



# Amazon In Focus

FALL 2016



20  
YEARS





# OUR MISSION & VISION

## Our Mission

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

## Our Vision

We envision a world that honors and values cultural and biological diversity and the critical contribution of tropical rainforests to our planet's life support system. We believe that indigenous self-determination is a critical component of any successful conservation strategy for the Amazon, and see that indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contribute greatly to sustainable and equitable stewardship of Mother Earth. We strive for a world in which governments, corporations and civil society respect the collective rights of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent over any activity affecting their territories and resources. We commit, in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect, to support our indigenous allies in their efforts to protect life, land, and culture in accordance with their aspirations and needs, as well as the needs of future generations.

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo: Toby McLeod

Dear Friends of the Amazon:

As I reflect on Amazon Watch's work over the last 20 years, I am proud of our accomplishments and excited about the work ahead.

Since its beginning, Amazon Watch has been deeply committed to defending indigenous peoples' rights and territories, for they are the best guardians of their rainforest homes. We stand with the U'wa of Colombia who inspired the world with their call to protect their sacred territory and keep the blood of mother earth in the ground. We stand with the Kichwa of Sarayaku who expelled oil companies and the military from their territory and won a historic case against the Ecuadorian government for violating their rights. We stood with the communities devastated by Chevron and Occidental petroleum and won. We also stood with the Xingu's indigenous and riverine communities to resist the construction of Belo Monte Dam when others had given up.

We recently completed a 4-year strategic plan that builds on our work over the last 20 years to strategically tackle the Amazon's gravest threats. Considering that indigenous lands hold 80% of global biodiversity, it is no surprise that extractive industries want their resources. If left to them, the Amazon's Sacred Headwaters would become one big oil field, and the watersheds of the Brazilian Amazon would be destroyed by agribusiness and mega-dams. There is another way!

Amazon Watch continues to stand with indigenous allies in defending their territories and sacred natural areas as industrial "No Go Zones." We are committed to supporting and amplifying Sarayaku's Kawsak Sacha, or Living Forests, proposal in defense of all life in the Amazon by keeping the oil in the ground. We want to expand this model throughout the Amazon, so that places like Yasuni National Park and the Xingu and Tapajós rivers will never again be considered for industrial development.

We are also waging international market campaigns to expose and pressure governments and corporations that are causing harm. Our new Amazon Crude Campaign aims to reduce demand for rainforest-destroying oil. We recently began working with Brazilian allies to expose the financiers of environmental and indigenous rights law rollbacks.

But really, these campaigns are just the tip of the iceberg. To truly protect the Amazon, we must build an international mandate to respect the rights and territories of indigenous peoples. The movement is growing, and I hope you will join us in demanding justice for all life on Mother Earth.

In gratitude and partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leila S. Salazar". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Leila Salazar-López  
Executive Director





## OUR WORK

Amazon Watch works in close partnership with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems. The organization's theory of change centers on advancing Amazonian indigenous people's legal rights to manage their ancestral territories, as recent studies confirm that community-managed protected areas are the most effective strategy for conserving biodiversity and sequestering carbon.

To advance our collective goals, Amazon Watch serves as a bridge for these crucial frontline voices and movements, amplifying their impact by providing communications and logistical support as well as funding for indigenous-led campaigns and movements through our regranting program. Amazon Watch's expertise in the field and twenty years of history as a principled indigenous ally have uniquely positioned it to compellingly shape the global narrative on why we must defend the Amazon in a manner that is both effective and just.



# 2016-2017 PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

The Amazon, the world's largest and most biodiverse tropical rainforest, covers an area larger than the continental United States, is home to more than 400 distinct indigenous peoples and one-third of the Earth's plant and animal species, and helps regulate our global climate. However, despite global recognition of the Amazon's ecological and cultural criticality, many areas are experiencing heightened industrial development pressures. In Ecuador and Peru's Sacred Headwaters region, which hosts the greatest biodiversity in the world, ecosystems, wildlife, and indigenous communities are imminently threatened by oil, gas and mining development. In Brazil, mega-dams, big ag, and other industrial development plans are plowing ahead under the heavy hand of an increasingly reactionary right-wing government. And in Colombia, a long-awaited peace accord is likely to bring renewed fossil fuel extraction pressures to remote indigenous territories.

To address these threats at their roots, and in accordance with its 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, Amazon Watch is building upon its prior collaboration with indigenous communities, regional organizations, and international allies, to:

## **1. Protect and defend the Amazon rainforest by advancing indigenous peoples' rights and territories - both on the ground and within national and international governing bodies.**

- Advocate for and secure recognition and protection of indigenous human and territorial rights in national and international agreements on climate change.
- Protect the Sacred Headwaters of the Amazon as critical biological and cultural corridors.

- Build international campaign to defend the Tapajós River, its people, and other river-dependent indigenous communities from industrial development projects, such as mega-dams and waterways.

## **2. Advocate for rights-based solutions, as well as sustainable and just alternatives to industrial and fossil fuel development that threaten the Amazon and its peoples.**

- Support and advance alternatives to mega-dams in the Amazon.
- Strengthen the Americas-wide alliance to Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground.
- Launch an international campaign tracking dirty Amazon crude, targeting consumers, and pressuring governments, companies, and financiers of industrial expansion in the Amazon.
- Stop Beijing-backed drilling projects by encouraging China to uphold its environmental commitments and pressuring Ecuador to reconsider their oil-for-loans relationship.
- Advance proposals by indigenous peoples to keep fossil fuels in the ground in their territories.
- Implement solar-powered communications projects with key frontline communities.

## **3. Educate and generate awareness about the global significance of the Amazon rainforest and indigenous stewardship as solutions to climate change and other ecological threats.**



## **PROFILE:** SÔNIA BONE GUAJAJARA

By Christian Poirier

At the young age of eleven, Sônia Bone Guajajara was chosen to be a warrior for her people. Her aunt, a Guajarara-Tentehar elder from Araribóia indigenous territory in Brazil's Maranhao State, recognized her great potential to employ the power of the word in the indigenous struggle for social and environmental justice. Sônia left her family and village to pursue an education, working as a housecleaner and babysitter to pay her way, ultimately obtaining college degrees in Literature and Special Education.

Even with this heavy workload, young Sônia still found time to advocate for her people, engaging in social movements while resolutely fighting to demonstrate how the indigenous experience was far different from what was taught in a colonized education system.



Around 2001, Sônia's advocacy became more focused, ultimately leading to the Encontro Estadual dos Povos Indígenas do Maranhão (First Statewide Encounter of Indigenous Peoples of Maranhão) and to a more formalized indigenous movement in Maranhão. She hasn't slowed down since, serving as a spokesperson and leader not only for her people but for Brazilian



Photo: Gert-Peter Bruch/Planète Amazone

"We are living in a moment of great global transformation, where capitalism dominates and all those who do not incorporate themselves into this system are seen as an inconvenience. Today, we indigenous peoples are seen as an embarrassment to this system because of our age-old and harmonious relationship with nature, where land is a sacred good and not merchandise, where rivers represent life, and the forest is our protector. In the name of economic development all of this is threatened, if not already destroyed. Our role as conscious citizens is to fight against this looming chaos, maintaining our way of life, enjoying [our lands] responsibly, and significantly contributing to the well-being of the planet."

Amazon Watch is honored to welcome Sônia as our honored guest at our 20th Anniversary celebration in San Francisco, CA. Her message could not be more timely.

indigenous people as a whole at the regional, national, and international levels.

Having served as vice-coordinator of the Amazonian indigenous network Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) for four years, today Sônia is the Executive Coordinator of Brazil's Association of Indigenous Peoples (APIB), occupying a key role in the struggle for the rights and way of life of the country's indigenous peoples. An indigenous woman warrior, passionate advocate for her people, and dedicated mother of three, Sônia brings a compelling call for justice from Brazil's first nations everywhere she goes.

In 2015, Sônia traveled to the U.S. for the first time at the request of the United Nations, where she addressed the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

"I had the opportunity to say that the United States wasn't the center of the world as they taught and preached, but that the center of the world was in the Amazon, since if they destroyed our forests and natural resources, the U.S. and New York would no longer be able to survive."

With Brazil currently undergoing political turmoil and an alarming shift to its most conservative and regressive government in decades, the Amazon and its indigenous stewards are under renewed threat. Within this alarming situation, Sônia has a message that the world needs to hear:





# DEFENDING THE AMAZON FOR TWO DECADES









## **TWENTY YEARS OF STRUGGLE IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON**

By Christian Poirier

With two thirds of the Amazon's rivers and forests falling within its borders, Brazil holds the key to the future of this vast biome and its diverse cultures. 240 distinct native peoples span 690 indigenous territories across the country, nearly all within the Amazon's preserved forests. As such, defending and advancing the rights of Brazil's indigenous peoples is fundamental to the ongoing integrity of the rainforest's life-giving ecosystems.

Throughout our history in Brazil, we have had the honor of working alongside inspiring indigenous partners and a myriad of allies, providing a keen understanding of Brazil's complex political, financial, and corporate landscape as well as the ubiquitous threats to the Amazon's socio-environmental stability. Alongside these allies we staged stirring actions and witnessed many beautiful and tragic stories, teaching us how to respond to today's evolving challenges, grim realities, and bright opportunities.



Amazon Watch built its foundation in Brazil, responding to the environmental and human rights crisis of a growing illegal mahogany trade and efforts to lay a hazardous gas pipeline through the remote forests of Amazônia State. By personally confronting Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso for his government's indifference to these controversies during his US visit in 1996, Amazon Watch founder Atossa Soltani set the stage for 20 years of high profile, game-changing campaigns.

Addressing some of the Brazilian Amazon's most pressing social and environmental problems, our work exposed the threats of the regional mega-infrastructure integration scheme IIRSA and challenged its political and financial enablers. Drawing from years of experience in reforming multilateral banks, we challenged the lending model of Brazil's development bank BNDES. Our background in corporate social responsibility campaigns informed efforts to dissuade international companies like Siemens and General Electric from profiteering from Amazon destruction. By consistently bringing rights violations before international institutions like the United Nations, the Brazilian government was forced to defend its record abroad. And in support of a just Amazonian development model, we worked with a coalition of Brazilian NGOs to encourage the adoption of clean energy alternatives to a wave of new hydroelectric Amazon dams.

Our most inspirational work in Brazil came as a response to the government's plans to construct the world's 3rd largest dam on the mighty Xingu River. Emblematic of the clash between the rights of indigenous forest and river stewards and a predatory and corrupt development agenda, the struggle to stop the Belo Monte dam defined the future of the Brazilian Amazon. During our long campaign alongside Xinguano communities, social movements, and NGOs, we played a decisive role in generating a global polemic, significantly raising the project's financial and political cost and inspiring millions to take action.

Despite our successes, this battle was ultimately lost. But the greater struggle for indigenous rights and environmental justice saw progress. The grim fate of the Xingu and its

peoples – enduringly exposed through our lens as we bare witness to this unfolding tragedy – laid the groundwork for a victorious battle to save the Tapajós River basin from a similar destiny. As the Brazilian government's bulldozers prepared to carve another mega-dam into the heart of the Amazon, imperiling the Tapajós' vast forests and rich biodiversity, the tenacious and innovative resistance of our Munduruku partners laid down a formidable roadblock.

Like that of the Arara, Juruna, and Kayapo peoples of the Xingu, the Munduruku's determination to defend their lands and cultures from dam-driven ruin profoundly inspired our work in Brazil. It informed our strategies and provided a basis for our actions, international delegations, and multi-media communications, while spurring dynamic new partnerships and coalitions. For the Tapajós River, the Munduruku's struggle was the defining factor behind August's stunning victory that saw the cancellation of the São Luiz do Tapajós mega-dam.

Such a victory is to be savored, but also understood against the backdrop of today's increasingly dire circumstances for indigenous peoples and their forest homes. With an ascendant congressional bloc known as the ruralistas waging open constitutional warfare on the rights of native peoples and an errant, industrial Amazonian development model continually gaining favor, Brazil's indigenous movement and its allies must rise to the occasion to confront a spate of complex new challenges.

The stories of the Xingu and the Tapajós dictate that the international community must continue to play a key role in asserting social and environmental justice for the Amazon. Following the lead of powerful indigenous leaders like Brazil's Sônia Guajajara we have a duty to support forest defenders whose struggle so fundamentally interweaves with the global imperative to defend rights, protect ecosystems, and defeat climate change.

Twenty years on, Amazon Watch's mission to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples has never been more relevant and essential.



## **AMAZON CRUDE:** DESTROYING THE RAINFOREST, DEVASTATING THE CLIMATE, DEADLY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

By Adam Zuckerman

Society is slowly awakening to the fact that we have to quit burning fossil fuels, but weaning ourselves off of oil is a complex process that we must all invest in. Amazon Watch is taking concrete steps to accelerate the transition, and you can help.

Where does your oil come from, and what can you do to limit its impact? If you live in the United States, China, Chile, Japan, Peru, South Korea, Spain, or the United Kingdom, chances are pretty good that some of it comes from the Amazon rainforest. California consumers play a particularly large role in fueling the destruction of the Amazon--roughly 60% of all Amazon crude exports are processed by California refineries. Much of the final product - gas and diesel - is purchased for corporate, university, and municipal vehicle fleets. Amazon Watch has identified these influential bulk purchasers as a pivotal starting point for getting the U.S. out of the rainforest and climate destruction business. This fall, we launched the *End Amazon Crude* campaign to pressure



refineries to not process Amazon crude and public and private vehicle fleets to not source their fuel from refineries that process it. It's an important starting point for a clean energy transportation revolution.

Refineries in the United States process about 225,000 barrels of oil (9.5 million gallons) from the Amazon every single day. California alone processes 74% of that - over 170,000 barrels every day. In practical matters, that means that all vehicle fleets in the state--and many others elsewhere--are using fuel that is at least partly derived from Amazon crude. That creates a thriving market for this rainforest-destroying product, which rationalizes expansion of oil operations into some of the Amazon rainforest's most pristine regions. That has devastating impacts for our global climate and weather patterns, indigenous peoples, biodiversity, and frontline refinery communities in the United States.

The science is unequivocal: we need to keep 80% of all remaining fossil fuels in the ground in order to avert catastrophic climate change, and the Amazon rainforest ranks among the most important places in which to restrict drilling. Tragically, this increasingly accepted reality has had an inverse effect on drilling plans, with oil companies and governments conspiring to get the oil out before global awareness turns to global fossil fuel restrictions. Drilling in the Amazon has a triple carbon impact from: 1. burning the oil, 2. cutting down the rainforest, and 3. the cascading emissions that come from destroying the world's largest carbon sink. Perhaps fittingly, felling these forests could deepen California's historic drought.



Climatologists' dire predictions that Amazon deforestation could mean "20 percent less rain for the coastal Northwest and a 50 percent reduction in [California's] Sierra Nevada snowpack" have borne out, with the state now facing its worst drought in 1200 years.

Our addiction to Amazon crude also disproportionately impacts indigenous peoples who depend upon the rainforest for their way of life. In one oil producing region of the Peruvian Amazon, 98% of indigenous children have dangerously high levels of toxic metals in their blood. And with strong demand, in September 2016 Ecuador began exporting its first barrels of oil from Yasuni-ITT, home to Ecuador's last indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation. Amazon crude also threatens the millions of plant and animal species, including the jaguar, the Amazon pink river dolphin, the anaconda, the tapir, and the giant river otter, that live in the world's most biodiverse place. And refining Amazon crude, some of the heaviest oil on Earth, greatly increases toxic refinery emissions, negatively impacting refinery communities in the U.S.

As consumers of this crude, we can spur divestment from this toxic energy source by pressuring local refineries to commit to rejecting crude from the Amazon and by pressuring their clients to 1. Improve fleet efficiency and 2. Only purchase from refineries that commit to going Amazon-free. This will ultimately reduce the market for Amazon crude, undercut the drivers of an expanded oil frontier, and help accelerate the transition away from fossil-fueled transportation. We are either part of the problem or part of the solution; let's start by going Amazon free.

# END AMAZON CRUDE

DESTROYING THE RAINFOREST, DEVASTATING THE CLIMATE,  
DEADLY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

The Amazon regulates  
**global weather**, contains  
1/5 of the world's flowing  
**fresh water**, and produces  
1/5 of our **oxygen**.

Drilling the most  
biodiverse part of  
the Amazon would  
generate only  
**17 days** of  
global oil supply.

Just one hectare  
of that area  
contains **more  
tree species**  
than all of the  
U.S. and Canada  
combined.



What's it worth? **All the oil  
in the entire Amazon**  
would produce only **a few  
months** of global supply.

In just one oil-  
producing area  
of the northern  
Peruvian Amazon,  
**98% of indigenous  
children** have high  
levels of toxic metals  
in their blood.







The US refined  
**225,441 barrels  
of Amazon Crude  
per day** in 2015.  
California processed  
3/4 of those barrels.

Deforestation  
in the Amazon  
is a direct contributor  
to California's current  
**drought.**

Drilling in the Amazon has a  
**TRIPLE CARBON IMPACT:**

- 1 Burning the oil
- 2 Emissions from cutting  
down the rainforest, and
- 3 Additional emissions cause a  
reduction in the world's largest  
carbon sink.

**FILLS  
790,000  
CARS  
per day**

Despite ready alternatives,  
all truck fleets in California  
(and many elsewhere) use  
**Amazon Crude.**



Photo: Terra Mater

## DREAMS VERSUS PEOPLE POWER IN ECUADOR'S SOUTHERN RAINFORESTS

By Kevin Koenig

Long before climate scientists were warning about rising global temperatures and the new imperative to keep all fossil fuels permanently in the ground, indigenous peoples in the southern Ecuadorian Amazon were already doing it. In fact, despite all odds, they've been doing it for decades.

In the 1940s, Shell Oil and the Ecuadorian government had big, manifest destiny-style plans for its remote southern rainforests. They blueprinted roads, highways, and a transcontinental pipeline. Together with the church and military, they hoped to open up the rainforest, 'civilize' local indigenous peoples, and establish a presence for an ongoing border war with neighboring Peru. But after a decade under siege from local indigenous peoples and a fruitless attempt to penetrate the forest by plane and mule, no oil was ever found. Shell left empty handed, leaving behind a town that still bears its name.

Oil was eventually found in 1967 by Texaco several hundred miles north along the Colombian border, in an area now known as Lago Agrio, or Sour Lake,



named by the company after its famous Texas oil strike. It became ground zero for the country's oil industry, which built hundreds of miles of pipelines and roads through the forest, littered indigenous territories with thousands of oil waste pits, and became the site of the world's worst oil disaster at the hands of Chevron.

Today, Ecuador's southern Amazon is still virtually intact, free of large scale oil projects and roads that have opened up most areas north of the Curaray River, including Yasuni National Park. The government and oil companies have done their best to change that situation. But the Kichwa, Achuar, Shuar, Sapara, and Shiwiar peoples--historic adversaries--joined together, combining on-the-ground resistance with advocacy and legal strategies that halted even the grandest of resource extraction plans.

On multiple occasions the Ecuadorian government sought to sell its southern Amazon off wholesale for drilling. Recent oil auctions carved concessions out of the forests of indigenous territories into twenty-one oil blocks totaling about 10 million acres. But they were tremendous failures -- met by protests every place the government sought to promote them -- from Quito, to Houston, to Calgary, to Paris.

Of the few blocks where contracts were actually signed, the list of companies that indigenous peoples forced to leave is impressive: Atlantic Richfield Corporation (ARCO), Chevron, Perenco, ConocoPhillips, CGC, and Burlington Resources. The area began to develop a reputation among industry and finance as an impossible place for petroleum production. Attempts to drill would only lead to paralyzed projects, shareholder protests, a date at the human rights court, and an arbitration hearing where the companies and government could slug it out over their lost investment.

Amazon Watch supported these communities over the years with on-the-ground communications equipment, including satellite phones, solar powered VHF and UHF radio systems, video cameras, and capacity-building training. In addition, we created critical advocacy spaces for indigenous

leaders to directly address decision makers and brought our own pressure to bear inside corporate boardrooms, the halls of the UN, and on the streets with a bullhorn.

Thus to date, the southern Ecuadorian Amazon has been a de-facto "No Go Zone" for oil companies. The strategic combination of grassroots on-the-ground resistance, capacity building, legal action, media, and advocacy has proven an effective recipe to keep oil in the ground, primary forests intact, and indigenous rights respected.

The threats, however, are starting to mount. A recently signed contract between Chinese state-run firm Andes Petroleum and Ecuador for two oil blocks at the headwaters of the Pastaza River Basin threatens the Sapara, a small vulnerable indigenous group numbering 500. And, as oil prices remain low, Ecuador is seeking to expand its mining industry into the Amazon. In August of this year, the Ecuadorian government forcibly evicted Shuar communities along the eastern Andean-Amazon slopes of the Transkutuku region -- a unique biological hotspot -- to make way for a Chinese-backed gold mine. The communities were not consulted and were given five minutes to gather their belongings before their houses were razed.

But local communities throughout the Amazon are coming forward with their own alternative proposals for protecting these areas. These proposals aren't new, however. They are based on the cosmovision, traditions, and practical strategies that they have been using to protect their lands for millennia.



# THE LIVING FOREST

By Kevin Koenig



Last December, on a frigid Paris morning, the Kichwa of Sarayaku dropped an 800lb hand carved canoe that had traveled from deep in the rainforest into the chilly waters of the Seine River. The canoe is carved in the shape of the Kindi Wasi, or hummingbird fish that, as it sounds, has a hummingbird-like beak and inhabits the bottoms of the Kichwa's most sacred lagoons. It was sent as a vessel to carry their message to the COP 21 Climate Conference that as a planet, and people, we are all in the same boat. If we're serious about avoiding climate change, we need to not only keep oil in the ground, but change the fundamental way we relate to nature.

In Paris, and most recently at the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i, the Kichwa of Sarayaku have begun to share what they call Kawsak Sacha, which translates to Living Forest. The proposal essentially shares their belief system for living together with the natural world that grows

out of the historic knowledge of the indigenous peoples who inhabit the Amazonian rainforest, and it is one that is also buttressed by recent scientific studies. Whereas the Western World treats nature as an undemanding source of raw materials destined exclusively for human use, Kawsak Sacha recognizes that the forest is made up entirely of living beings and the communicative relations they have with each other. These beings, from the smallest plants to the supreme beings who protect the forest, are persons (runa) who inhabit the waterfalls, lagoons, swamps, mountains, and rivers, and who, in turn, compose the Living Forest as a whole. These persons live together in community (llakta) and carry out their lives in a manner that is similar to human beings.

The Kichwa of Sarayaku seek to attain national and international recognition for Kawsak Sacha as a new legal category of protected area that would be considered Sacred Territory and Biological and Cultural Patrimony of the Kichwa People in Ecuador. The goal is to preserve the territory of Indigenous Peoples, and especially the material and spiritual relations that they establish in the Living Forest with the other beings that inhabit it. This implies that these areas be declared zones that are free of oil, mineral, and lumber extraction.

A step towards recognizing the role of indigenous peoples and indigenous rights in protecting critical ecosystems was made at the IUCN Congress with the passage of Motion 26, which calls on members to protect indigenous sacred sites from extractive industries. The respect and recognition of indigenous life plans and worldviews like Kawsak Sacha are long overdue and finally gaining traction. We need to join them in making these a reality!



# **“THE ARC OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE IS LONG, BUT IT BENDS TOWARD JUSTICE”**

## **CHEVRON'S TOXIC LEGACY IN ECUADOR**

By Paul Paz y Miño

The decades-long epic battle for justice for the deliberate pollution of the Ecuadorian Amazon perfectly epitomizes MLK's iconic quote. Amazon Watch launched its "Clean Up Ecuador" campaign in 2001. At that time, the indigenous and campesino communities had just lost a nine year legal battle to hold Texaco - now owned by Chevron - accountable in New York. This was nine years after Texaco had left Ecuador and thirty-five years after it began to dump toxic waste into the rainforest, resulting in 18 billion gallons of toxic waste. The fight for justice had only completed round one.

Amazon Watch joined the campaign knowing that the battle was far from over. But no one imagined that fifteen years after launching that campaign we would be sitting in a Toronto court watching Chevron try to slip away from paying for a clean-up. In 2011, the Ecuadorian communities achieved a milestone victory when Chevron was found liable in Ecuador for \$9.5 billion in damages. Upheld later by Ecuador's Supreme Court, this ruling was at the time the largest judgment in history for environmental damages. Chevron refused to pay.

That calculation must ultimately prove wrong for the environmental and human rights community to avoid another Chevron in Ecuador case. Put simply, legal and financial might can't "make right" or the the arc of the moral universe would bend towards the wealthy.

As I wrote this, lawyers for the affected Ecuadorian communities were arguing why Canada must enforce the Ecuadorian verdict and allow the communities to seize Chevron Canada assets in order to cover Chevron's debt and finally cleanup its mess. They have a rock solid case, but that does not in any way guarantee that, in the face of Chevron's massive legal machine, a victory here is a forgone conclusion.

The case against Chevron has become one of the most important corporate accountability cases in history, not only because of the scale of environmental destruction, but because of the vicious and precedent-setting strategies Chevron has used to crush the free speech of critics and stop environmental activists and concerned shareholders from organizing campaigns to pressure the company. Despite the fact that every judge who has examined the evidence has determined that the case against Chevron is overwhelming and the company is liable for the many damages, Chevron still refuses to pay. Indeed, its strategy has been to invent a preposterous case that Chevron is the real victim, and on the basis of testimony from a corrupt witness to whom it paid \$2 million, hide behind the verdict it achieved in a retaliatory SLAPP suit in New York.

In addition to that lawsuit, Chevron has used every dirty trick in the book to stop Amazon Watch and our allies in the Amazon from continuing this case: slanderous hit pieces, calls and emails to foundations, legal actions meant to block our work, and even having our team arrested for trying to enter shareholder meetings with valid proxies. Chevron itself has admitted to dumping toxic waste in the Amazon, yet it continues to refuse to pay damages, instead spending billions on lawyers and PR firms.

We don't yet know if the Canadian court will be the last stop on this path for real justice in Ecuador, or if we must ride the arc even further. No matter what happens, Amazon Watch will stay in the fight and continue to stand with the affected peoples, working to assure that the financial might of corporations cannot bend the arc of the moral universe towards the wealthy, that it cannot endanger the lives of ever more people and the remaining pristine places in the world.



Photo: International Institute for Law and Society

Photo: Barbara Fraser

## PERU: NEW PRESIDENT, OLD TENSIONS

By Andrew Miller

After five lackluster years under President Ollanta Humala, Peru is facing a new political scenario with the ascension of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, known as PPK, to the presidency. From an indigenous rights perspective, the prior presidency was an improvement over the disaster that was Alan García, but still deeply disappointing. Following a promising start with the promulgation of the Prior Consultation Law, the situation deteriorated with poor implementation of the law, ongoing socio-enviro conflicts (150 registered by the Human Rights Ombudsman as of July 2016, up from 138 one year prior) especially around big mining projects in the Andean highlands, and weakening of environmental regulations.

The new president is best described as a neoliberal technocrat. He is expected to further reduce regulations and government oversight of extractive industries and encourage greater private sector investment. Initial indications are that mining will continue to be seen as a primary motor for generating revenue and economic growth.



Here are some of the flashpoints Amazon Watch will be monitoring in the coming months and years:

### **Amazon oil extraction**

Government plans to expand oil and gas exploration throughout the Amazon were foiled in recent years by crashing oil prices. Seven concessions tendered in late 2014 are still listed as available for licitation, according to oil licensing agency PeruPetro. Exploration plans in Block 64, where Achuar indigenous peoples have fiercely resisted oil activities, have been in suspension. This could all change, assuming renewed efforts by the new government and rising oil prices.

2016 has seen at least six Amazon oil spills along the Northern Peruvian Pipeline, with a lackluster government response to mitigate the spill's environmental health impacts. Extraordinarily, the last three happened after the pipeline had been ostensibly shut down.

### **Indigenous land titling**

Some 20% of the Peruvian Amazon - roughly 14 million hectares - has been titled to indigenous peoples. According to the national indigenous federation Aidesep, an additional 20 million hectares are pending for government recognition. A sustained campaign, dating back more than five years, has yielded important international funding and advances on this front. A very important pilot case is that of the Achuar of the Pastaza River basin, who have the most well-developed proposal and are pushing it within the Peruvian court system with the support of Peruvian human rights lawyers and international allies like Rainforest Foundation Norway and Amazon Watch.

How far the incoming government will take this remains to be seen. Prior to taking his powerful position as Minister of Economy, Alfredo Thorne made concerning public statements regarding privatizing collective territories (precisely the issue that led to indigenous protests in 2008, culminating in the so-called Baguazo in 2009).

### **Socio-environmental conflicts**

In their July 2016 report, Peru's Human Rights Ombudsman listed 211 social conflicts across the country, over 70% of which are socio-environmental conflicts like community protests over large-scale mining projects. This is the context in which many protesters are wounded and, in some cases, killed by security forces. Related to that are the ongoing killings of environmental defenders and indigenous leaders. According to Global Witness, some 12 deaths were documented in 2015, keeping Peru in the notorious five worst countries in the world to be an environmental activist. Beyond that, indigenous leaders continue to face criminalization for their activism, as illustrated by the case against 54 related to the tragic violence in Bagua. Although they were recently absolved, the movement has been sapped by years of hearings while the true responsible parties for creating the conditions that led to the deadly clashes - politicians and corporations - remain at large.

These are but several of the key dynamics at play in the Peruvian Amazon. There are also a whole host of other threats to both the environment and the well-being of those who live there, including mining, logging, coca production, cattle ranching, the expansion of oil palm plantations and even cacao for chocolate. As such, we can expect the situation of indigenous rights in the Peruvian Amazon to remain precarious into the foreseeable future. The indigenous movement itself continues to be the key defense against further violations and the main hope for the crucial advances we would all like to see.



Photo: Michelle Guitierrez

Colombia's 50+ year armed conflict with the FARC, the country's largest and oldest left-wing insurgent group, appears to be coming to a close. A final peace agreement between the government and the FARC was announced on August 24th, and signed on September 26th, and will be put to a popular vote on October 2nd. For the majority of Colombians, and for those who have worked on human rights in Colombia, the conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions can't end soon enough.

Like other rural populations in Colombia, the country's 102 indigenous peoples have been subjected to terror campaigns committed by all of the conflict's armed actors. The war has also contributed to ecological destruction, including damage to the rainforest associated with coca cultivation, eradication, and drug production. Guerrilla attacks on oil pipelines have led to a reported 4 million barrels of spilled oil over the years.

Though the Colombian government claims the post-conflict scenario will bring environmental benefits as part of the "peace dividend," we should also be prepared for a dark side of peace. Some of Colombia's natural riches have been off-limits to industrial scale exploitation due to the war. In removing the risk of kidnapping, extortion, and attacks on infrastructure, investment will potentially explode through the far reaches of the country, bringing megaprojects like mining, dams, and roads. This, in turn, could result in a great increase in environmental impacts and conflicts with local communities who have their rights trampled, similar to what we see in Peru.

Colombia's oil industry is salivating to expand throughout the country. Its designs have been frustrated by a reported 2500 plus attacks on pipelines over the last 30 years. The day following announcement of the peace agreement text, one of Colombia's main newspapers, El Espectador, ran an article titled, "Oil companies - Ready to retake areas of the country affected by the war."

## **WILL COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS HAVE AN ENVIRONMENTAL DARK SIDE?**

By Andrew Miller





Photo: Asouwa

One specific cause for concern has been the discussion about financing peace via royalties on expanded hydro-carbon activities. Colombian Minister of Mines Tomás González has promoted the notion of “Fracking for Peace” - an idea roundly rejected by environmental activists as the adverse environmental and climate impacts of fracking become increasingly apparent.

Another area of concern to indigenous peoples involves so-called “eco-tourism.” Many locations of natural beauty are sacred sites to indigenous peoples, of special spiritual and cultural value to them. Tourism and conservation measures - designed ostensibly to protect the environment - can pose a significant threat to indigenous peoples’ cultures and must rigorously respect indigenous self-determination and free, prior, and informed consent.

Though the armed conflict might officially wind down, social movements are fearful that repression will continue. In recent years, the face of State crackdown on protests have been the notorious Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD). Following many deaths and injuries suffered by protest movements, civil society voices have argued this Colombian National Police unit should disband. President Santos has insisted it will continue to exist into the future. One ‘peace dividend’ should be a strengthening of social movements’ right to peacefully dissent and protest official measures and mega projects that threaten their well-being and existence.

As has been the case for several decades, the experience and struggle of the U'wa indigenous people are emblematic of many of these nationwide trends. They have been fighting gas extraction in their ancestral territory for years, winning a significant victory in early 2015 with the dismantling of the Magallanes gas exploration platform. In 2016, the tension boiled over when mountaineers broadcast a video of a soccer game played at the peak of El Cocuy mountain, which is one of the most sacred places for the U'wa. The U'wa launched months of ‘territorial control,’ turning back all outsiders who wanted to climb the mountain. This highlights the tension between a national park, in which the government has permitted eco-tourism activities, and self-management of the overlapping U'wa Reserve.

Even in the best-case scenarios, peace will be messy. Post civil war situations elsewhere in Latin America - think Guatemala and El Salvador - don't offer cause for optimism. Colombian civil society and social movements, central amongst them indigenous peoples, will continue their fierce struggle for social, economic and environmental justice. International solidarity with those efforts will be crucial for years to come. Amazon Watch has stood with the U'wa for almost twenty years and doesn't plan to abandon that foundational relationship anytime soon.



Photo: Tatiana Vila

## BRINGING A MESSAGE TO LIFE: HUMAN BANNERS

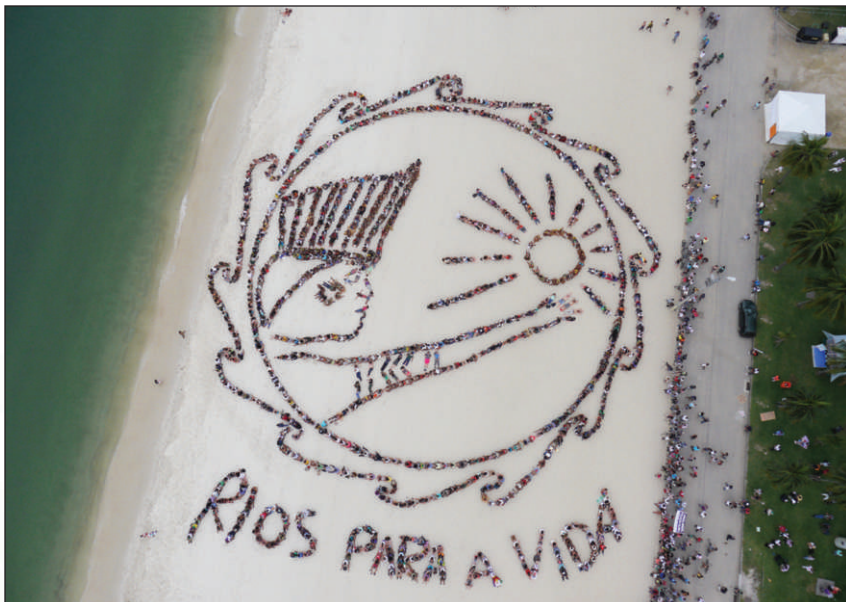


Photo: ChicoPaulo/SpectralQ

### Rivers for Life (2012)

Nearly 1500 people used Rio de Janeiro's Flamengo Beach as a canvas during the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, forming the lines of an enormous image to promote the importance of free-running rivers, truly clean energy sources like solar power, and including indigenous knowledge among solutions to the climate crisis. This activity was led by diverse indigenous peoples organized under the umbrella of Brazil's Association of Indigenous Peoples, who also comprised the majority of the action's participants. The message "Rios para a vida" ("Rivers for life") signifies that rivers must remain undammed and dedicated to supporting the life of the millions of humans who depend on them.



Photo: Antonio Bonsorte/SpectralQ

### Salve a Amazônia (2009)

Indigenous peoples from across Latin America led over 1000 participants at the 2009 World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil to use their bodies to draw attention to the increasingly precarious situation of the Amazon rainforest. Indigenous leaders, environmentalists and activists joined forces to spell out the messages "Salve a Amazônia" ("Save the Amazon" in Portuguese) around the massive silhouette of an indigenous warrior taking aim with a bow and arrow.





Photo: Lou Dematteis/SpectralQ

### Yasuní Live (2007)

Some eight hours down the Napo River and several more down the Yasuní tributary, over a hundred people came together in an out-cropping inside Yasuní National Park to spell out "Live Yasuní" and the Spanish translation "Yasuní Vive". It was organized together with the Ecuadorian government in 2007 to celebrate the launching of the Yasuní-ITT initiative that sought to keep the Ishpingo, Tiputini, and Tambococha oil fields--the country's largest--in the ground in exchange for international compensation. Yasuní is widely considered the most biologically diverse place on the planet and is home to Ecuador's

last indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. The action was broadcast as part of the Live Earth concert and included the former Vice President of Ecuador, now a leading candidate for the Presidency, along with high level cabinet ministers, many of whom have had a hand in the government's recent decision to abandon the initiative and approve oil drilling.



Photo: Lou Dematteis/SpectralQ

### Justicia Ya (2007)

Close to one thousand indigenous and campesino farmers gathered at the infamous Lago Agrio 1 well site in Ecuador's northern Amazon to demand "Justice Now" from Chevron, (formerly Texaco), responsible for turning a once pristine rainforest into ground zero for the worst oil related disaster on the planet. The site was the first of several hundred well sites the company designed, built, and operated on the cheap using outdated technology that spilled at least 16.8 million gallons of oil, dumped billions in toxic waste water, and left behind over 1000 unlined pits

filled with crude waste and carcinogens that led to a class action lawsuit filed in 1993. Some 23 years later, despite a 2014 verdict that found Chevron guilty of environmental devastation and damages of \$9.5 billion, the company refuses to conduct a clean up, provide clean water, or fund for health care.





Photo: Antonio Bonsorte

## **Amo Amazonía (2009)**

How do you raise consciousness among urban public opinion that the Amazon must not be destroyed in the short-term quest for profits? The "Amo Amazonía" ("I Love the Amazon!") human banner in Lima, Peru helped meet that challenge, bringing visibility to a week-long cultural festival promoting the rainforest as a place of breathtaking human and biological beauty.



Photo: SpectralQ

## **Pueblos + Derechos = Bosques Vivos (2014)**

Carried out on the beaches of Lima during the COP20 climate summit, the "Indigenous Peoples + Territorial Rights = Living Forests" human banner helped raise the profile of indigenous peoples' permanent campaign to ensure indigenous rights protections within the international climate treaty.



## In Memoriam: Terry Sheldon Turner, “Wakampu” 1935-2015



Amazon Watch honors the legacy of the late anthropologist Terry Turner, whose groundbreaking ethnographic and activist work with the Kayapo people of Brazil's Xingu River inspired a generation of advocates for indigenous rights and environmental protection in the Amazon.

Our sincere thanks to Terry's family, his wife Jane and daughters Vanessa and Allison, for creating the *Terry Turner Memorial Fund* to support Amazon Watch's ongoing campaigns for rights, rivers and rainforests in Brazil.

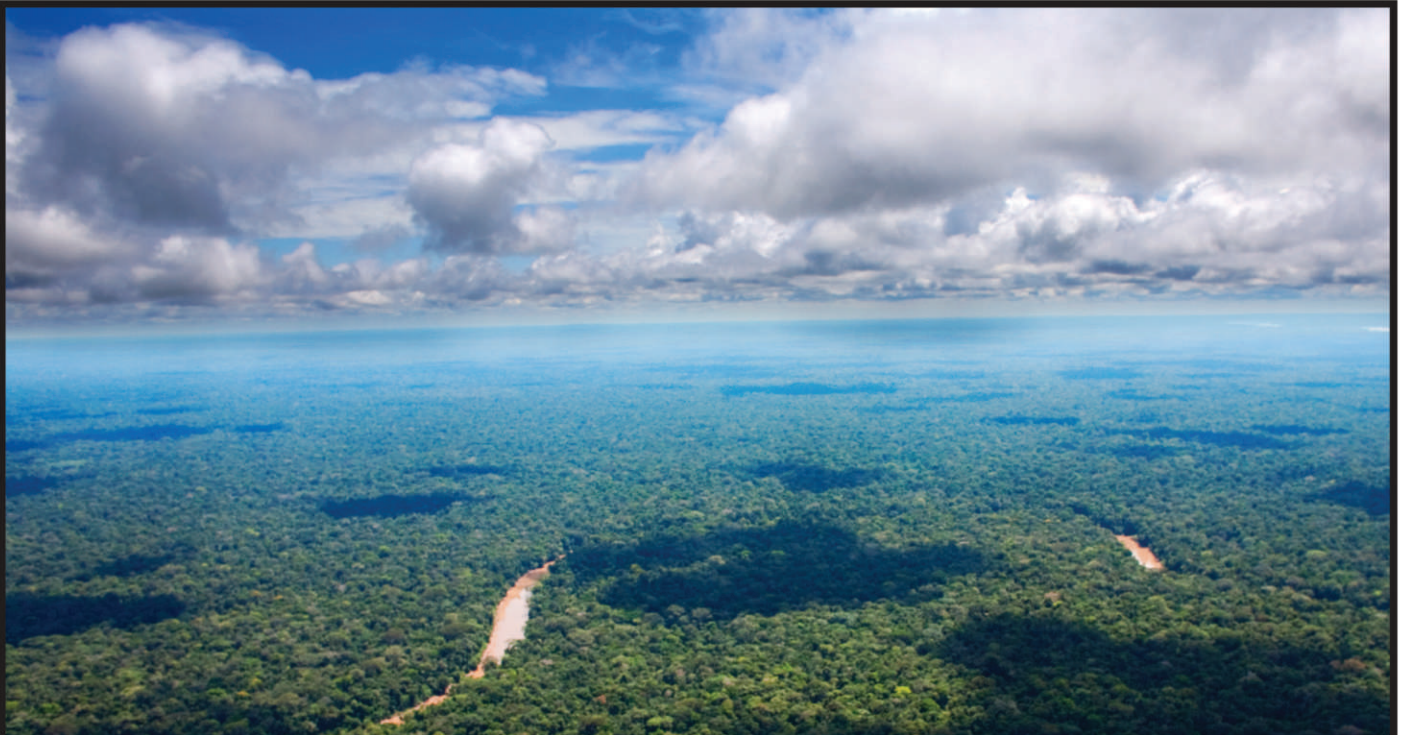




**Thank you Amazon Watch for your 20 years  
of work protecting the Amazon Rainforest and  
advancing indigenous rights!**

*-Jackie and Michael Klein*





**Thank you Amazon Watch for 20 years of  
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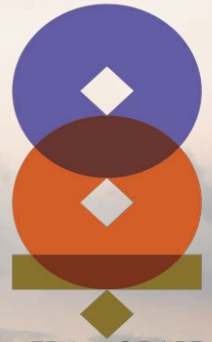
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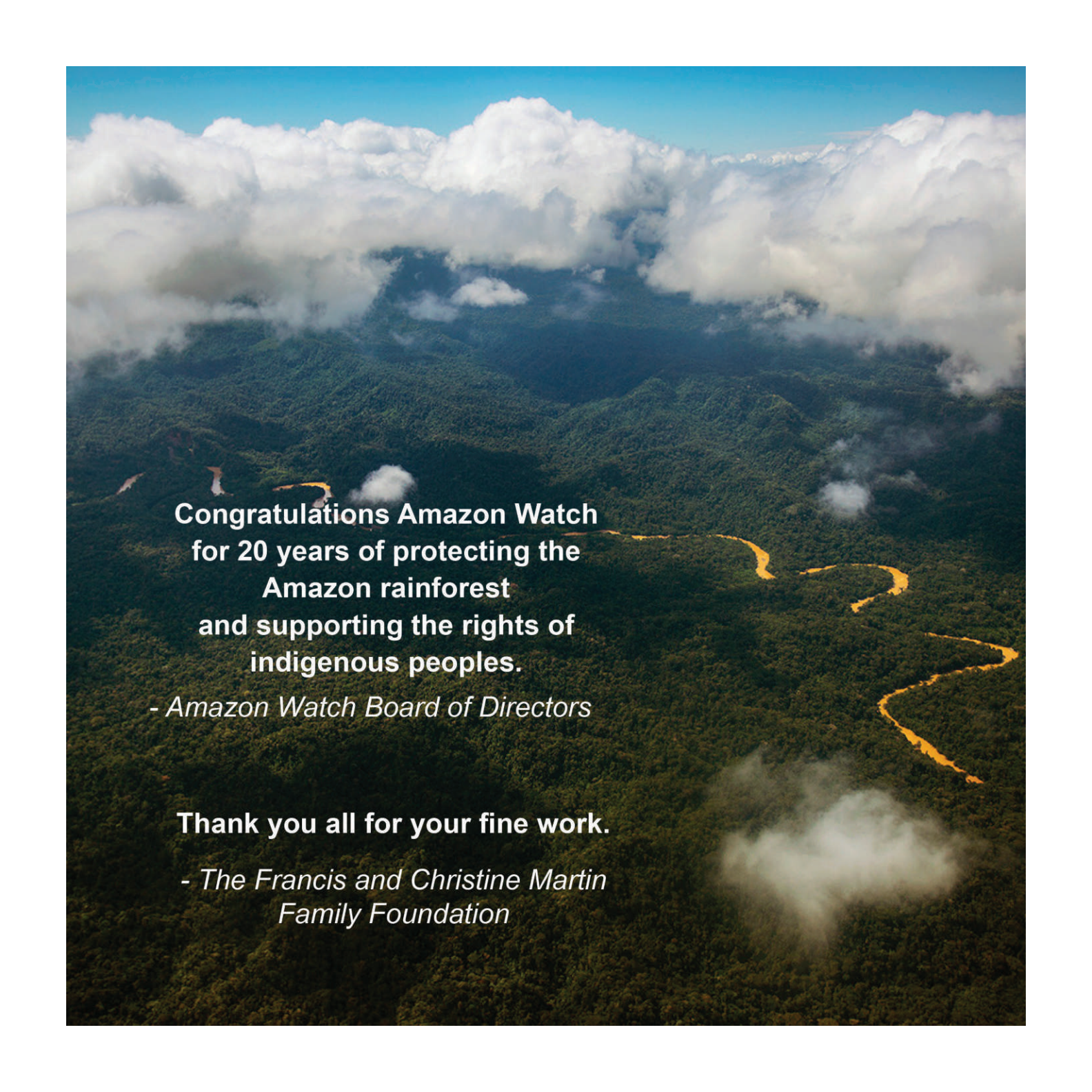
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*- Amazon Watch Board of Directors*

**Thank you all for your fine work.**

*- The Francis and Christine Martin  
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