

"We, who are part of the Wajãpi indigenous people and are located in several communities scattered in the Wajãpi Indigenous Land (TIW), in the Municipalities of Pedra Branca do Amapari, Laranjal do Jari and Mazagão, in the state of Amapá. We have our own social organization that includes our way of life. Our paternity system is part of our knowledge and ancestry, which until now are part of our everyday culture, so we maintain our way of living and taking care of our children."



# THE WAJÃPI FATHERHOOD



# THE WAJĀPI FATHERHOOD

This document portrays the experience of the Wajāpi fatherhood, having been written by researchers from the Wajāpi community with direct support from researchers from Amapá State University and the Promundo Institute. All text, contained in this document, follows the ethnic patterns proposed by the indigenous researchers themselves. This is an initiative of the Paternidades e Primeira Infância Project, carried out with the support from the Porticus Foundation.

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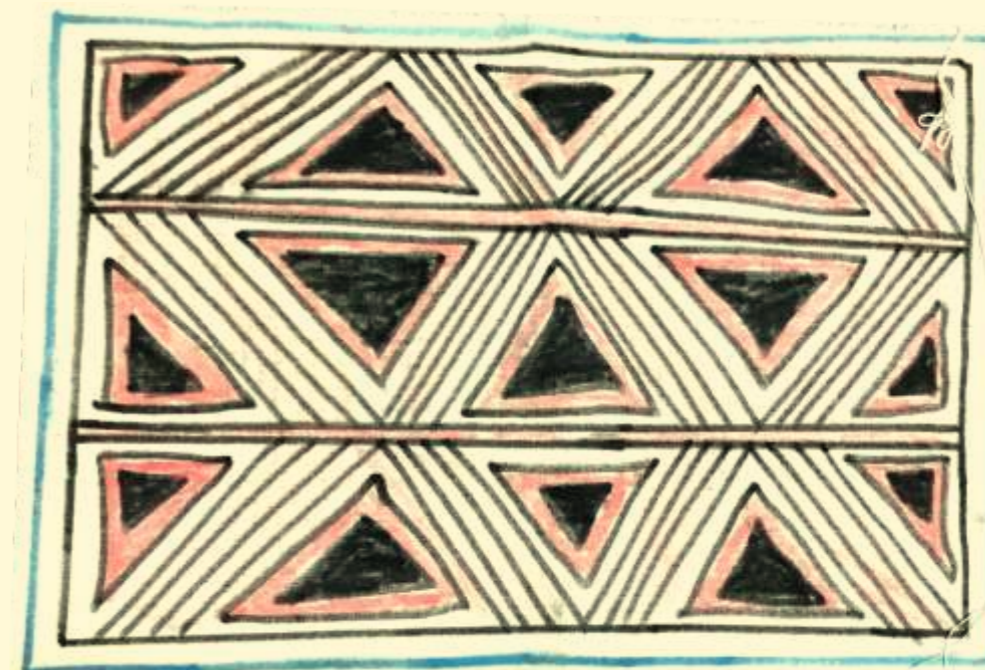
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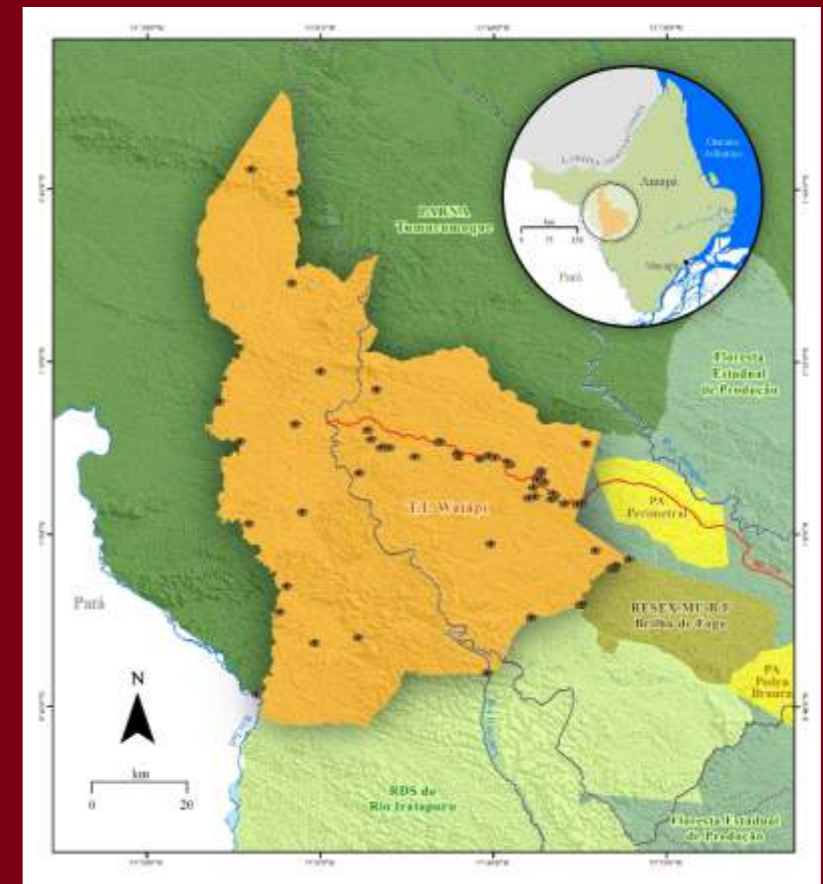
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# THE WAJĀPI PEOPLE

“Knowledge is Wajãpi and Wajãpi is knowledge for their children, everything that Wajãpi knows is passed on to their children and their children are Wajãpi”  
**(Testimony of the Pajé, 2021).**





# THE WAJĀPI PEOPLE

We, the Wajāpi indigenous people, are located in several communities across the Wajāpi Indigenous Land (TIW), in the Municipalities of Pedra Branca do Amapari, Laranjal do Jari, and Mazagão, in the Brazilian state of Amapá.

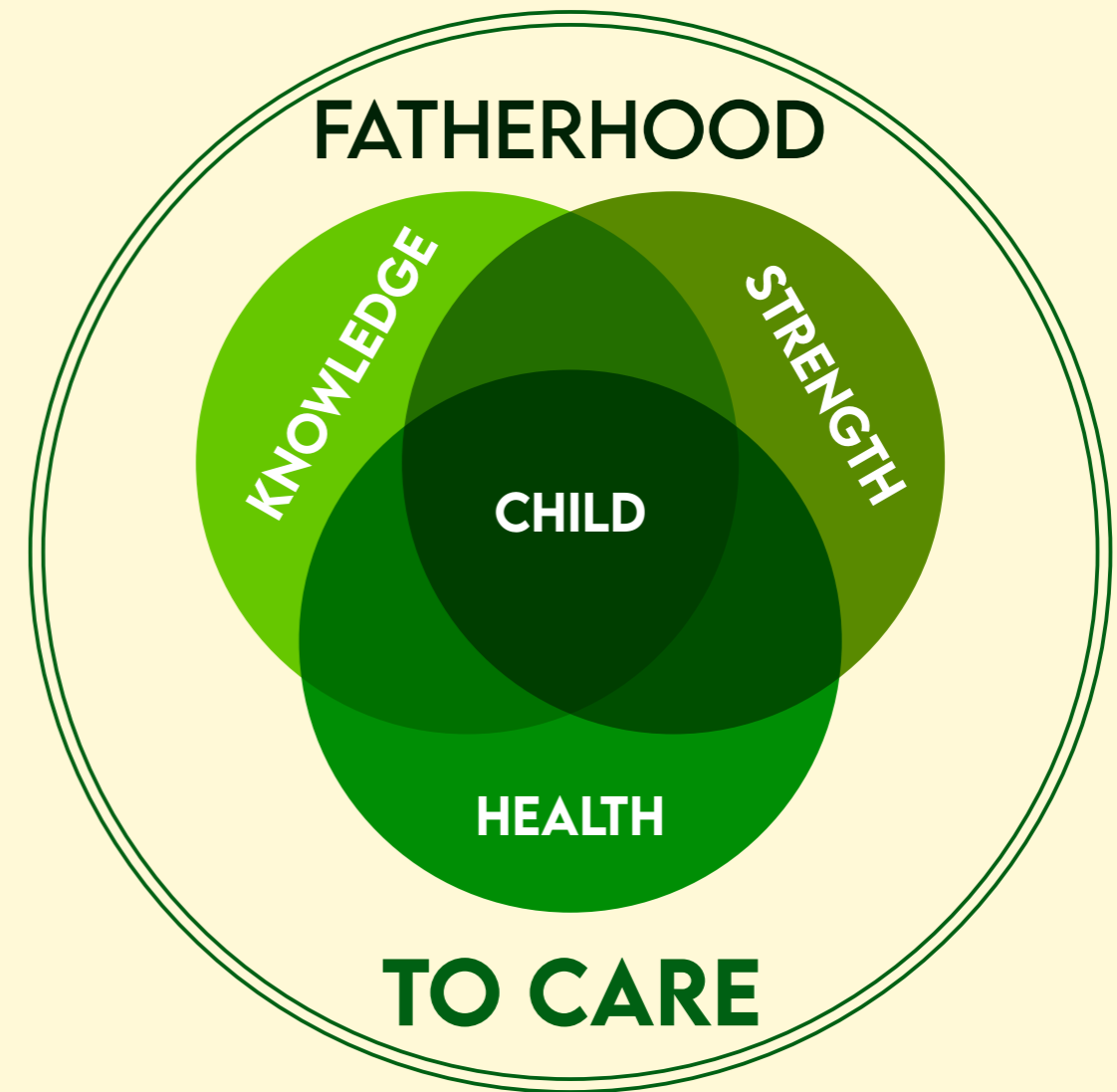


We have our own social organization which reflects our way of life.



Our paternity system is part of our knowledge and ancestry, in which part of our everyday culture remains, and thus we maintain our way of living and taking care of our children.

To better understand the Wajāpi's fatherhood, it is necessary to know our culture, which has its own structures, such as: marriage, relationship based on kinship and caring for pregnant women and children.



We, the Wajāpi, have our own ways to relate to nature or the forest and to take care of the children, ensuring their health and growth. All of this is part of our way of caring, which involves the following concepts: wisdom, strength and health of the Wajāpi people.



The ancestor of the Wajapi had several contacts with the outside community, such as adventurers, gateiros<sup>1</sup>, gold miners, caravan warfare and others.

Officially, in the 1970s, the Wajãpi had contact with the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI), the religious entity of New Tribes Mission in Brazil, anthropologists from the University of São Paulo (USP), and other institutions. And, recently, we are in contact with several institutions in Brazil.



<sup>1</sup> individual who recruits workers, serving as an intermediary between them and the contractor





# TERRITORY, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WAJĀPI

“We have 7 Wajāpí subgroup, which are called: 1. Pirawiri, 2. Mariry, 3. Inipuku, 4. Wiririry 5. Tuawaikōpa, 6. Aramirã, 7. Kumakary”





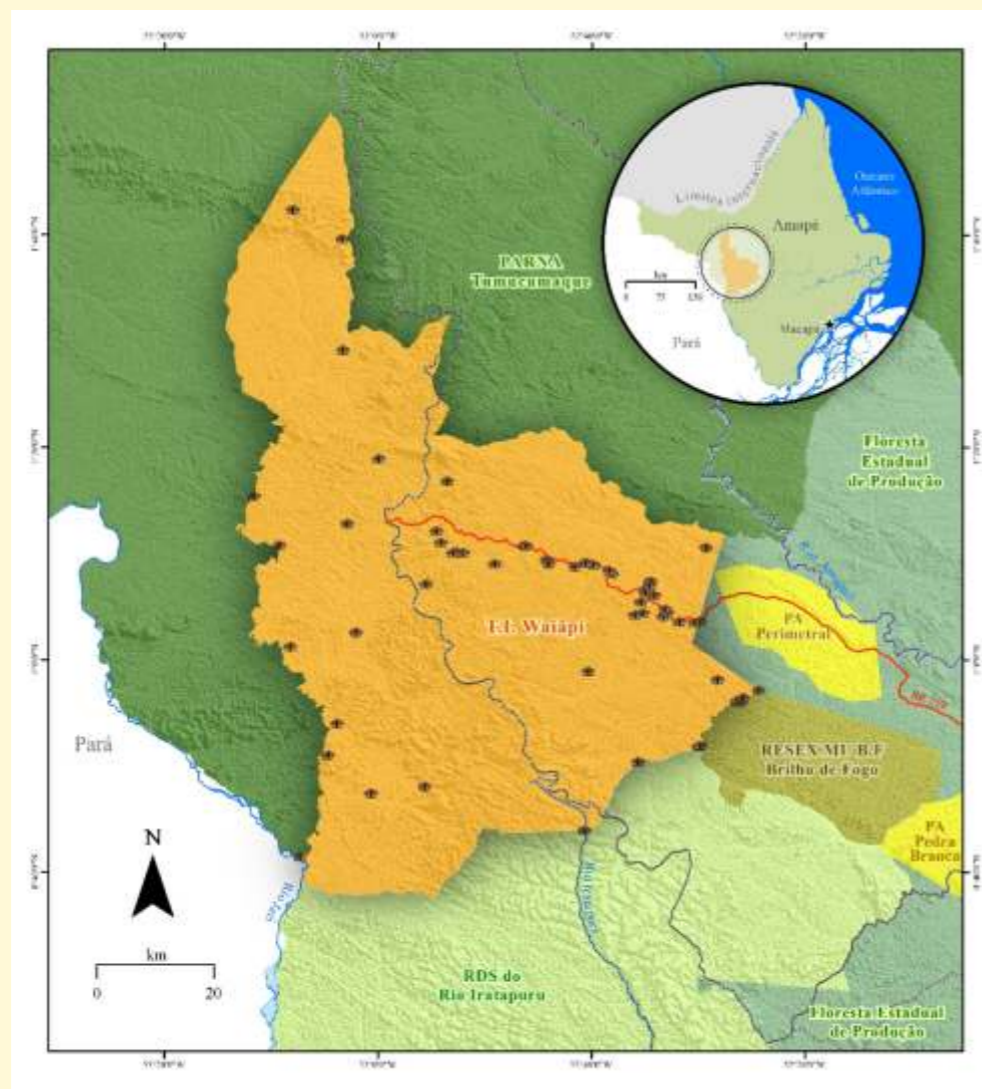
# TERRITORY, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WAJĀPI

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We have 93 villages that are distributed across in the Wajãpi Indigenous Land (TIW) that were officially demarcated in 1996, with a territorial extension of 6,070.17 km<sup>2</sup>, or 607,017.24 ha. We have land, river and air access, such as the villages of Mukuru and Okakai and arriving in these villages requires a landing strip for a small aircraft or a helicopter.

Our main rivers that bathe or cross our land are: Riozinho, Inipuku River, Felicio River, Onça River, Ari River, and Aimã River. These rivers are important for our navigation to other villages. TIW demarcation includes river and land. Around the TIW there are Conservation Units (CUs), including the Tumucumaque Mountains National Park (PNMT), Amapá National and State Forest, Resex Beija Flor Brilho de Fogo, Conservation Unit Sustainable Development Reserve of the Iratupuru river, among other areas of preservation and conservation of sustainable and integral use. We have territorial mobility, this is our way of taking care of our land and doing surveillance.

We have 8 villages that are part of the Indigenous Education Organization System (SOMEI). We have a main pole in the Aramirã village, which is the largest and most strategic for our meetings, and in this site, the health post is also installed. Our demarcated land belongs to all the Wajãpi and each region takes care of the demarcation line.



# HOW WE ORGANIZE OURSELVES

Our organization is based on the union by marriage that is considered essential for the future of the nuclear family and the extended family. So, in that context, we form community leadership. This is our way of organizing ourselves around caregiving, establishing a community, and leading a family. Therefore, each group has its local and regional leaders. Our relationship is based on kinship, which is fundamental for the respect of our relatives and other regional and local groups.



Our traditional custom is to greet everyone, especially we should greet our in-laws, grandparents, among other important family members. When we pass by or visit families, we must mainly greet the chief or cacique of the community. The man talks to the man and the woman talks to the woman. We don't call people by names, but by our relationship to them. It is shameful to speak by the names of our relatives, being brothers, grandparents, husbands, wives, etc. Thus, it is our way of relating and respecting our relatives or non-relatives. Elders or sages must always dialogue with each other to exchange experiences and to better plan and organize their community.

Our organization and politics are hereditary, when the head of the family or community passes away, it is the eldest son's duty to take his place. The pajé in a community is fundamental for the spiritual world, as he heals the sick, so he must be highly respected by the community.



Each Wajãpi has a group of origin called Wanã. The ancestors of each Wanã are different. Wanã is not the same thing as a village, it is a group of people who do not all live together, but in different villages. But all people from the same Wanã know their region and their connecting paths.



In the Wajãpi Indigenous Land we are represented by seven (7) Wajãpi subgroups, called Wanã kō, which are: 1. Pirawiri, 2. Mariry, 3. Inipuku, 4. Wiririry 5. Tuawaikōpa, 6. Aramirã, 7. Kumakary.





# HOW WE COMMUNICATE: MOTHER TONGUE OF THE WAJĀPI

“Our language or words came through the sound of birdsong or other animals. Some words ORIGINATE from birdsongs such as: pyni, kurasive, pāi, pavo and others”



# HOW WE COMMUNICATE: MOTHER TONGUE OF THE WAJĀPI

We have our own Wajãpi language, which is part of the Tupi-Guarani linguistic tree. We are approximately 1600 people who speak our mother tongue. Our language is fundamental, as we transfer our knowledge to children. Also, we are able to dialogue with each other and relate to the forest in organizing our calendar time.

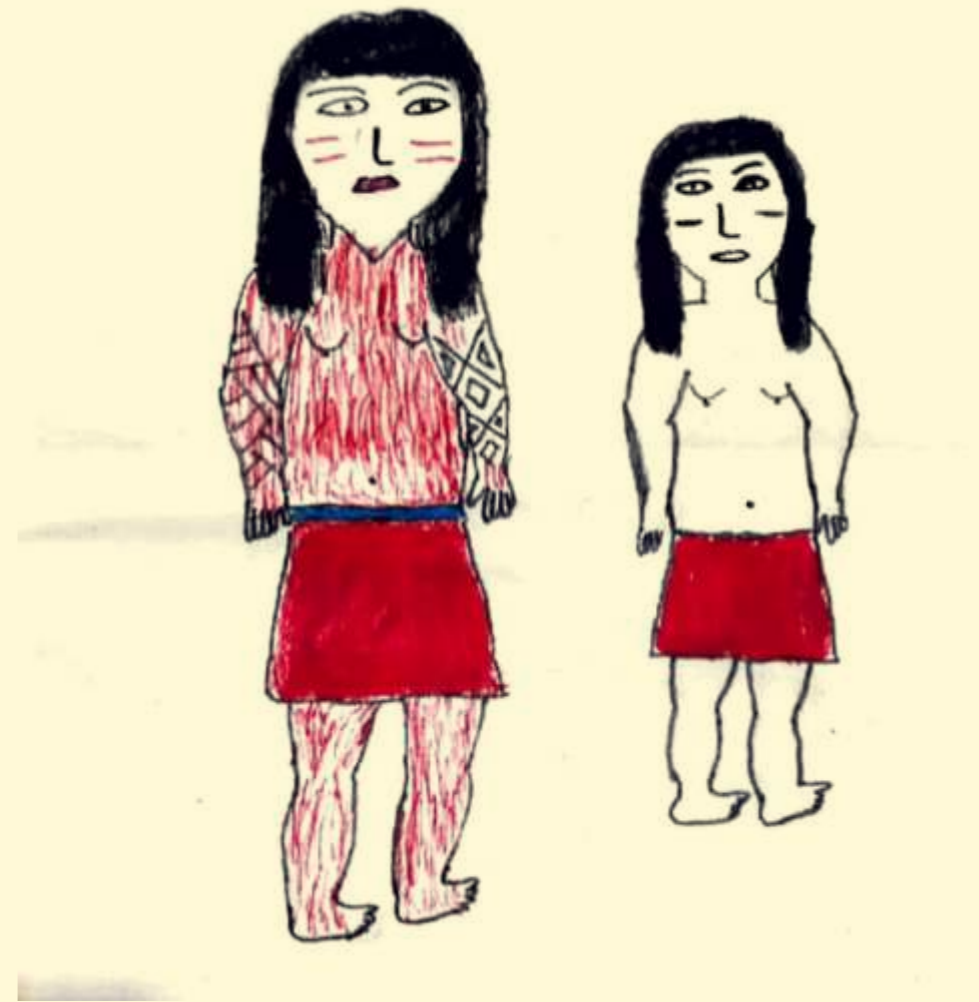
Our mother tongue is part of our social organization and is the way to relate to our relatives. We have different accents that make up our mother tongue. Our language or words came through the sound of birdsong or other animals. Some words originate from birdsongs such as: pyni, kurasive, pãï, pavo and others.





In the past, we did not need to learn and understand Portuguese, which is our second language. Nowadays, we need to learn and acquire the official language of the country, which is Portuguese, so that we can communicate and defend ourselves against the non-indigenous and the government.

Our children grow up together with their parents, at the same time learning a few words to know how to relate to the family and the forest. Our language and words are recorded in books in our mother tongue that are prepared by Wajãpi Socio-Environmental Agents: Wajãpi teachers and among others Wajãpi.



Whenever we meet, we speak or discuss matters in our mother tongue. In meetings with non-indigenous, we always translate the Wajãpi to Portuguese, to better understand what was discussed during external events.



We sing our songs using our language and have our traditional festivals with other living beings from the “primordial” festivities season, such as the fish festivity, butterfly festivity, bird festivity and others. So, some words we have acquired since that time and until today, we continue to practice them in our community.



Our language is fundamental for us so we can discuss and narrate about the universe among our families. That's why we teach our children with affection about what is good and bad through dialogue. We have an important way of communicating with male and female children, from when they are starting to talk to their parents and other people close to them.



# THE WAJĀPI FATHERHOOD – MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

We always marry part of our father, so the marriage is always committed inside the mother's belly, we already got married right inside our mother's belly. If I marry my brother-in-law's sister, I have to give my sister to my brother-in-law

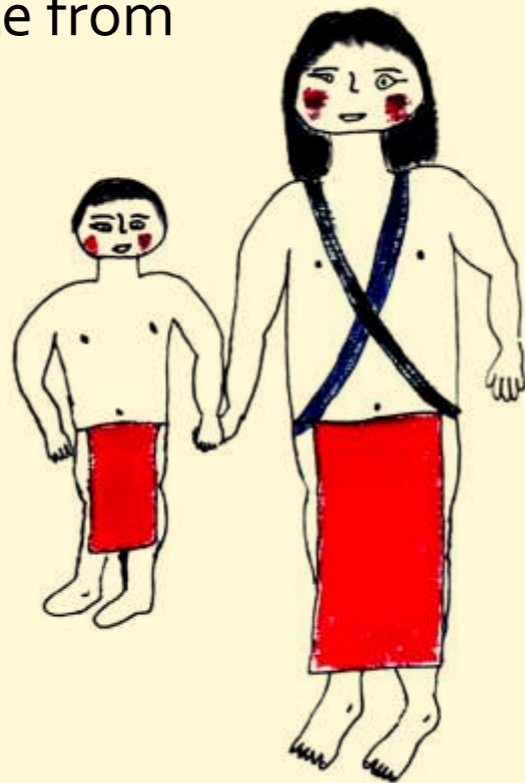
**(Wajāpi Testimony, 2022).**



# THE WAJĀPI FATHERHOOD – MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

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Fatherhood during early childhood, according to us Wajāpi men, is based on our values and knowledge that we have learned from our elders. We men actively participate from the beginning of pregnancy until a newborn becomes part of a family nucleus and we become a Wajāpi father or mother.



From the beginning of the role of being a Wajāpi father, it is necessary that one of the most important processes for the constitution of the family nucleus take place, which is marriage.

The union of the Wajāpi is essential for the formation of a family, in which the children are born within our culture. Our families are large, with an average of 6 to 20 children.

Traditionally, our marriage is defined by our parents. Nowadays, there are marriages by choice by the younger Wajāpis.

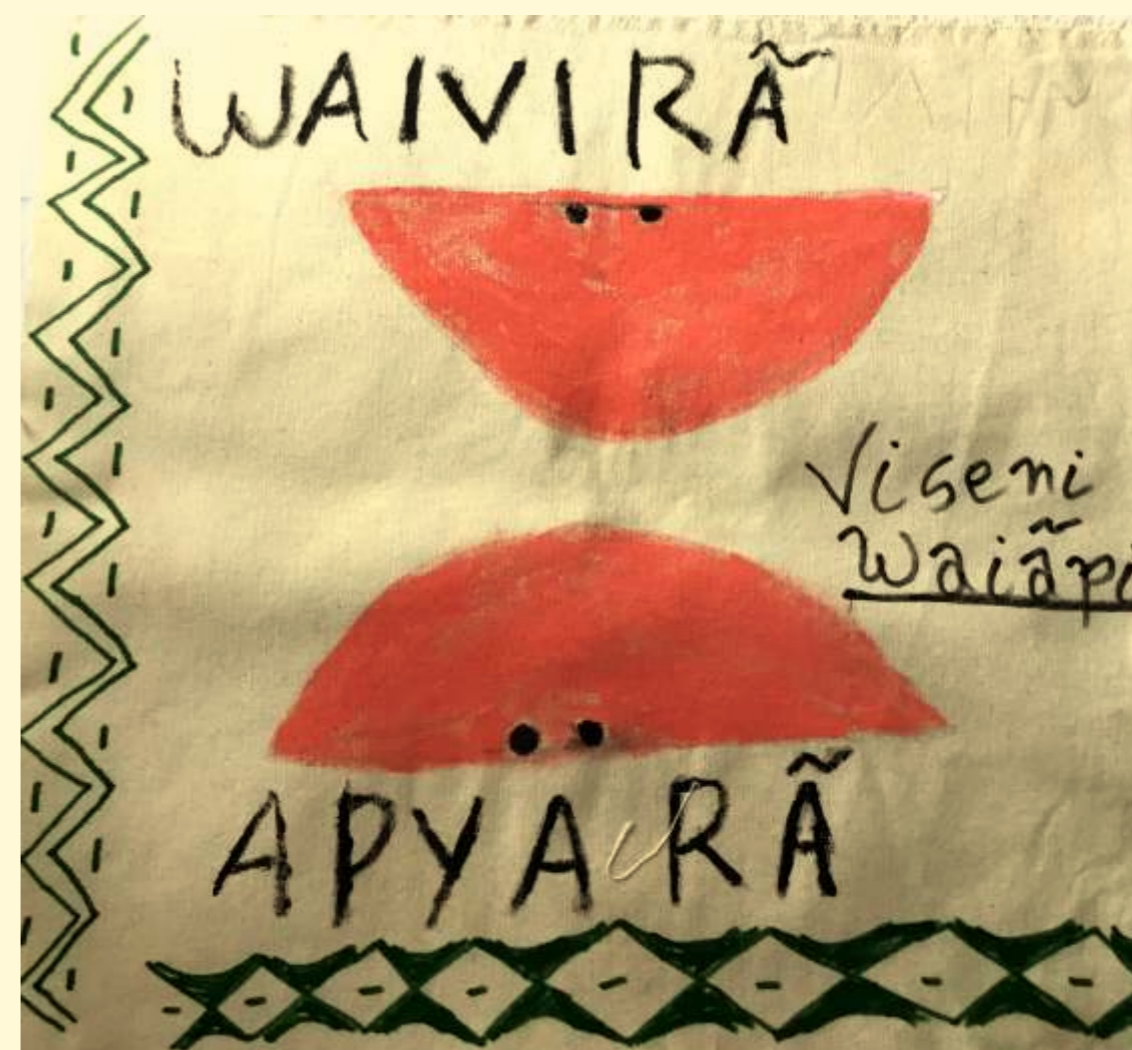
In our Wajāpi community we can marry more than one wife. The decision to marry a second wife is made jointly with our first wife, who may be your sister or next of kin.



Wajãpi fatherhood begins with the wife's pregnancy, a unique moment in which we men exercise the first duties of a father in permanent care of the wife and the child, when they are still in the womb. Together with the community, we know if the child is a boy or a girl.



Sign that appears on a pregnant woman when she is expecting a boy



Something very important is the traditional ultrasound of the Wajãpi. Until today we perform that by first bringing the family together, and all the relatives together ingest a crab, and then take the shell and place it in their hands and throw it on the ground. If it is upside down, it will be a man and if it is upside down, it will be a woman.

As the daily tasks in the villages are shared between men and women, the moment of pregnancy is when our women are preserved,



by not making excessive effort, such as, for example, carrying the weight in the crop field or water from the river for feeding the family.



**Husband carrying weight, husband carrying firewood for wife**



When my wife is pregnant, I take care of her, you know... because I hunt for her, yeah... I collect firewood for her. She can't carry a lot of weight, that's why it's the husband who can cut the firewood, carry the cassava, carry weights, and we also look for the fruits that our wife want, because during pregnancy she gets sick, huh. That's why we look for the fruit to offer her, and ... this is how we take care of our wives during pregnancy."

**(Wajãpi statement, 2022).**



The collaboration of the Wajāpi man in carrying out tasks that would be otherwise the responsibility of our wives, but which she is unable to perform during pregnancy, shows our paternal care for the wife's health and, consequently, for that of the child. Care is not only reflected in performing out daily activities, but also in sharing moments during the nine months of pregnancy, as well as fulfilling desires for favorite foods, especially fruits that help in this process as it relates to frequent nausea, which is normal during pregnancy and that the use of traditional Wajāpi medicine helps to overcome with positive results.



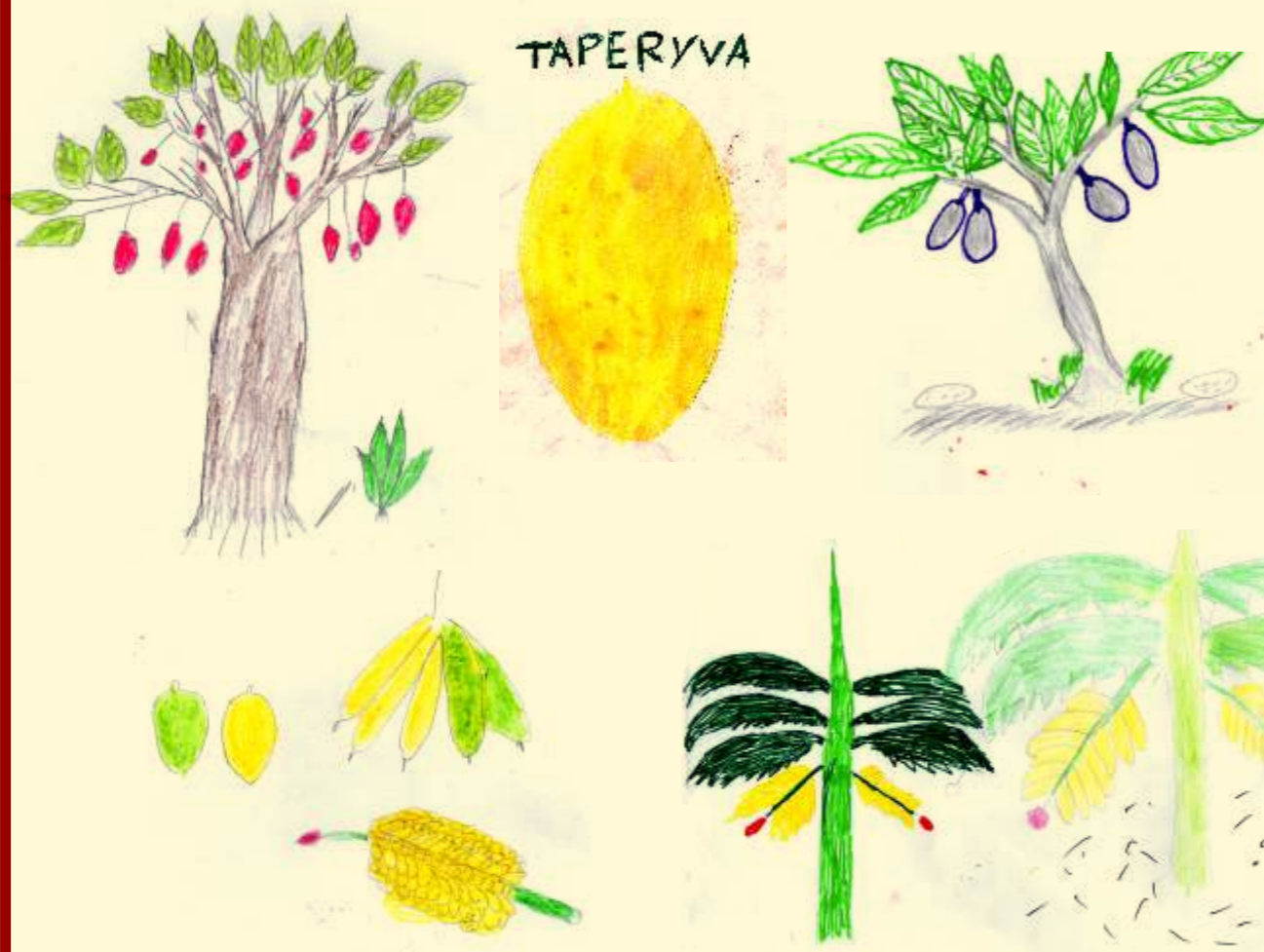
**A young man goes fishing for his wife and makes the roast**

Thus, when the Wajāpi child is born, some values are respected among the parents in terms of safeguarding and caring for life outside the womb. The caring and safeguarding of Wajāpi babies is a continuation of the moment that is unique to this new life: pregnancy. Thus, when the long-awaited birth arrives for both the Wajāpi father and mother, the moment of postpartum confinement (jikoakuwa) begins.



"I take care of my wife when she's pregnant...we take care of her...we help bring her fruit to eat...whatever she prefers. We don't just bring her any food... when she's pregnant. We bring the one she likes... and another one too, we help the wife when she's pregnant and help her carry weight... and so she doesn't carry too much weight when she's pregnant."

(Wajãpi statement, 2022).





# THE WAJĀPI FATHERHOOD: THE POSTPARTUM CONFINEMENT

“We built a tapiri for THEM to stay, THE CHILD cannot be close to a family home and also, THEY cannot be in the middle of families and that is a rule, because if the child goes to take a bath, the owner of the river will see the child and THEY will get sick and will not grow. In the tapiri, THEY TAKE shelter during postpartum for a month or two. The place for postpartum confinement should be searched by the husband and wife”

**(Wajāpi Testimony, 2022)**



# THE WAJĀPI FATHERHOOD: THE POSTPARTUM CONFINEMENT

For the moment of confinement (jikoakuwa) there is a whole family set up to receive the new Wajāpi child, the father builds a house to welcome the child.



Postpartum confinement (jikoakuwa) skills is characterized as one of the most important traditional knowledge in the Wajāpi way of life as it relates to how unique is to become a complete parent, since both Wajāpi father and mother participate in this private moment, which differs from the non-indigenous society where the safeguarding is associated to health, mainly of the parturient, in which the female body recovers from the gestation period.



For us Wajãpi, confinement is a caring and protection practice for the family that can influence the child's health and their relationship with nature. Thus, specific caring practices are determined with the father, mother and child. At the moment of confinement, being close to the newborn child is more important than other tasks in the village, as our Wajãpi family helps us in this process of feeding, caring for our other children and with the daily tasks in the village, since the father and mother Wajãpi are living in shelter.

Our relatives, grandparents and older children are also mobilized to provide support to the newborn's parents, ensuring the couple's protection, in relation to work activities and respect for nature, such as bathing in the river. This is of fundamental importance for

the health of the child and of the parents according to the Wajãpi cosmology.

## HOW TO NAME THE CHILDREN

In the old days, the grandparents chose the child's name. Nowadays, it is up to the fathers and mothers to decide on the names of the children. We still give the names of the ancestors to the children.

When we have our newborn children, we cannot work, we cannot clear fields, we cannot plant and bathe in the river, after our son is 3 months old, 5 months old, then we can bathe, but we cannot hunt any game, there are game that are harmful and fish too. We cannot catch any fish when our children are still small, in order to hunt, the child you have to be one year old, this is all important for our culture and that is why we have to value our knowledge"

(Wajãpi Testimony, 2022).

# THE WAJAPI FATHERHOOD: THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN

“I am proud to be a father because I take care of my children and my children recognize me for what I am doing, and as a young father, I take care of my children and I know that I am a father”

**(Wajāpi Testimony, 2022).**





# THE WAJAPI FATHERHOOD: THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN

In this way, paternity begins for the Wajãpi who, during early childhood development, weave a very intimate relationship in the care of children and in the construction of knowledge that will be transmitted to this generation, which consists of father and growing son, in the family core. During the caring relationship with the Wajãpi child, the role of the father is not just to be the food provider, as the activity of hunting and fishing is one of the roles

of us men in the villages, but we transcend this role by actively sharing the teachings that are consistent with the transmission of knowledge during human formation.

Knowledge permeates the way we take care of each other in relation to respect for everyone in the village, and, at the same time, these teachings are passed on in a more practical way, with examples in the daily activities that we carry out together with the children.



The drawing shows a mother explaining the variety of plants in the garden.



Teaching the child how to eat  
sugar cane to clean teeth



Teaching to weave



Teaching how to grate cassava



"I teach mainly to raise awareness of what I have to do for my children, so they don't get... fighting with other people and... and for them to be in peace and quiet, to become friends with others without a problem, and at the same time I mainly teach my son: hunting, fishing, and... how to climb the açai tree, how to climb the bacabeira tree carefully, and... how to plant crops, how... how to go in the bush, how you have to know the whole forest so as not to get lost in the bush, how you have to hunt..."

**(Wajãpi Testimony, 2022).**

Teaching care to our children is carried out orally, as we Wajãpi fathers pass on knowledge through dialogue, narratives and stories to guarantee the transmission of the tradition of our ancestors. The Wajãpi narratives are

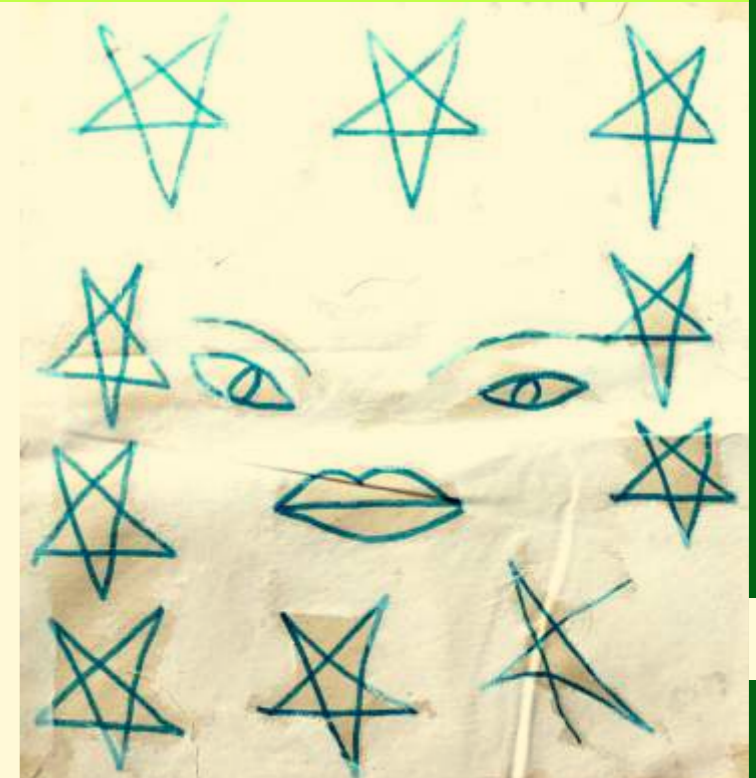


one of the most frequent ways of educating children, as they represent the experiencing of traditional knowledge in the community.

We, the Wajãpi, tell the story and I also tell my wife's father to tell the story to my son. The father teaches his son knowledge, passes on what will be difficult for him to understand. We always pass on knowledge to our grandson, son. It tells the story of the world, the story of who owns us (the Wajãpi name their gods the owners). I always say to myself: I'm a lawyer, I'm a judge, I'm a doctor, when my son fights I solve it, I'm a judge and I don't send him to jail, I order him differently, I advise him not to do more... what I don't have is the certificate.

**(Wajãpi testimony, 2022).**

**Story that parents tell their children, what are the stars and the moon.**





The child is taught by the daily practice of us parents, in a guided way. Thus, essential skills for survival, such as hunting, fishing and handicraft making, are taught from an early age so that the future head of the family will come to know his reality concretely and symbolically and, in this way, will also teach his children, in a process of transmitting ancestral knowledge. Teaching to respect others, first at home since they are



Teaching the son how to hunt

infants, and learning to understand parents, who he is, who she is. You have to know the father, the brother, and to teach how to respect and to acquire knowledge.



The father teaches how to fish and plant and the children, while playing, so the child already knows how to build a temporary house. They are learning.



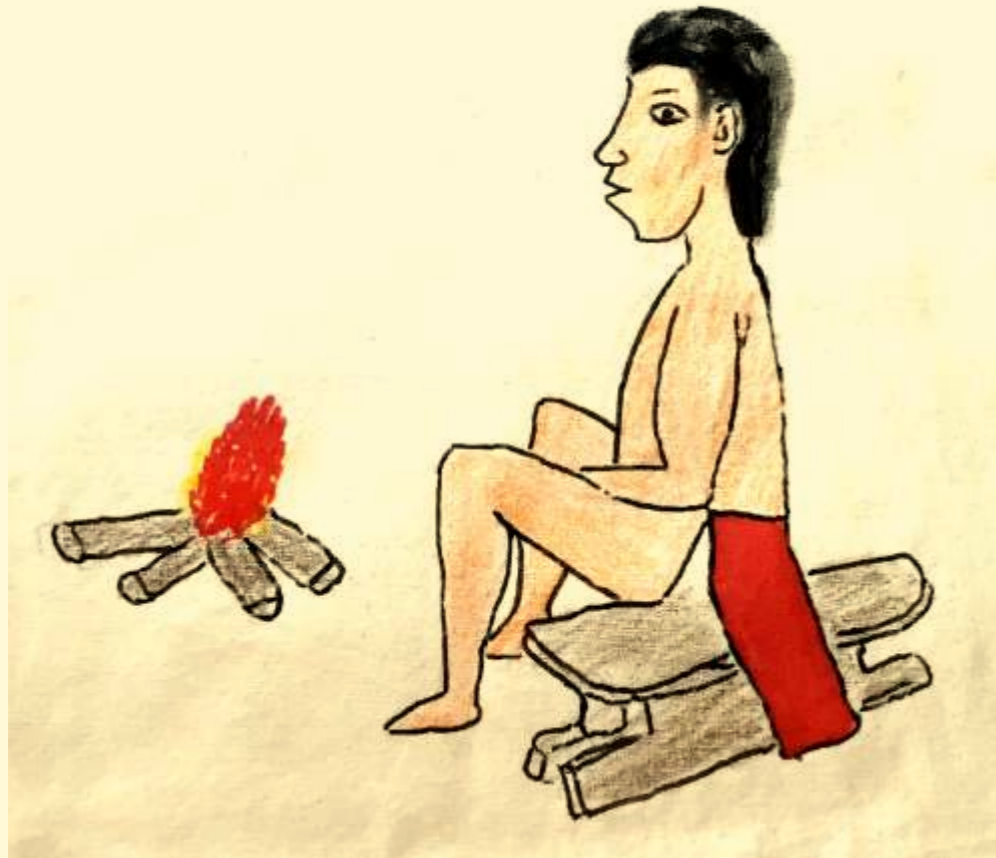
To be a good father, we don't send our children to another village, to another region, each one has its own culture. Another important thing is the food at home and the food in the forest, which is native, and we teach that there are plants or fruits that we don't eat, so we Wajãpi teach the children since they are little.

We advise the children and the community knows they are good. Since they are little, we advise them not to fight and they always have to behave as if they were at home when they are in other villages. Parents teach their children the stories of their ancestors and they know how to recognize the trees in the forest, the name of fish, hunts so the others recognize they are intelligent. The child gets to know the family relationships when the child begins to speak.



**The father teaches fishing and cropping and the children already know how to build a temporary housing by playing. They are learning.**

Thus, caring for our children takes place based on a dimension of care learning, as learning is procedural and continuous, and it focuses on training during childhood for future collaborative autonomy during adult life. Finally, we Wajãpi parents directly follow-up the raising of children, which is based on an exercise of active and responsible parenthood.



The young person show grew up very early to become a good warrior and a good hunter