

Kamunguishi Declaration

A forest home for our continual renewal

a message for a planet in ecological crisis from the Sapara Nation

*Inscribed on the
UNESCO Representative List of the
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*

We, the Sapara Nation, have, over the generations lived through a veritable “ecocide.” We have lost a large part of the forest that nourishes our being. Moreover, our language is on the verge of extinction and our beloved grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, the wise ones who help us connect with *naku*, the world of the forest, are dying. In the midst of this darkness, we carry on, true to our ancestral mission to defend at all costs this world called *naku*, in recognition that the forest is a vital source for our people and our planet.

The living world that nourishes and sustains us all is a forest. We *are* forest. Our task, goal and destiny as Saporas is to be faithful to the teachings that come from the forest; to live our lives fully by them, and to transmit these so that they can reach the entire planet, with the goal of discovering a new connection with the forest that makes and surrounds us.

This Kamunguishi Declaration is the message we transmit with all our being for the good of the planet. It is a guide for these times of ecological crisis in which we are living today.

The message is simple:

The world is one
–*nukaki*.

The world is forest
–*naku*.

The fragmentation of this world happens when the material part becomes separated from its spiritual foundation. The grave error of the modern epoch consists in forgetting the spiritual part and only focusing on the material, treating the so-called natural world as if it were a mere resource. This separation has had serious consequences for the wellbeing of our planet. By saying, however, that the world is forest, that the world is *naku*, we wish to say that the world that surrounds, holds, and sustains us all is made up of selves –persons– who communicate among themselves and with us. These beings are spirits (*tsawanu*), and, being part of that world, we too are spiritual beings. The world called forest is a whole at the same time that it is made up of innumerable beings producing a profusion of knowledge: the forest is a single totality and also a multitude.

The task of the Saporas is to maintain open the lines of communication with the *tsawanu* side that holds and sustains the world, and, in that way, to remake from the fragments of everyday life, a whole. In our lives we need to learn again to return to the spiritual foundation that

animates all life, so that it can serve as a guide for a future *buen vivir* (*witsa ikichanu*). This requires a daily practice. One needs to know how to work with dreams as well as with the visions given to us by our medicinal plants, since these are the paths that lead directly to the domain of the spirits.

Naku, the forest world, is rejuvenated in a place our elders, the *ishyawnashimanujinya*, named Kamunguishi. Kamunguishi is a large expanse at the center of Sapara territory. It is made up of sacred forests and lagoons of unparalleled diversity. Although we defend it with our entire being, Kamunguishi is not a “reserve,” given that this word alludes to a space that is kept separate from human activity and conserved as an eventual source of resources. It is, rather, a home. Kamunguishi is the forest home for our continual renewal.

Kamunguishi is crisscrossed by the fire-strewn path of the Burning Anaconda, the *Anamishuka Sawyeraw*, the being in charge of reviving the Earth when she begins to lose her balance. Oil extraction is the principle cause of this imbalance. It makes the Earth begin to die, given that, maintaining oil in its proper place, underground, is necessary for the well-being, the *witsa ikichanu*, of the planet. It is for this reason that we prohibit all forms of extraction on our territory.

We, the sons and daughters of the forest, the dream-travelers, make our way to Kamunguishi to listen to its beings and their messages. This is where we are reborn to its life. And it is there where we go to live, learn, and assure that its story will also be ours. And by telling that story we will be able to right the thoughts of those who listen, and in this way, orient their paths. Kamunguishi is the heart (*winjya*) of forest life. It is the source for a planetary rejuvenation.

Kamunguishi, in sum, is our spiritual university, our temple in the forest. Under the shade of its immense trees –*Samiki, Suyawna, Tsawanatuka*– it teaches us how to live. Under the care of its guardian jaguar-dogs, we find the right path, a path that is maintained by the beings of the forest –the *kananakuhinya*– who guide us through life’s meandering ways. By means of the dreams of yesteryear their beings fix our ways and our intentions. Reminding us: “This is how it has to be. This is how we have to care for it.” Reminding us: “The world is one – nukaki; the world is forest –naku; this is how it is.”