Fair Trade Shopping

Inkkas.com is a socially conscious shoe company founded in 2012. The brand seeks to promote beautiful handmade shoes using traditional South American textiles. From the beginning, Inkkas set out to be a company that would have a beneficial impact on the world, not an exploitative one.

The company was founded on the principles of fair trade, philanthropy, and authenticity. Though the shoes are made in Peru rather than Ecuador, we recommend them because the company donates a percentage of sales to AmazonWatch, a non-profit organization founded in 1996 that aims to protect the Amazon rainforest and the rights of the indigenous people living in the Amazon. The Achuar people live on both sides of the Peru-Ecuador border.

Inkkas shoes are for men, women, and children - $65

Guayusa (gwy-you-sa)

Traditionally, indigenous families wake up together at dawn to drink guayusa, a tea prepared from a native Amazonian tree leaf. The Achuar drink this every morning at dawn to cleanse their bodies from toxins, illness, and negative energy from the previous day. They sit around the communal fire drinking gourds full of guayusa until sunrise.

During this time, the village elders teach the youth about ancestral myths, hunting techniques, social values, and about what it means to be “Runa” (meaning ‘fully alive’) in the indigenous cosmovision.

You can purchase Guayusa at some Whole Foods locations, or online from Runa.org.
About this month’s recommendations

All of the recommended books, films, and music carry a common theme – empowering indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, educating and inspiring individuals everywhere to bring forth a shift in humanity from a dream rooted in consumption and competition to one of sustainability and mutuality – this is the mission of the Pachamama Alliance. The Alliance was founded at the invitation of the Achuar people.

Dining for Women’s donations this month will specifically support the Alliance’s Jungle Mamas program, whose goal is to eliminate all preventable deaths in childbirth of mothers and babies. The Achuar call the Jungle Mamas program Ikiama Nukuri, which means “Women as Keepers of the Forest”. The Pachamama Alliance views empowerment of Achuar women as the unifying element to ensure success on all joint projects.

Recommended Books

Fiction

The Ecuador Effect by David E. Stuart (University of New Mexico Press, 2007)

May 1970 - Freelance human rights investigator John Alexander rides on horseback, away from the scene of his latest mission. Flames engulf the second story of the Hacienda Atalaya in southern Ecuador's Santa Isabel district that Alexander and a local named Efraín have just set ablaze. Their arson is not just a typical job in Alexander's "human rights" campaign. It is a symbolic burning of the powerful Veintimita clan's shady politics and exploitation of the local peasantry.

*The Ecuador Effect* combines a liberal dose of Ecuadorian/Quechua Indian culture with the drama of a novel. David Stuart fictionalizes major events he witnessed while doing anthropological fieldwork in Ecuador and shares the real-life struggles of the Cholos, the Mestizos, and the Indios in their attempts to maintain their working-class livelihoods in a strikingly stratified society that pushes them out of their traditional settlements.

"Wow! A devastatingly gorgeous story of how one man, an American stranger in southern Ecuador, learns a thing or two about love, family, and justice. Powerfully written, Stuart crafts a riveting story with a quick tempo." – Amazon reviewer

The Old Man Who Read Love Stories by Luis Sepúlveda (Mariner Books, 1995)

The village of El Idilio is remote, to say the least, and twice a year an itinerant dentist makes his way up river to rid the villagers of their oral afflictions. One of the dentist's buddies is an old-timer to whom he brings a six-month supply of the romance novels he loves to read. Antonio Jose Bolivar and his wife had gone into the jungle to live, but the jungle claimed the life of his beloved. Antonio at first blamed the jungle, but as time passed--as he passed time spent with the Indians of the region--he came to appreciate the jungle as the magnificent entity it is and to appreciate the destructiveness "civilization" brings to it. Now Antonio lives a village existence, alone with his romance novels. But when a female ocelot begins carrying out a reign of terror in the area, Antonio's expertise in jungle ways is called upon to get rid of the problem. Over her beautiful dead body he sheds tears, and to his romance novels he retreats. Translated by Peter Bush

“As simple on the surface as a fable, this economically presented tale is, true to a fable, deeply resonant - in this case, about the need for a worldwide ecological mind-set.” – Booklist
Recommended Books

Non-fiction

The Spears of Twilight – Life and Death in the Amazon Jungle by Philippe Descola (New Press, 1998)

Recommended by Pachamama Alliance

Based on his own experiences, author Philippe Descola transcribes the complex story of the Achuar people. Descola, an anthropology professor in Paris, spent three years living among a Jivaro tribe, and this engrossing, minutely detailed chronicle of daily life gets past exotic stereotypes to delineate a band of individualists oscillating between gentle anarchy and factional solidarity. Obsessed with bloody vendettas against neighbors or relatives, the tribal group nonetheless reverentially communicates with a world of spirits, plants and animals, with the wandering souls of both the living and the dead.

Descola's narrative is nearly a daily journal of his own learning and efforts. Descola explores Jivaro shamanism, dream interpretation, polygamy, marital violence against wives and the Jivaros' loose-knit, fluid cosmology, which makes no effort to impose coherence on the world.

"Sprinkled with Jivaro songs, chants, myths and the author's line drawings, this lyrically precise exploration of a people's lifestyle and consciousness is a work of enchantment." – Publishers Weekly

Spirit of the Shuar: Wisdom from the Last Unconquered People of the Amazon

by John Perkins and Shakaim Mariano Chumpi (Destiny Books, 2001)

Here, in their own words, the Shuar share their practices of shapeshifting, "dreaming the world," and ecstatic sex, including the role older women play in teaching uninitiated men how to please. They explain the interdependence of humans and the environment, their formula for peace and balance, and their faith in Arutam, the life-giving spirit of nature that allows each of us to transform ourselves. And they describe how their ancient - and current - practice of shrinking heads fits into their cultural philosophy. Whether exploring the mystery of shamanic shapeshifting, delving deeper into the powers of healing herbs and psychotropic plants, or finding new ways to live sustainably and sensitively in the face of encroaching development and environmental destruction, the Shuar have emerged as a strong people determined to preserve their identity and beliefs and share their teachings with a world in dire need of their wisdom.

"This book contains profound wisdom. In our modern age we lack the deep knowing of how to positively transform our culture. The Shuar give hope and direction that will benefit our children's children." - Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D.

The Soul of Money by Lynn Twist and Teresa Barker (W.W.Norton & Company, 2006)

This book is co-written by Lynne Twist, co-founder of The Pachamama Alliance.

Through personal stories and practical advice, Twist demonstrates how we can replace feelings of scarcity, guilt, and burden with experiences of sufficiency, freedom, and purpose. Twist shares from her own life, a journey illuminated by remarkable encounters with the richest and poorest, from the famous (Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama) to the anonymous but unforgettable heroes of everyday life.

"An inspired, utterly fascinating book....A book for everyone who would like to make the world a better place." —Jane Goodall
Films & Videos – Recommended by Pachamama Alliance

A Call for Our Time: The Story of the Pachamama Alliance (2011, 12:10 minutes)

“If you are coming to help us, you are wasting your time. But if you are coming because you know your liberation is bound up with ours, then let us work together.” – Indigenous Elders

This short film tells the story of the beginnings of The Pachamama Alliance from the invitation of the Achuar to the development of their latest programs. The mission of The Pachamama Alliance is to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world. View the 12 minute video on YouTube.

Dream People of the Amazon (2005, 32 minutes)

“Dream People of the Amazon” tells the story of the Achuar, indigenous people who live in a remote and pristine part of the Amazon rainforest in southeastern Ecuador. The Achuar had no contact with the outside world until the early 1970’s. Today, while still retaining their traditional culture, they are becoming increasingly sophisticated about the world beyond their forest. They know that the outside world is desperate for the oil that lies under their territory. They also know that oil operations have brought environmental and cultural devastation to their indigenous neighbors in northeastern Ecuador, only a few hundred miles away.

Faced with this threat to their very existence, the Achuar followed an ancient tradition. They looked to their dreams for guidance. Many elders had been having similar dreams, and their interpretation of those dreams was stunning: if they were to defend themselves from the destruction of oil operations, they should seek alliances in the very world that was about to destroy them. Dream People of the Amazon is the first film the Achuar people have allowed to be made in their territory.

Overcoming their shyness of cameras, they share with us their knowledge, customs, and spiritual beliefs. We learn how their dreams have protected their forest and their society—and could even help guide all of us to a sustainable future on our planet. View an excerpt on YouTube. Purchase the video from Green Planet Films.

“This colorfully photographed and educational film compels you with a worrisome yet hopeful corner of worldwide struggle. It invites you into the tradition and adaptive reality of the Achuar people.” – Green Valley Union

Chumpi & The Waterfall (2009, 31:21 minutes)

Filmed in the Achuar community of Chicherta in the Peruvian Amazon Rainforest, the last community on the Huasaga River before the border with Ecuador. Chumpi, with his father Secha and his grandfather Irar, make a trip to a sacred waterfall where both adults had received a vision as young men. (Note: Among the Achuar, both boys and girls approaching adolescence travel to sacred places to receive their visions.) The Achuar made this film to show you how their extraordinary rainforest home is critical to survival.

Watch and share this award winning documentary about Chumpi’s journey in search of the vision of his Achuar ancestors.

“Amazing film, seriously so inspired, just watching these people made my day, they know very well how to respect our earth and live in harmony. It’s just the most wonderful thing known to us.” – White Wolf Pack
Awakening the Dreamer – Changing the Dream

Our society is on an unsustainable path, and we have a limited time to turn things around. Acknowledging this, Lynne Twist (co-founder of Pachamama Alliance) also became aware that the resources and technologies to address our crisis already exist - the missing element is the human commitment to make it happen.

With that realization, the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium was born, and since its launch in 2005, the symposium has grown to transform and educate its attendees in more than fifty countries and ten languages.

The symposium, an extension of the Pachamama Alliance, exists to educate and inspire a shift in humanity from a dream rooted in consumption and competition to one of sustainability and mutuality. This DVD endeavors to recreate the life-changing experience of the Awakening the Dream Symposium, offering the thought-provoking, interactive sessions in the comfort of your home or wherever you are. More than two hours of enlightening, relevant information, paired with creative exercises, will inspire each of us to find our role in driving change toward a thriving, just and sustainable world not just for ourselves, but for all the world’s inhabitants for generations to come.

Available from Amazon

Recommended Music

Listen to indigenous Shuar music from the Ecuadorian Amazon.

“Our cosmovision is based on the premise that the jungle is our home where in all our sacred medicines and the spirit of our forefathers live.”

Notes on the distinction between “Shuar” and “Achuar”

“Shuar”, in the Shuar language, means "people." The Shuar live in the tropical rainforest between the upper mountains of the Andes and the tropical rainforests and savannas of the Amazonian lowlands in Ecuador extending to Peru. Shuar live in various places — thus, the muraiya (hill) shuar are people who live in the foothills of the Andes; the achu (swamp-palm) shuar (or Achuar) are people who live in the wetter lowlands east of the Andes (Ecuador and Peru).

Submitted by Lynn O’Connell and Marcie Christensen, DFW Researchers & members