

# Indigenous identity: People of the Amazon

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The Asháninka people live along the Rio Amônia in the Amazon rainforest.

Anna Johnson - Our identities are constructed through our everyday actions and the place in which we live. We display that identity through our clothing, our behavior, and our associations with each other. For some, that means wearing a Yankees hat or a Panthers jersey. For others, that identity defines our behaviors or our occupation. By building our identities we construct our sense of place, or the way we connect our own experiences to the world around us on a local scale.

Our [identities](#) define the way we look at the world, shaping our relationships to the place we live and the people we live with. Common identities create unity while differences in identity have fueled some of the most convoluted disputes in history. Through our identities, we feel attached to the [place](#) we live and, often, we call ourselves by the place we see as our home. We divide ourselves into different groups according to these constructed identities. Even within a [national identity](#) based around a connection to a particular nation, we can further divide ourselves through our local ties to our community. Shared experience on a local [scale](#) often brings a stronger connection than a shared national identity. Within the Amazon rainforest, [villages with relative autonomy in remote regions of the forest](#) create their identities around the forest itself and their relationship with it. The forest as a cultural landmark becomes a central part of the village's sense of place and ability to connect to their community. Their building and farming techniques reflect this identity and preserve it despite strains on resources from climate change and the development of large cities on the outskirts of the ever-shrinking forest. Sustainability is a part of their core identity as a people

rather than a consideration separate from economic or political processes. Without this direct connection to the forest and the ecological processes that sustain it, these identities would cease to exist as we know them.

This sense of identity also relies on the [location](#) of the forest - acting as a cultural and economic center for Brazil. The extractive industrial processes which have built up the Brazilian economy have, through their unsustainable processes and large scale, destroyed significant portions of the forest. Many small villages have defined their identity in opposition to these processes, committing to protect the forest and through that, protect their identities. With the forest's destruction comes the eroding of the Indigenous identities the forest creates. If the forest were to disappear, along with the destruction of one of the most diverse and critical world ecosystems, hundreds of unique Indigenous identities would vanish.

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