

**Name:** Stolting Shawn  
**Username:** shawnstolting  
**School:** Polytechnic College Suriname

## Maroons and Indigenous land ownership struggles in Suriname

The legislative system of Suriname is based on colonial-era policy that does not recognize any specific rights for indigenous peoples. Suriname's land law ([Decreet Beginselen Grondbeleid, SB.1982 no. 11](#)) states that all land, that is not the private property of an individual(s), belongs to the state. This means that the land where native groups have lived for decades also belongs to the government.

In accordance with the Maroon governance system, their territory is partitioned among clans, known as Lo's, that constitute the tribe. Each clan holds authority over their allocated region. This arrangement has led to a significant conflict, as it prompts inquiries into the entity vested with the authority to issue permits for the exploitation of natural resources within Maroon-inhabited territories. Is it the governmental authorities or the traditional Maroon leaders who hold this prerogative?

In 1994, within the Maroon village of Nieuw Koffiekamp in the Brokopondo district, a concession named the Rosebel Gold Mines was granted to the Canadian gold mining multinational company, Golden Star Resources. Shockingly, this concession was granted without the knowledge or consent of the local villagers. Subsequently, a series of conflicts arose between the company, which changed ownership multiple times over the years, and the affected Maroon community.

It wasn't until November 2017 that a significant development occurred. IAMGOLD, in collaboration with Makambo, an advocacy organization representing the Nieuw Koffiekamp gold miners, reached an agreement. This agreement permitted members of Makambo to engage in gold mining activities within a specific section of the Rosebel Gold Mining concession, designated as Romapit.

Despite this progress, the Nieuw Koffiekamp villagers continue to face ongoing challenges. These include the detrimental effects of blasting operations near their community and severe restrictions on their access to the forest and its resources. These constraints encompass areas essential for subsistence plots, hunting, and the collection of non-forest products.

## The future of Surinamese Indigenous and Maroon land rights

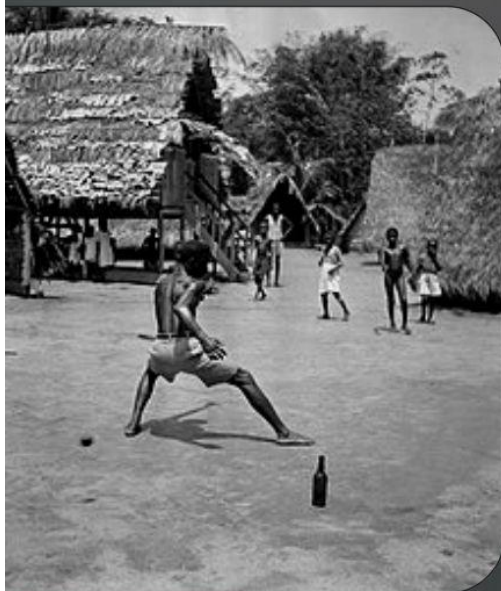
Despite several court rulings, there still exists no legal recognition of the land rights held by Indigenous people and Maroons in Suriname. However, there have been notable efforts by the government to acknowledge and address the rights of these groups. In 2019, a significant milestone was achieved when a constitutional amendment was proposed along with a draft Law on Collective Rights of Indigenous People and Tribal Groups.

This initiative was spearheaded by a land rights management team, comprised of representatives from both the government and traditional communities of Indigenous people and Maroons. The draft legislation is specifically tailored to address the collective rights of these communities. These encompass fundamental aspects such as their right to self-determination, the preservation of their culture and cultural integrity, land tenure, active participation in decision-making processes, the principle of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), safeguarding traditional knowledge, and equitable benefit sharing.

These steps mark significant progress toward recognizing and safeguarding the rights of Indigenous people and Maroons in Suriname. They signify a commitment to rectifying historical injustices and advancing the principles of equality, self-determination, and cultural preservation for these communities.

source of information:

- <https://www.amazonteam.org/the-road-to-recognizing-indigenous-land-rights-in-suriname/>
- <https://theglobalamericans.org/2020/12/maroons-and-indigenous-people-in-suriname-the-struggle-for-land-rights/>



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**sjonnie\_sensei** Centuries of Heritage, Decades of Struggle: Indigenous and Maroon communities in Suriname continue their unwavering fight for land rights. 🌍🏡 #LandRightsMatter #SurinameStruggle #HeritagePreservation#pgc2023 @turninggreenorg @pachamamaorg

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