

BRIDGING BORDERS



Laura Vicuña

Icaro, a Karipuna boy, fishes in Karipuna Territory in the Amazon.

QUERIDA AMAZONIA

Sr Laura Vicuña Pereira Manso CF works in Rondônia State in Brazil as part of the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon Region.

Thirty years ago, the Karipuna people in the Amazon were almost decimated by outsiders invading their territory. Only five adults and three children survived. The Karipuna people have suffered numerous invasions in spite of their

land being officially recognized as Indigenous territory. The federal constitution of Brazil guarantees the protection of Indigenous rights and the defence of their land. Today, however, they live under constant threat of genocide. Outside forces

conduct illegal activities and want to appropriate their land for economic and political gain.

The Amazon is important to the world because of its rich biodiversity and complex socio-cultural fabric. It is the world's largest tropical forest and spans over nine countries in South America. It contains one-third of the planet's animal

A WORD FROM **JENNY CAFISO** | CJI DIRECTOR



“I can’t breathe” – the heart wrenching words uttered by George Floyd as he was choked to death, unarmed, by a policeman, have become the rallying cry against police brutality and racial inequality underpinning our societies. These words come to mind as I listen to people whose lives are being snuffed in the Amazon, the Congo Basin and the Boreal forest, due to violence and the pursuit of profit at all cost.

These forests are referred to as the lungs of the world – the source of breath and life for humanity. They are being destroyed.

There is a reason why they are called the lungs of the world. Together, the three forests store and release huge quantities of carbon, playing an important role in the fight against climate change, not to mention the fact they are home to innumerable species of plants and animals. They are being destroyed by unbridled development, as denounced in the encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Their destruction has a significant impact on climate change and on all our lives. Yet, despite all the evidence around us – rising sea levels, uncontrollable fires, floods, loss of species – we still delude ourselves that we can postpone action to mitigate the impact.

The people living in these forests do not have this luxury. For them the destruction of the Earth’s

lungs has immediate and often fatal consequences. The Karipuna people in the Amazon were almost decimated by outsiders invading their territory. Outside businesses conduct illegal activities and appropriate their land for economic and political gain. Indigenous people live under constant death threats by developers. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the increase in demand for rare earth materials used in green technology has an impact on the lives of artisanal miners, especially women and children. They are forced to work in dangerous conditions to clean and process minerals such as cobalt, endangering their health, their communities and their environment. Climate change is also expected to affect the Boreal ecosystems at a higher rate than equatorial ecosystems. Industrial development such as mining, hydropower development and forestry impact Indigenous communities, endangering the way of life that they have known for centuries.

As we hear from the contributing authors in this issue, another way is possible. As Laura Vicuña in the cover article says, Indigenous people consider these forests as a true “vital organ” of the planet. They are the “source of ancient wisdom and care for humanity and Earth”.

The Amazon, the Congo Basin and the Boreal forest are the source of breath; the breath that marks the beginning and the end of our lives. Let us take care of them, so that we can all breathe and all live.

The **vision** & **mission** of CJI

The **vision** of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The **mission** of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

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and plant species, 20% of all fresh water on Earth and is rich in mineral resources. All this makes the Amazon a highly coveted region and the source of many conflicts. Numerous undertakings in the guise of development are underway in the region: mining, land grabbing, hydroelectric development and other similar ventures. These compromise biodiversity and the survival of future generations of the people who live there. To date, 25% of the Amazon region has already been deforested.

About 400 Indigenous populations live in the Amazon, three million people who speak more than 250 different languages. There are also more than 140 uncontacted Indigenous communities living without sustained communication with others beyond their own society.

Indigenous peoples have been guardians of the forest for millennia despite their worldviews and cultures not being recognized and valued. They maintain the Amazon as a true “vital organ” of the planet. It is a source of ancient wisdom and care for humanity and Earth. It is a cradle for social and ecological justice.

Over 20 years working with Indigenous peoples has been a rich learning experience for me in spite of the devastation around us. The state of Rondônia in Brazil has been deforested and heavily impacted by mining, agribusiness, agriculture and organized crime. In Karipuna territory, there are numerous requests for mining exploration by national companies, many of which are linked to multinational corporations.

The work we do with the Karipuna people consists of monitoring the territory, gathering evidence, denouncing atrocities and pressing the state to fulfill its duty to protect the land. It is their responsibility to maintain the environmental, cultural and territorial integrity and rights of both the uncontacted peoples that inhabit Karipuna territory and the Karipuna people themselves.

In 2017, I changed many of my daily routines, like the leaders of the Karipuna people. I regularly change paths and routes through the city of Porto Velho due to the constant death threats we receive. I have lost the freedom to come and go. It is very difficult. In the eyes of organized crime, life is worth very little.

When we walk through Karipuna territory in the middle of the forest, we often hide because the invaders walk armed, ready for anything. When we are in the town, we cannot sleep. Gunshots and the noise of tractors disturb the peace. The community has received numerous messages saying that the town will be destroyed and everyone killed, first the leaders and then the rest of the townsfolk. The invaders intimidate us by saying, “we know where people live and

where they are going.” This robs us of our peace and tranquility. Some may ask, “why don’t you seek help from the government to protect human rights defenders?” It is impossible to believe in government programs given the current political scenario in Brazil.

We live in a moment where any action in defence of the Amazon and Amazonian peoples is criminalized and considered an act against the sovereignty of Brazil. We have made our grievances known to national and international organizations. We seek allies in the defence of the territory of the Karipuna people and other Indigenous peoples. My life with the Karipuna people has enabled me to stand in solidarity with them in their effort and struggle to defend their land.

The Amazon is beautiful, rich and abundant, but it is also a complex and fragile system. For the Amazon to survive, its forests, fauna, waters, as well as the Amazonian peoples who have lived in harmony with the environment for millennia, must be respected and protected.

📷 Laura and Andre, a Karipuna man, take a break during one of Laura’s visits in Karipuna Territory.



CARING FOR THE CONGO BASIN

Rigobert Minani SJ is the Regional Coordinator of the Ecclesial Network of the Congo Basin Forest (REBAC) and Social Apostolate Coordinator for the Jesuit Central Africa Province (ACE).

The Congo Basin Forest in Africa is the second-largest rainforest on the planet after the Amazon. It spans over 3.6 million sq km and extends over 12 countries. Like other forests, it plays an important role in the fight against climate change. It stores and releases carbon, a key factor in evaluating the global carbon cycle. It fixes more carbon than either the Amazon or the forests of Indonesia (Euronews 2021) and contains the largest tropical peatland complex in the world. (Dargie et al. 2017). Researchers estimate that these peatlands store up to 30.6 billion tons of carbon, the equivalent of nearly 20 years of US fossil fuel emissions. The Congo Basin is also home to many Indigenous people and local communities.

For these reasons, safeguarding the Congo Basin is a priority for Jesuits and the Church in Africa. In 2015, the Ecclesial Network of the Congo Basin Forest (REBAC) was created. Today, it plays a leadership role in promoting environmental action in dioceses and communities at both national and international levels.

REBAC has four goals: 1) to reflect the social doctrine of the Church, particularly, “Laudato Si’,” in safeguarding the Congo Basin; 2) to define concrete actions to address environmental crises and promote ecological conversion; 3) to lobby authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and international institutions to implement policies favourable to local populations and Indigenous communities; and 4) to strengthen the capacity of local communities and organizations in safeguarding the Congo Basin ecosystem.

REBAC strives to achieve its goals by advocating against the large-scale dispossession of local communities’ lands, the global drive for raw materials, agro-business and the construction of major infrastructures without free, prior and informed consent. These activities push local communities toward collapse. In several cases, tensions with communities have led to open conflicts, leading to the loss of lives. REBAC tries to respond to these challenges.

REBAC works with local communities and applies their wisdom and knowledge in protecting forests.

In Banalia, Tshopo province of DRC, REBAC and local people harvest seedlings from natural forests to help with regeneration. In the Ituri and Uvira regions, REBAC and local communities address issues around artisanal mining such as: 1) child labour; 2) poor work conditions; 3) lack of access to healthcare; and 4) the link between mining and armed groups. Around big cities where forests are fast disappearing, REBAC strengthens the capacity of local communities in employing sustainable farming.

In the past two years, COVID-19 has greatly impacted REBAC’s capacity to accompany the people and communities they work with in the Congo Basin Forest. The pandemic has isolated the central African region and reduced the inflow of resources. Our hope is that the future will bring more interest to the Congo Basin Forest, that more people will learn about the importance this region plays in mitigating climate change and that they will advocate for its protection. This calls for a collective and united response from all countries and greater solidarity in caring for our common home.

For the full list of references, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/CJICongoBasin>

Men, women and children in Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, clean minerals such as cobalt and copper from artisanal mining operations. These minerals are used by the Global North for green energy transition initiatives.



Jacques Nzumbu SJ

THE BELOVED BOREAL

John McCarthy SJ is the Ecology Facilitator of the Jesuits of Canada.

Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue, an Innu elder from Sheshatshiu, calls the boreal forests of eastern Labrador home. Her published diaries witness to her decades-long care of family, community and the lands and waters of her homeland (Penashue 2019). Many other Indigenous voices across Canada witness to the importance of Indigenous protected and conserved areas as a path to reconciliation (Moola & Roth 2019).

The boreal region is home to many people – northern forest-dependent communities and hundreds of Indigenous communities. People know they need to protect their homeland, to seek ways of living that respects integral ecology in this vast region.

Tucked between the arctic tundra to the north and the temperate forests and grasslands to the south, the great boreal biome circles the globe as a halo of green and blue. Named after Boreas, the Greek god of the north wind, the boreal region holds about 30% of the world's forests (Gauthier et al. 2015). The coniferous pine, spruce, larch and fir mix with the deciduous birch, aspen and poplar to create one of the great forest regions of the world. Given its relative remoteness and low population density, the boreal region boasts an ecological integrity with abundant wildlife, intact ecosystems and unparalleled fresh water sources (Wells et al. 2020).

The boreal region plays a significant role in global climate dynamics, storing about 30-40% of the globe's terrestrial carbon (Bradshaw & Warkentin 2015; Pan et al. 2011; Walker et al. 2019). Recent research has documented the increasing importance of boreal forests as a global terrestrial carbon sink relative to tropical forests (Tagesson et al. 2020) because of vast, largely intact boreal peatlands. Canada alone is home to 25% of the world's northern peatland, holding the world's largest peatland carbon stock, particularly in the Hudson Bay lowlands (Harris et al. 2021).

After the 2019 Synod on the Amazon Region, Pope Francis offered his reflections in the post-apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*. His opening statement offered a fresh vision of the globe's biomes; The beloved Amazon region stands before the



Camille Fougillard

📷 Tshaukuesh begins her spring walk (meshkanu) into the country.

world in all its splendour, its drama and its mystery (*Querida Amazonia* #1).

Imagine if we viewed the boreal region in the same way. Imagine if we considered the boreal region as the “beloved boreal.” What a difference that would make. If we continue to consider the boreal region as simply a storehouse of natural resources in a remote, northern, sparsely-populated land of bush and swamp – then avarice and greed will be our constant companions. But, if we view the boreal region as a beloved boreal where divine Love is revealed, we will act accordingly.

All landscapes, if experienced and lived long enough, eventually become inscapes. Spaces become places, places of meaning, places of salvation (Williams et al. 2013). Landscapes become meaningful. They define our visions, what questions we pose, what hopes we dream. That's why people who have an Indigenous intimacy with lands and waters, skies and seas, have come to a depth of wisdom. The land can no longer be simply “swamp and bush” but becomes a home, a place where wisdom lies, a place that elicits dreams and hopes. This is what we seek for the Boreal Forest, that we consider it our home.

For the full list of references, please visit:

➡ <https://bit.ly/BelovedBoreal>

CJI SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS TO PROMOTE ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

AFRICA

SOUTH SUDAN

Multi-Educational and Agricultural Jesuit Institute of South Sudan (MAJIS)
Addressing food insecurity due to climate change and conflict

ZAMBIA

Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre
Training in organic farming and sustainable livelihood

ASIA

INDIA

Lok Manch (People's forum)
Building climate-resilient communities
SASAC/SOJASI
Livelihood, support and training to address food insecurity

LATIN AMERICA

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Centro Montalvo
Defence of human and environmental rights in the face of resource extraction

LATIN AMERICA REGION

Comparte network
Promoting organic farming and strengthening the solidarity economy

MEXICO

A.C. Indigenous Rights Centre (CEDIAC)
Support of Indigenous people's rights

PAN-AMAZON REGION

Fe y Alegria and Jesuit Service for the Pan-Amazon Region (SJPAM)
Caring for our common home and harnessing Indigenous knowledge

WEBINAR – WAITING TO EXHALE: ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE FOR THE EARTH'S LUNGS

On May 17 at 12 noon (ET), please join us for a webinar on climate change and the challenges faced by the people who call the Amazon, the Congo Basin and the Boreal forest home. These regions are often described as the planet's lungs – they absorb enormous amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and breathe out oxygen. These regions and their people encounter pressure to resist unabated resource extraction and development, often without free, prior and informed consent.

CJI is pleased to invite Rigobert Minani SJ (Ecclesial Network of the Congo Basin Forest), Laura Vicuña Pereira Manso CF (Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon Region), Ron Thiessen (Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society – Manitoba chapter) and Stephanie Thorassie (Seal River Watershed Alliance) to shed light on the challenges that these regions and their people face.

📷 Poster for Ecological Justice webinar on May 17.

For more information and to register, please visit:
<https://bit.ly/EarthsLungs>

WAITING TO EXHALE:
Ecological justice for the Earth's lungs

Tuesday May 17
12 to 1:30 PM (ET)

WEBINAR
To Register:
<https://bit.ly/EarthsLungs>

Rigobert Minani SJ Laura Vicuña Pereira Manso, CF Ron Thiessen Stephanie Thorassie

The Amazon, the Congo Basin and the Boreal forest.

Canadian Jesuits International

Laura Vicuña



 Haiti Earthquake 2021.

HAITI: BUILDING HOMES, GIVING HOPE

The Jesuit Commission for Intervention in the Greater South in Haiti has started the process of rebuilding homes affected by the earthquake last August 4, 2021. In February, Fr Kawas François SJ and the coordination team visited their four areas of focus: Sucrierie Henri and Ducis in the South department, and Pestel and Corail in the Grand' Anse department. Engineer Lérismé, the technical coordinator, is surveying these areas to identify construction sites, plan the building of structures to store materials, recruit and train workers and coordinate other pre-construction activities. Thank you again to all our friends and supporters who helped CJI raise over \$157,000. This amount makes up part of the Xavier Network's commitment of \$607,000 to the project which has a total budget of \$2.09 million. Additional contributions from our supporters and friends are most welcome.

VOICES OF HOPE: HAYDEN HALL

CJI invited long-time supporters of Hayden Hall in Darjeeling, India to an online get-together last April 5. It gave everyone the opportunity to celebrate the work of Hayden Hall and share memories dating back to its founding by Fr Edgar Burns SJ. Fr Paul D'Souza SJ, Director of Hayden Hall, opened with a Lenten reflection. He then gave a virtual tour and an update on their current programs. A discussion among participants was moderated by Jenny Cafiso, CJI Executive Director.

To watch a recording of the event, please visit:

 <https://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/voices-of-hope-hayden-hall/>

CNCA SUPPORTS MPs' BILLS TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

CJI, together with all the other members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), supports two private Members' bills introduced in the House of Commons last March 29. Bill C-263 aims to empower the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) to compel Canadian corporations to provide documents and testimonies in response to complaints about their actions that violate human rights. Bill C-262 will require Canadian companies to exercise due diligence with respect to human and environmental rights throughout their global supply chains. If passed, these bills would give marginalized communities in the Global South more protection against forced labour, land and water contamination and violence against women. These bills will require companies to change their behavior or face consequences.

For more information, please visit:

 <https://bit.ly/CNCA2022>

YOUTH FOR OTHERS SOCIAL JUSTICE DAY

CJI and the Durham Catholic School Board brought together students from across the Durham region in Ontario for a Youth for Others (Y4O) Social Justice Day last May 3. The event, with the theme *Ecological justice for Earth's lungs*, was held as part of Catholic Education Week. The students learned about the importance of protecting Earth's major forests to mitigate climate change. Guest speakers included Sister Laura Vicuña Pereira Manso CF of the Amazon region of Brazil; Stephanie Thorassie, director of the Seal River watershed alliance of Northern Manitoba; and Fr Jacques Nzumbu SJ from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For more information, please visit:

 <https://bit.ly/Y4OMay3>

CJI SUPPORTS JESUIT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN UKRAINE

Canadian Jesuits International is receiving donations for the work of Jesuits and their lay partners in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries as they accompany people forcibly displaced by the war. Jesuit relief efforts are being coordinated by Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Europe which has a long experience on the ground.

In Ukraine, the Jesuit community is accompanying people fleeing the devastation of war. In border countries, they accompany the refugee population, mainly in Poland, Hungary and Romania, as well as a second line of work in five countries in southeastern Europe that are also receiving refugees. The main activities are: 1) temporary shelter/accommodation for refugee population; 2) food, water and other basic materials; 3) facilitating the transport of the refugee population;

For more information or to donate, please visit:

<https://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/ukraine-humanitarian-response/>



Ukrainian refugees arrive in Poland.

4) legal assistance; 5) psychosocial support and other protection mechanisms; and 6) educational support.

CJI is one of many Jesuit organizations around the world contributing to this effort. All donations received for the Ukrainian relief effort will be channeled through JRS Europe.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICISM TO GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A webinar on The Contribution of Catholicism to Global Sustainable Development was held last April 26. Cardinal Michael

Czerny was the keynote speaker and CJI Executive Director, Jenny Cafiso, was one of the panelists.

To learn more about the event, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/GSDevent>

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE AND SERVICE

Your **legacy gift** will change lives through Jesuit projects in **education**; sustainable **agriculture** and **livelihood** support; **healthcare**; **human rights** defence and **community** organizing; and **humanitarian action** in the Global South.

CJI has worked in **solidarity with marginalized people** around the world for over 75 years. We support our Jesuit partners and the communities they accompany in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

For more details:

canadianjesuitsinternational.ca

To make a legacy gift or to get more information, please:

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