



# Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

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## THE WAORANI - Fierce defenders of the Ecuadorian Amazon

*Sunday, May 24, 2009*

I first met Manuella Omari Ima Omene of the much feared Waorani Tribal Nation of the Ecuadorian Amazon in 2008, we were together for what was the first year of the training course sponsored by Tribal Link and Project Access (Global Capacity Building for Indigenous Peoples), a year later we are together again for the second year of training and our second attendance at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples - May 18-29th 2009 at the United Nations headquarters in New York City; USA.

The Waorani People number about 2,500 persons and inhabit a traditional territory of 700,000 hectares spread over 3 Amazonian provinces in the Republic of Ecuador, I decided on this trip to take the time to learn more about her as a person, without the invaluable translation skills of my Andean Ecuadorean brother Johnson Cerda - my interview would not have been possible; my lack of fluency in Spanish (like my father) never ceases to dismay me.

Now that I know more about Manuella, I'm impressed beyond my wildest expectations, the old adage 'never judge a book by it's cover' was written specifically for people like her I believe, she is very soft-spoken, and under 5 feet tall (like my own Arawak wife), but Manuella is the closest to the female Amazon warrior of Greek mythology that I have ever had the honor of befriending.

She is the daughter of ailing hereditary Chief Cogue of the Waorani, so in western terms that makes her a princess of her tribe; even though the word 'princess' or 'prince' does not exist in any Amazonian Indian language that I am aware of - we are simply known as the son or daughter of the (Hereditary) Chief, but among our respective peoples we have a good measure of respect and influence among traditionalists (note I said 'Traditionalists'). The still much feared War Chiefs Kemperi and Babehe who were active in former years are her uncles, and these two great warriors are famous in Ecuador for the amount of intruders into Waorani territory that the two of them have personally killed. Manuella casually explained the reasons for the killings to me thus:

"In our traditional law anyone who enters our territory to destroy it must be killed". Manuella herself personally met with Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa in 2008 and told him "Mr. President, If you send oil workers into Waorani Territory my people will kill all of them, and then who will be responsible for that situation? The Waorani? or you? President Correa replied to her "Well I certainly don't want anyone to go there and get killed". The proposed oil exploration incursion by Petro Ecuador deeper into Waorani territory was shelved. Did I mention that not even the Ecuadorian Police and Military risk patrolling in the Waorani territory?

The diminutive Manuella also stopped the Brazilian Oil Giant Petro Bras from doing any exploration into her people's territory, this was not a fight spearheaded by the men, believe it or not it was the Waorani Women's group led by Manuella who met with the President and warned him of the consequences of his intended actions - and who stood up to a corporate behemoth and achieved these peaceful victories! As a man I felt quite embarrassed to hear that the uphill struggle is one being tenaciously fought without pause by the women in the Waorani tribe, and Manuella agreed that it should not be this way, but in the absence of their men shouldering their responsibility - these determined women are capably filling the void. I am sure the men will be only too willing to spear or rain arrows on any intruders into their territory, but it is the women who have taken the fight into a more palatable (albeit frustrating at times) arena of passive resistance.

Very few Waorani want to have anything to do with the outside world if truth be known, Manuella for example is the only Waorani with an e-mail address, and it takes her 7 days to travel one-way from her jungle home to the nearest town of Puyo to check her e-mail. Most of the Waorani live in about 32 small villages of under 100 persons each, and all of those settlements in the center of their territory desire to remain un-contacted, caring not to fall into the trap of a slow cultural death that generally comes with 'assimilation' and 'westernization' (often dishonestly peddled as 'progress' and 'development' by it's cunning salesmen). Manuella would doubtless prefer the simple joy of traditional life and ignore the rest of the world, were it not for the constant encroachment by foreigners - who wait like greedy barbarians at their proverbial forested 'gates' with covetous eyes on the pristine forests and sub-surface mineral wealth of the Waorani homeland.

Manuella will hold a workshop in every village of her people when she returns home, and share everything she has learned with them, encouraging them to learn all that she has - with a view to joining her in defense of their people. Manuella wishes to help her people by developing a cottage industry for their unique handcrafts, and these beautiful items are available for perusal at [www.mujeeres.org](http://www.mujeeres.org) - this is to help the Waorani women's group self-finance their just cause; and is undertaken out of the groups office in the town of Puyo....I guess you could call it the 'Tribal Office of the Waorani'.

The Waorani's immediate needs - ones which are easily accommodated by kindhearted donors - if they can be located, are to obtain at least 1 computer for the tribe, Manuella knows how to use the technology and is eager to teach others so it can be used as a tool in their struggle, and the only other item requested is a radio set - so that communication between the sole Waorani office in Puyo and the villages in the Waorani territory will not require a 7 day journey merely to transfer news...and this will become obsolete in this 21st century - as it should be!

It has been my great honor to befriend Manuella, to write these few words about her, and to welcome the Waorani people into the worldwide Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations.

*Damon Gerard Corrie*

*President of the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations*

*Attending the Eighth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*

*18-29th May 2009, New York.*

*The Following Statement was read in Spanish by Manuella Ima at the United Nations Permanent Forum On Indigenous Issues Eighth Session, at Un Headquarters, New York City; On Tuesday May 26th 2009*

Los Waorani ante el ITT

Nosotros representamos a la Organizacion de la Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador NAWE. Y de la Asociacion de Mujeres Waorani de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana AMWAE.

Somos Waorani y vivimos dentro del parque Nacional Yasuni.

Los pueblos en aislamiento voluntario Tagaeri y Taromenani son nuestros hermanos, junto con ellos somos un solo pueblo y el Yasuni ha sido nuestro territorio ancestral.

Como lideres somos responsables de nuestra gente y territorio y queremos respetar a los pueblos en aislamiento y proteger el bosque

Nuestra duda sobre la iniciativa Yasuni ITT es:

- El ITT sera financiado con creditos de carbono?

los Waorani no queremos mas petroleras, tampoco creditos o negociaciones de carbono en nuestro territorio ni en el Yasuni.

Nuestra propuesta para la iniciativa Yasuni ITT es:

- Que los Waorani como pueblo y organizacion tengamos una participacion activa en el proyecto ITT, que se nos informe de todos sus procesos y decisiones.

- Tambien queremos que la iniciativa Yasuni ITT apoye nuestro pueblo en temas de educacion, salud y desarrollo

Manuella Ima

Presidenta de la Asociacion de Mujeres Waorani de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana AMWAE.

*Google Translation:*

To The Waorani ITT

We represent the Organization of the Nationality of Ecuador Waorani Nawe. And the Association of Women of the Ecuadorian Amazon Waorani AMWAE.

We Waorani and live within the Yasuni National Park.

The peoples in voluntary isolation and Taromenani Tagaeri are our brothers, together with them we are one people and Yasuni has been our ancestral territory.

As leaders we are responsible for our people and territory and we want to respect peoples privacy and protecting the forest

Our questions about the ITT Yasuni initiative is:

- The ITT will be funded by carbon credits?

The Waorani not want more oil, not carbon credits or negotiations on our land or in the Yasuni.

Our proposal for the ITT Yasuni initiative is:

- That as a people and Waorani organization's active participation in the ITT, which was inform us of all its processes and decisions.
- We also want the ITT Yasuni initiative to support our people in matters of education, health and development