

YAWANAWA STORY

The Yawanawa tribe have been in contact with White Man for over a hundred years. During that time, they were virtually enslaved to the rubber tappers working in their area and were forced to abandon their beliefs and customs by the well meaning missionaries who lived among them. In the 1980's a boy was sent to Rio Branco, capital of the State of Acre for medical attention. There, he stayed on to study and, eventually, discovered that the indigenous peoples of Brazil had rights enshrined in Brazilian Law. When the boy, Biraci returned to the Tribe he successfully led them in a fight to reclaim their ancestral lands, eventually expelling the rubber tappers and missionaries from their territories. He was elected chief and together they founded a new village, Nova Esperanca.

The partnership with Aveda began after Biraci met Aveda's founder, Horst Rechelbacher at the Rio earth Summit in 1992 and together they came up with the idea of the Yawanawa supplying Aveda with Urucum, an important plant in the tribes's spiritual and cultural life, for use as a dye in Aveda's products. Biraci understood the importance of developing ways to achieve economic independence for the Tribe.

As guardians of the forest, the Yawanawa are not just preserving their territories for themselves but also taking part in a wider conservation of rainforests for the benefit of all mankind.

Tashka Yawanawa became Chief in around the year 2000 and continued the partnership with Aveda. 92,859 hectares were obtained from the Brazilian State before the Aveda partnership and in 2007 Aveda helped the Tribe to obtain official title to their remaining land, a further 81,941 hectares, giving 172,800 hectares in total. Tashka Yawanawa studied at Rio University and has become a global spokesman on indigenous rights. He realized that education was key to tribal people being able to fight for their rights and protect their lands.

The Yawanawa Urucum plantation supplied Aveda with annatto for their products and through this partnership the Yawanawa were able to build a school and a health centre. They later managed to buy a biodiesel conversion program for their river transportation to negate the need to buy petrol for their outboard motor. Further possibilities