

Hello, my name is Yarima. I am 11 years old and I live in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. I am a member of the Yanomami tribe. We are trying to keep our traditional way of life, the same way our ancestors have lived for thousands of years, but it is very difficult. We don't have electricity so that means no telephones, televisions or washing machines. We have to make everything ourselves from things that live or grow in the rainforest. For example, we build our own homes using wood that we get from the forest. My family lives with all the other families of our village in a large round house, this is called a shabono, it is made from wood and large leaves. Our family has its own area inside the shabono where we all eat and sleep. The house surrounds a large open space where many of the tribe dance and sing and have feasts. On most days I have to get up very early to go swimming and hunt fish in the nearby river. I also try to hunt turtles, monkeys, pigs and birds as we can eat all of these animals. I bring the food back for my mother to clean and cook. We only kill what we need to eat. Sometimes I am able to collect fruit from an area in the forest where all the families grow corn and sweet potato, banana and plantain. My hobby is making jewellery out of beads and string. I make the beads out of the stones that are left over from fruit that we eat.

However, one thing in my life that is different from that of my parents. We have a small school and there is a teacher. He has hung up a blackboard in a part of the shabono, and in the afternoons he teaches us Portuguese, which is the main language of Brazil. Anyone can join in and lots of the adults also come to the lessons. We are learning to read and write our own language and Portuguese, and do maths. We are doing this so we can deal with the outside world when we have to.

Even though I am 11, I will be getting married soon. Then I will be responsible for my wife and her parents, so I need to be a very good hunter and carer. I know my wife will probably be one of the girls in the shabono. Just like I have been taught to hunt and fish and which fruits to take from the trees, she is learning about housekeeping, cooking and child care by her mother. Outside of our tribe, the only friends we have in the forest are our teacher. We are trying to live our lives in the forest like our ancestors did, by respecting the land and taking only what we need. The forest also has many wonderful plants, some of which we can use to make powerful medicine that saves lives.