

# The Equatorial

Selah Turk

A lush rainforest scene featuring several large tree trunks with vibrant, multi-colored bark in shades of green, yellow, orange, and red. In the foreground, there are large, green, deeply lobed leaves, likely from a Monstera plant. The background is filled with dense green foliage and sunlight filtering through the canopy.

# Goals/Objectives

- Share information on Rainforest restoration
- Shed light on indigenous cultures in South America
- Bring awareness to illegal deforestation and its impact on the environment
- Spread the message on how rainforests aid our planet



## Final Masthead



# THE EQUATORIAL

Your Insight into rainforest preservation

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RAINFOREST  
FOUNDATION US



# COLORS OF THE AMAZON

## The Kayapo

The Kayapo people are instantly recognizable by their distinct body paint patterns, which serve as a visual testament to their rich cultural heritage.

These intricate designs, meticulously applied using natural pigments derived from the Amazon rainforest's resources, encapsulate the Kayapo's profound connection to the natural world.

Symbolizing their values, beliefs, and way of life, Kayapo body paint embodies the essence of their indigenous community, preserving traditions passed down through generations in the heart of the Amazon.

The adorned canvases of Kayapo body paint intricately weave together social identity, status, and cultural heritage within the community.

*The Amazon rainforest pulses with color. Scarlet macaws streak across the canopy, electric blue morpho butterflies dance through dappled sunlight, and jaguars prowl with their distinct rosette patterns gleaming gold and black.*

*For the indigenous peoples who have called this world home for millennia, these colors and patterns are more than beautiful, they are teachers, ancestors, and sacred symbols woven into their cultural identity.*

*This Article looks into some of the Amazon's Indigenous tribes and their ties to animals of the forest.*

Culture

## How the animals of the forest influence Native culture

Written By: **Claude Brooks**  
Photography By: **Roy Dibakar**



# Culture

Beyond decoration, these designs encapsulate the richness of Kayapo traditions, transmitting ancestral knowledge and values through generations.

butterfly wings. These aren't random decorations; they're a visual language that connects the wearer to the spirit world and to the natural environment that sustains them.

From marking significant

tinuity. Kayapo see body painting as a form of communication with the great spirit that exists in all living things.

By adorning themselves to resemble invertebrates, they honor their teachers and maintain the spiritual

design that represents nothing less than the universe itself. These aren't merely decorative; they're cosmological statements, mapping the wearer's place within the grand design of existence.

The choice of feathers is

icance. Parrots are social birds that live in flocks, communicate constantly with each other, and display remarkable intelligence.

In this way, they mirror the communal values the Kayapo hold dear, similar

The Kayapo believe their ancestors learned how to live communally from social insects, particularly bees. This isn't merely mythology—it reflects a deep observation of how these insects organize themselves, work cooperatively, and thrive in the forest environment.

This ancestral connection manifests most visibly in their body painting traditions. Mothers and children paint each other's bodies with intricate patterns that mimic the markings of insects and animals—the geometric precision of bee patterns, the segmented bodies of beetles, the delicate tracery found on

life events to expressing personal identity, body paint serves as a dynamic medium for storytelling and cultural connection between human and non-human life.

The fine-lined patterns can represent animal skins, insect shells, or elements of the natural world, creating a living bridge between the individual and the environment they live in.

## Feathers as Symbols of the Cosmos

While body paint provides one canvas, feathers offer another spectacular medium for cultural expression.

Kayapo men ceremonially wear elaborate headdresses with feathers radiating outward in a corona of color—a

deliberate and meaningful. Parrots and macaws, with their brilliant reds, blues, yellows, and greens, provide plumage that transforms a human figure into something between earth and sky.

The colors a Kayapo wears often represent their specific tribe's identity, creating a visual vocabulary that can be read by those who understand its language.

Parrot feathers are prized not just for their spectacular colors but for their symbolic signif-

to how the bees teach lessons about social organization through their hive behavior.

The process of acquiring and preparing parrot feathers is itself a cultural practice steeped in respect and ritual. The Kayapo don't simply hunt parrots indiscriminately; they understand the rhythms of the forest, the nesting patterns of different species, and the importance of maintaining healthy bird populations.

Some tribes even practice a type of parrot husbandry, caring for young birds and harvesting feathers without killing the animals, allowing a renewable source of these precious adornments.



## The Toucan

The toucan serves as a messenger between the physical and metaphysical worlds. Indigenous tribes believe it carries messages from ancestors and spirits.

When a toucan appears near a village or calls during a ceremony, it is often interpreted as a sign—a communication from the spirit realm that requires attention and interpretation by those who understand its language.





## Culture



### The Poison Dart Frog

Picture a frog the size of a thumbnail, glowing electric blue or screaming yellow against the forest floor. The coloring isn't just for show, it's a neon warning sign that says "don't eat me, I'm toxic!"

Indigenous tribes figured out centuries ago that this tiny amphibian could be their secret weapon. People simply rub their blow darts across the frog's back, and boom. The poison paralyzes prey and stays potent for up to a year.

## The Tikuna

The Tikuna people, who inhabit regions along the Amazon River where Brazil, Colombia, and Peru converge, take the animal-culture connection even further by organizing their entire social structure around it. Their society is divided into clans, each one represented by a specific animal totem that serves as both ancestor and spiritual guide. These aren't arbitrary assignments—each clan animal embodies particular characteristics, strengths, and ecological roles that the clan members are expected to understand and, in some ways, emulate.

The clan system divides animals into two primary categories: creatures of the sky and creatures of the earth. Sky animals might include birds, beings that soar above the canopy and see the world from a higher perspective. Earth animals could be various forest-dwelling creatures that navigate the shadowed ground below. This division reflects a fundamental understanding of the forest's vertical structure and the different forms of knowledge and power that come from inhabiting different ecological niches.

What makes the Tikuna tradition particularly remarkable decorating themselves—they're literally embodying their clan animal, invoking its spirit, and declaring their lineage and identity to all who see them. Their face paintings aren't separate from their understanding of animal behavior, their clan

loyalties aren't separate from their observations of how different creatures live, and their spiritual beliefs aren't separate from their daily interactions with the forest. Everything connects, everything informs everything else, and the colorful patterns painted on human skin become a map of these infinite connections—a living encyclopedia of what it means to be Tikuna, to be of the forest, to be kin to the animals of sky and earth.

*The relationship between Amazonian biodiversity and indigenous culture reveals a profound truth: human culture and natural environment aren't separate spheres that occasionally intersect—they're thoroughly interwoven, each shaping and being shaped by the other.*





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Protect our Rainforests. Protect their culture.

















