

# Indigenous peoples and the Climate Crisis

## (for learners aged 11-18)

Dear educator,

Thank you very much for choosing Survival International's educational resources. A core part of our mission is supporting teachers in introducing Indigenous rights to young people. Our engaging resources are designed to make learning about the struggles and rights of Indigenous peoples accessible and meaningful for students of all ages.

This resource guide aimed at young people aged 11-18 features audio-visual resources showing that Indigenous peoples are not just victims of the climate crisis: they are agents of change in the fightback against it and play a crucial role in protecting the natural world. It is structured as follows:

1. Videos showing that Indigenous peoples are the natural world's best guardians
2. Videos showing the impact of natural resource exploitation for profit on the lives of Indigenous peoples
3. Videos showing the impact of "climate mitigation strategies" on Indigenous peoples such as:
  - A. Conservation
  - B. Carbon offsetting
4. Fun time-lapse videos featuring the Baka and Awá people
5. Immersive rainforest sound resources

Before you use this guide with your students, you may want to take a look at our [Introduction on Indigenous peoples](#) for learners of all ages.

Please feel free to use them to best suit your students' needs. All we ask is that you reinforce **three key messages:**

1. There are more than 476 million Indigenous people worldwide, who form part of extraordinarily diverse societies with ways of life that are just as modern as anyone else's. They have technologies, laws, education, religions, and complex social, political, and economic structures. Like all societies, Indigenous peoples continually evolve – embracing tools like mobile phones and social media while adapting their ancestral techniques to challenges such as climate change. This doesn't make them any less Indigenous.
2. Indigenous identity is deeply rooted in their connection to their land. Many Indigenous peoples rely on their land for their livelihoods and are largely self-sufficient. They have developed intricate systems to live sustainably on their land, fostering strong community ties. Indigenous peoples actively shape and safeguard some of the planet's most biodiverse regions, preserving them for future generations.

3. Indigenous peoples around the globe show remarkable resilience in the face of systemic racism, land theft, forced development, and genocidal violence. They fight tirelessly to defend their rights, territories, and ways of life. Supporting their struggle and standing in solidarity with their pursuit of justice and self-determination is essential.

To learn more about how to teach about Indigenous peoples' rights and struggles in a culturally sensitive manner, we invite you to look at our [Teaching guidance Indigenous peoples: Dos & Don'ts](#).

Your Survival education team

#### About Survival International

Survival International is the global campaigning movement for Indigenous peoples' rights. Since 1969, we've been working to prevent their destruction and give them a platform to speak to the world about the genocidal violence, slavery and racism they face on a daily basis. By lobbying the powerful, Survival helps defend the lives, lands and futures of people who should have the same rights as other contemporary societies. Unlike many other organizations, Survival refuses government money and does not take donations from companies that might violate the rights of Indigenous peoples. To learn more, visit [www.survivalinternational.org](http://www.survivalinternational.org)

## 1. Indigenous peoples: the natural world's best guardians

Indigenous peoples are not just victims of the climate crisis: they are agents of change in the fightback against it and play a crucial role in protecting the natural world. Indigenous territories are the best barriers to deforestation and are key to protecting the world's biodiversity. If we are serious about tackling the climate crisis, we need to listen to world's Indigenous peoples – representing more than 476 million people globally – and push for Indigenous land rights.

- “All we want is for our land to be free” (13.48 min)



Tainaky Tenetehar, a member of the Guajajara people, is part of the Amazon Guardians, an Indigenous group bravely defending their land from illegal logging in the Amazon rainforest. [Here](#) Tainaky speaks about putting his life on the line to protect his land against invaders. Tainaky's story is just one among many of Indigenous environmental defenders worldwide fighting against natural resource exploitation and the climate crisis, yet too often their struggles pass unnoticed.

Format: video testimony from Tainaky Tenetehar, Guajajara people, Brazil  
Keywords: Amazon rainforest, destruction, Amazon Guardians, deforestation

- “There is a lot left to learn from Indigenous peoples” (7.08 min)



It's said that the climate crisis stems from human actions... but be careful! Not all human actions and way of lives are responsible for climate change. Many Indigenous societies have succeeded where the industrialised world has failed: they live sustainably, respecting, rather than exploiting, nature. Their practices offer a crucial lesson in the face of the unsustainable consumption and exploitation of natural resources for profit, driving the climate crisis. [Here](#) Indigenous people share what we could learn from them.

Format: video testimonies from Indigenous people across the world

Keywords: climate crisis, deforestation, “development”, natural resource exploitation

## 2. Indigenous peoples: the impact of natural resource exploitation for profit on their lives

- When the miners came (3.17 min)



This [video](#) depicts the destructive effects of mining on Indigenous peoples' land without their consent. Designed as an introductory resource, it underscores the fundamental importance of nature in the lives of Indigenous peoples, and the dire ramifications if their lands are mined without permission. For the accompanying education guide for this resource go [here](#).

Format: footage of different Indigenous peoples, footage of mined areas of Indigenous territories

Keywords: mining, Brazil, India, nature, destruction, consent, Yanomami

- “What would we get from mining? Nothing at all” (6.32 min)



In this [video](#), Indigenous people from across the world voice their determination to prevent mining on their land at any cost. Mining on Indigenous land without Indigenous peoples' consent constitutes a grave human rights violation according to international law, destroying their environment and undermining their lives and livelihoods.

Format: video testimonies from Indigenous people intercalated with footage inside Indigenous territories

Keywords: Amazon, mining, rainforest, India, Adivasis

- “Without our forest, we are nothing” (6.28 min)



Across the world millions of Indigenous people depend on forests for their survival. Who better to explain the devastating consequences of deforestation to your students? Here, Hamangai, Tainaky, Suzanne, and Temenggung [explain](#) how the forest is so much more than their home: it is essential to their lives and livelihoods.

Format: video testimonies of Indigenous people interlinked with footage of deforestation

Keywords: Brazil, Amazon, Malaysia, deforestation, rainforest

### 3. Indigenous peoples: the impact of “climate mitigation strategies”

Indigenous peoples, least responsible for the climate crisis yet most impacted, are seeing their rights violated and their lands destroyed in the name of climate change mitigation.

#### A. Conservation

Expanding Protected Areas, such as National Parks, isn't the answer to environmental protection. Too often, conservation projects have led to grave human rights abuses because they target the most biodiverse areas that are home to Indigenous peoples: millions of Indigenous people have been evicted from their ancestral land to protect nature. And when they try to return, they face arrest, beatings, torture and even death at the hands of ecoguards and park rangers. This model is both inhumane and ineffective. To truly protect the environment, we should respect Indigenous peoples' land rights.

To find out more about Survival's campaign to #DecolonizeConservation go [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

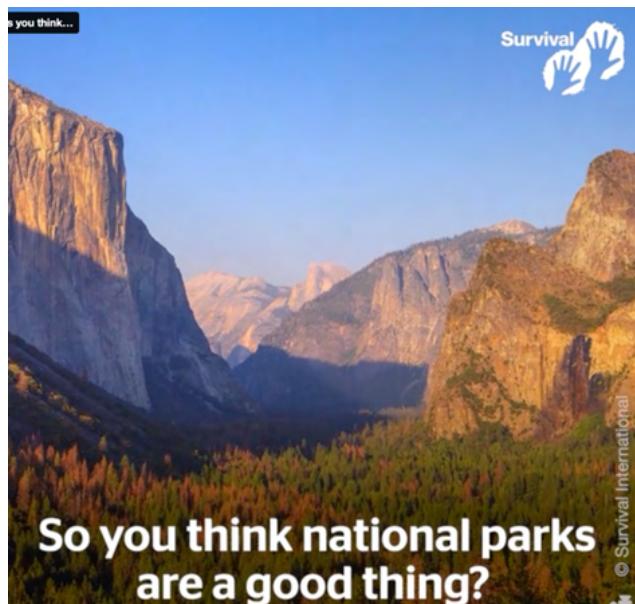
### i) Explainer videos

- The Big Green Lie (2.57 min)



Are nature conservation efforts and Protected Areas part of your A-level Geography syllabus? This compelling animated [video](#) is a great conversation starter about the devastating impacts such projects can have on the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples.

- Why national parks are not as good as you think... (5.27 min)



In this [video](#), ecologist Mordecai Ogada speaks about the problems of national parks for which governments and NGOs have stolen vast areas of land from Indigenous peoples and local communities under the false claim that this is necessary for conservation.

### ii) Indigenous Voices videos

Here Indigenous people speak about the human rights abuses they are suffering at the hands of forest and ecoguards (**Trigger warning:** content contains violence)

- “What the conservationists are doing is so bad”



Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
 Keywords: Baka, Congo Basin, forest, violence

- “We’ve had enough of this talk of ‘boundaries’ in the forest”



Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
 Keywords: Baka, Congo Basin, forest, violence

- “They threatened us and forced us to leave”



Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
 Keywords: Chenchu, India, forest, forced evictions

WWF is supporting the creation of a protected area in Congo, Messok Dja. The Baka haven’t given their consent to the park. In this [video](#) Dede, a Baka man, explains why they don’t want the park and why what conservationists are doing is harmful. Indigenous people must be at the center of conservation efforts on their lands. It’s time to listen to them.

[Listen](#) to Odette from Messok Dja. She shares her experience of beatings and violence at the hands of park rangers when her family tries to enter the forest to hunt, fish or collect mangoes for food. As her story shows, the Baka people have not given their consent to the park.

Chenchu people from Pecheru village in India have already been forcibly evicted once in the name of conservation. During the violent eviction, many people were killed by police and park officials. They dispersed into the forest to find safety. Smt Bangataia [explains](#) what happened and why they won’t survive if they’re evicted again.

## B. Climate neutrality: “Blood Carbon”

The premise of carbon offsetting is simple – but mistaken: companies, governments or individuals are fine to keep polluting and emitting carbon, so long as they “offset” their carbon by buying some carbon credits generated by projects that claim to “protect” some forest or plant some trees, mainly in the Global South. The problems here are two-fold: carbon credit projects on Indigenous land can force Indigenous peoples off their ancestral territories, with devastating consequences. Secondly, carbon offsetting doesn’t solve the main problem of the climate crisis. Instead, it lets polluting industries off the hook, allowing them to keep emitting CO<sub>2</sub> and avoid reducing their carbon emissions.

### Indigenous Voices videos

Here Indigenous people speak to the impact of carbon offsetting initiatives and “nature-based solutions” on their lives and livelihoods:

- They are harassing us saying “this land doesn’t belong to you anymore”



Amaral Baiga’s land has been stolen to make way for a tree planting project – part of an offsetting scheme that allows companies in India to destroy a forest in one area as long as new trees are planted elsewhere. In this case, their forest is being replaced by a monoculture teak plantation which in no way compensates for the loss of an old-growth, biodiverse forest.

Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
Keywords: Baiga, India, nature-based solutions

- “The main problem we, Indigenous people, see is that nature is being traded”



Ninawa, a spokesperson of the Huni Kui people from Brazil, talks about the REDD program which is aimed at offsetting carbon emissions being just a greenwashing scam. In reality, it’s putting a price on nature, leaving Indigenous peoples dispossessed and stripped of their livelihoods. Ninawa calls on world leaders to stop these initiatives.

Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
Keywords: Huni Kui, Brazil, Amazon, nature-based solutions, REDD program, carbon credits

- “They’re invading our home, with all these false promises”



Alessandra Munduruku stresses that without Indigenous peoples, there'll never be solutions to the climate crisis. She demands an end to the false solutions governments and companies are pushing while they continue to pollute the planet, and for Indigenous land rights to be upheld: the best way to protect the most biodiverse places on Earth.

Format: video testimony from Indigenous people  
 Keywords: Munduruku, Brazil, climate crisis, COP26, false solutions

## 4. Time-lapse videos

Too often Indigenous people are referred to as “backwards” and “ignorant”, their immense wealth of knowledge and expertise overlooked and scorned. These time-lapse videos seek to highlight Indigenous ingenuity and show just how at home Indigenous people are in the rainforest. Suitable for all ages – and to be enjoyed by adults too.



### How to make a rainforest shelter (1.09 min)

The Baka people in Cameroon show you to how to make a *mongulu*, or rainforest shelter, only by using leaves and plants from the forest.

Format: Time-lapse video of the Baka. Images only, no dialogue  
 Keyword: Rainforest



### How to make an eco-backpack (1.57 min)

The Awá people in Brazil show you how to make a rucksack just using rainforest leaves

Format: Time-lapse video of the Awá. Images only, no dialogue.  
 Keyword: Amazon

## 5. Immersive sound resources

Put on your headphones, shut your eyes and let's go to the rainforest! We hope that on listening to this immersive sound resource, your students experience something that's akin to virtual reality for the ears, and the animals, plants and people of the rainforest come to life in your classroom.

- "Is there anybody there?" Sounds of animals, birds and insects deep inside the rainforest
- "We're here too!" Sounds of nature alongside the sounds of daily life of the Yanomami
- "Don't destroy our homes" Sounds of rainforest destruction. Some may find this difficult to listen to.

Length: each soundscape is approximately 2 minutes

Format: binaural sound recording. Headphones are required to enjoy to best effect

Learn more about Survival International's work and how to promote Indigenous peoples' rights

We love hearing from you and your students!

- Does your class have questions on this topic? Would they like to have a brief virtual meeting with a Survival International staff member?
- Do you want to have a Survival International staff member speak at a school assembly?
- Would you, your colleagues, or other educators you know, like to receive more Survival International educational materials? We have materials suitable for groups aged 5 to 18 years.
- Would you like your school to be involved in supporting Survival International's work in partnership with Indigenous peoples?

If the answer is yes, then please get in touch with our team at [info@survivalinternational.org](mailto:info@survivalinternational.org)

We can't wait to hear from you!