

FACT FILE: ASHÁNINKA COMMUNITY

Satipo Province, Junín Region

WELCOME TO MY HOME!

Hello, my name is Nashi and I am 10 years old!

Welcome to my rainforest home, located in the valley of the Ene River in the Satipo province in the Junín region of Peru.

My family is part of the *Asháninka* (ah-sha-neh-kah) people, one of 55 Indigenous groups in Peru.

We collectively speak around 47 ancestral languages and we've been calling the rainforest home for centuries.

Let me share a little bit more about us and our beautiful home with you!

We live in the Ene River Valley, a tributary of the Amazon River. See where I live on the map to the right!



KEYWORDS

Indigenous Peoples/Communities

- Connected to or coming from the first people who lived in a place, especially in a place that was colonised

Colonised - When people settle in and take control of a place, often where others already live, usually through force or power

Tributary - A stream that flows into a larger stream, river or lake

Valley - A long, low area between hills or mountains, often drained by a river and its tributaries

Cushma - Traditional coloured cotton shirt or tunic worn by men and women from Indigenous communities in the Amazon

Biodiverse - A wide variety of plants, animals and other living things

Fair trade - A system of trade where consumers and companies pay fair prices to producers, ensuring ethical and equitable practices

Organic - Producing or using produced food without synthetic fertilisers, pesticides or chemicals

Sustainability - Harvesting or using a resource carefully to avoid running out or causing lasting harm

Handicrafts - Items made by hand using manual skill and creativity

Agroforestry - A land management approach that integrates the cultivation of trees with food crops or pastures

FOREST FRIENDS

My home is hugely biodiverse and it's special because some really cool animals call it home, like sloths, snakes and colourful birds. The *gallito de las rocas* (Andean cock-of-the-rock) is Peru's national bird. What makes them so special are the males' bright plumage and loud songs, which they use to impress females.



FACT FILE: ASHÁNINKA COMMUNITY

Satipo Province, Junín Region

LIVING IN HARMONY

The rainforest I call home is full of tropical plants and produce that support our livelihoods. We live in harmony with the rainforest and it provides everything we need!

The trees around us are used to build our homes, simple structures slightly raised off the ground that keep us safe from snakes and other animals. Forest seeds like *Huayruro* decorate our *cushmas* and we also use them to make handicrafts, like jewellery.



My *cushma*, a traditional tunic, is made of local wild cotton. It is grown, harvested, spun on a loom and dyed by the women in our community. We also use *achiote* or annatto to paint our faces by crushing the rose-coloured seeds of the *achiote* tree to make a red pigment called *urucum*, which we apply to our faces in traditional designs.

Our main food crops are cassava, plantain, beans, guanábana and cacao fruit. Our main crops that we produce to sell are cacao seeds, coffee and sesame.

My favourite way to eat cacao is when my mum cuts through it with her sharp knife and I scoop out the white fleshy cacao fruit and suck off the pulp that surrounds the seed; it's sweet and delicious! We sell the seeds directly, some are crushed into cacao nibs, and others go through a long process to turn them into chocolate products.

DAILY LIFE

In my community, we hunt for fish individually and in groups. We use sticks, arrows and machetes to catch fish, and if the river is deep enough, we'll go out on our boat.

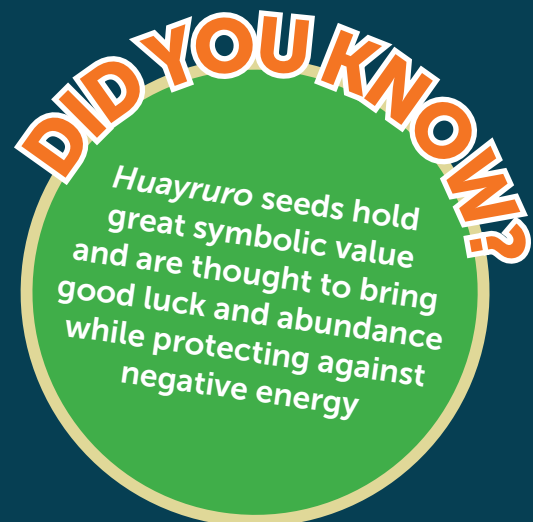
I love playing deep in the rainforest. My favourite thing is playing with the *bejucos* (jungle vine leaves) and chasing my friends.

At mealtimes, we eat smoked fish wrapped in a banana leaf and cooked on the fire in a pot. We sometimes eat smoked meat, like tapir and boar, depending on what's been hunted.

Our cultural drink is *masato*. It's a special drink that people have made for a long time. We make it by boiling yucca, then peeling it, and after that, the person making it takes clumps of mashed yucca and chews it. This helps break down the starch and make the yucca sweeter. It's then left for a while to ferment and is mixed with some water when it's ready to drink!

Another typical activity is weaving mats and baskets out of leaves and other forest materials.

Periodically, we move our homes to a different place so that the forest can regenerate. This way, we work in harmony with the forest.



FACT FILE: ASHÁNINKA COMMUNITY

Satipo Province, Junín Region

KAMETSA ASAIKE

The Ene River is the lifeblood of our lands, nurturing our forests, wildlife, plants, families and seeds. For us, a good life consists of eight important principles; we call this "*Kametsa Asaike*," (Kah-MEH-tsa ah-SIGH-keh), which means living well.

These principles are related to:

1. Culture and Ethics
2. Food Security
3. Territory and Harmony with Nature
4. Peace
5. Sustainable Production
6. Traditional Medicine and Access to Health Care
7. Education
8. Representation

THREATS TO OUR LIVELIHOODS



For the longest time, our way of life has been plagued by constant threats and abuse.

In the 1980s, we were enslaved during "The Rubber Era," robbed of our lands, murdered, and forcibly displaced from our territory to make space for logging, deforestation, illegal mining and other primary industries.

In response, my community, the Ene River *Asháninka* people, co-created the Otishi National Park and the *Asháninka* Communal Reserve.

This area contains some of our planet's highest levels of biodiversity! My community forms part of the buffer zone, a designated area that protects sensitive landscapes.

However, we're constantly fighting to protect our territories from outside influence.



DID YOU KNOW?
Asháninka children get a temporary name when they start walking and an official name when they turn seven

FACT FILE: ASHÁNINKA COMMUNITY

Satipo Province, Junín Region

GUARDIANSHIP & AUTONOMY

One way we keep our territories safe is through legally protecting and defending our lands. We can strengthen our monitoring efforts through partnerships like the one we have with the Rainforest Foundation UK.

We use their tool ForestLink as part of our community's rainforest monitoring initiatives. This tool provides real-time updates on our territories and alerts about illegal activities through trained community members acting as forest monitors and guardians.

Agroforestry and cultivating crops like cocoa and coffee help us raise more money, which we use for school materials, basic items, medicine and transportation.

We harvest the cocoa and coffee under a cooperative model, meaning an organised group of more than 250 people sell and own the enterprise.

This is done sustainably, and we sell them under fair trade and organic certifications, allowing us to access wider markets, which means we receive a fair amount for our work and improve our farming methods, which increases our income while still respecting our cultural practices.



DID YOU KNOW?
Since 1994, Indigenous communities living in the Ene River have been represented by CARE or Central Asháninka del Río Ene. This self-led Indigenous organisation aims to support the Asháninka people to protect their homes, way of life, and their forests through self-governance, education and advocacy

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Rainforest guardianship programs support Indigenous communities, but what can your school do to support these programs?

For example, you could run a fundraiser for a charity like Rainforest Foundation UK, to raise awareness and money for guardianship programs, such as a palm-oil-free food bake sale.

For more school fundraising ideas, head to RFUK's fundraising page: <https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/what-you-can-do/schools-and-fundraising/fundraise-in-school/>

