

Greener Challenge - Day 13

Team Name: GreenTech

Username: victorp2610

School: Pontifical Catholic University of Peru

The AP News report describes new research showing that well-conserved Amazon forests on indigenous lands protect human health. The study found that disease incidence falls in areas where forest cover is legally recognized and actively conserved by Indigenous communities. It links deforestation, fires and forest loss to increased respiratory problems and zoonotic diseases, noting that when forest cover drops below certain thresholds the protective effect disappears.

Scientists and Indigenous leaders argue the results validate ancestral knowledge: intact Indigenous-managed forests preserve clean air, biodiversity and the ecological balance that reduces disease risk. The report also stresses policy relevance ahead of international climate negotiations and highlights the need to secure land rights and support Indigenous stewardship.

Community: Kukama people (Loreto region, Peruvian Amazon)

Problem: The Kukama rely on the Marañón River for drinking water, food, transport and culture. Decades of oil extraction, pipeline leaks and contamination have polluted the river and harmed fisheries, health and livelihoods. These environmental harms also threaten cultural practices and the Kukama spiritual relationship with the river, undermining both material survival and identity.

The Kukama People and the Living River



In the Peruvian Amazon, the Kukama people face one of the most serious environmental crises: oil spills and pollution along the Marañón River, their main source of food, water, and spiritual life. For the Kukama, the river is not just a resource—it is a living being, an ancestor that breathes, speaks, and connects all life. Yet, decades of oil extraction have poisoned their waters and violated their rights.

In response, the Kukama have organized through local associations and women-led movements like *Huaynakana Kamatahuara Kana* (<https://www.instagram.com/huaynakana/>) to demand justice and

recognition of the Marañón as a living entity with legal rights. Their fight combines ancestral spirituality with modern legal tools, turning their deep ecological knowledge into action for environmental protection and cultural survival.

This struggle teaches that Indigenous leadership is fundamentally relational: it centers care, long-term responsibility and knowledge handed down across generations. The Kukama example shows resilience as both resistance and renewal—protecting ecosystems while insisting on rights and remedies. Their fight matters to everyone because intact rivers and forests buffer disease, store carbon and sustain global biodiversity.

From the Kukama, we learn that Indigenous leadership is rooted in reciprocity, respect, and care for the land. Their resilience shows that defending nature is inseparable from defending life itself.

Call to action:

1. Support Indigenous-led conservation by amplifying their stories, rejecting extractive projects, and standing for the legal recognition of rivers and forests as living beings.
2. Share verified Kukama updates, support Indigenous-led organizations financially or by signing petitions that demand cleanups and legal recognition for river rights, and pressure companies and policymakers to halt extractive projects that threaten Indigenous territories.

The Kukama have organized through associations like Acodecospat, demanding environmental justice and clean-up of the oil-contaminated rivers.:

<https://observatoriopetrolero.org/acodecospat-pronunciamiento/>

Post link:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPxdR9IDtLL/?igsh=MXd6cjNub2p2bWdneA==>