

Jessica Tapuy - Guango Lodge

Lina: Can you start with your first and last name please?

Jessica: Jessica Tapuy

Lina: Is this a surname originative from this area?

Jessica: Yes, from here.

Lina: So you are originally from here?

Jessica: Yes, 100% from here.

Lina: Are you more from the countryside or were you born in the city? Tell me a little about yourself.

Jessica: Well, I'm from the countryside. My mom is from the "Sierra" (Andes), but from Ecuador. My dad is 100% from Amazonia. They come from ancestral peoples. That's why my last name belongs to the community from my dad's side.

Lina: Since your dad is from Amazonia, have you lived there? or not?

Jessica: Yes, because this area is also part of the Amazon. The Amazon begins from Papallacta to here, all that is the entrance to the Amazon.

Lina: And can you tell me about the indigenous groups in this area?

Jéssica: Here, the Quijos

Lina: And those are from here? Or did they come from somewhere else?

Jéssica: No, from here, they originate from here.

Lina: Is that why the terminologies are different? For example, in Kichwa, when people name a lake they use the suffix "*cocha*", but here I don't see that that is used...

Jéssica: No, that's not very used here, it has been lost.

Lina: Something I also wanted to ask... Here I see a lot of awareness regarding the hummingbird, does that have any meaning for the community? Is the hummingbird an important animal in some way?

Jéssica: The word in Quechua "Kinde", means hummingbird. People thought that it would bring them good luck, so it was considered as a "good luck" bird, because it brings joy, and especially when they're so colorful.

Lina: Are there other animals or plants that have any meaning within the context, be it religious or cultural? Or is that almost not seen anymore?

Jéssica: Here we have that attachment to the “Danta” (tapir), so we feel happy when a tapir appears and we try to make sure nothing happens to it, because sometimes it gets out onto the road (traffic) so we try to avoid that. We are attentive and we are happy when someone says “we saw him, the tapir”, we say “oh! How nice that you have seen it!”

Lina: Is the tapir an animal that you don't see very often anymore?

Jéssica: Yes, exactly, because you don't get to see it much anymore and since it's a good animal, as I said, it's almost like a domestic one, it's too tame that it's been hunted too much, so we almost adore it.

Lina: Do you mean hunting just for sport? or for eating it? or because they use it for something else?

Jéssica: In this area almost no hunting occurs. Further inland, deeper into the Amazon, yes, it is for a source of food. It is not very common for people to go hunting here, fishing is more common than hunting.

Lina: What are the most common animals to fish here?

Jessica: Here, the trout. There aren't as many animals as there are further into the Amazon. For our position between the Amazon and the Andes, around 2700 masl we don't have as many species to fish here. Did you notice it was snowing in Antisana?

Lina: No, we didn't realize it.

Jessica: Yes, it was snowing.

Lina: So this place (the lodge) is right in the middle of the transition between the Sierra and the Amazon, right?

Jéssica: Yes. The climate and the vegetation start changing from here, but we are still more in the Andes side, that's why when you start going down to the Amazon, you can feel the warmth already and also how the vegetation changes a lot, you start seeing palms.

Lina: And the community that lives here is made up of people who have migrated from other places/ territories? or has this been their territory since its origin?

Jéssica: It's like being colonized here, because this used to be like a farmhouse, or a country house (a place to take vacations) and now people are coming from outside the Andes.

Lina: But are these people from here (Ecuador)? Or settlers from other countries?

Jessica: Oh no. They are people from here, only they have come from the Andes. Most of us (people that work in the lodge) are from here as well. I live an hour away from here, as well as my other colleagues

Lina: Is any language other than Spanish that is still preserved in this area?

Jéssica: Here is a Spanish-only area, as you go down to the Amazon you can find people that speak other languages and dialects.

Lina: Did you have the chance to learn the native language from your parents?

Jessica: Unfortunately, no. My dad can speak its language (kichwa), my grandmother the same. I mean, all my relatives from my father's side speak the language.

Lina: The language is Kichwa, right?

Jéssica: Yes, but Kichwa from the Amazon, because the Kichwa from the Andes is different.

Lina: Do you know why they are not the same?

Jéssica: I don't know, I've asked my parents and they tell me "no, the Kichwa from the Amazon is another". In other words, it seems that certain little words coincide, but it is not the same, they are two different ones. Everytime I have investigated, or asked my relatives, they always say that they are not the same.

Lina: If it's not Kichwa, then where does the root of the "*llacta*" come from, which is seen so much around here?

Jéssica: "*Llacta*" means land, here "*llacta*" or "*llacu*" means river. So here, for example, any name is put with "*llacta*" at the end, examples are "*chontallacta*", "*chirillacta*". Going down, almost all the names also have the "*llacta*". And already then as you go down it changes to "*cocha*".

Lina: So the ending "*llacta*" doesn't belong to Kichwa?

Jéssica: Yes, it belongs, they are words in Kichwa, but from the Andes kichwa. That's why I told you that some words or roots coincide, but others are different.

Lina: Speaking of animals again, regarding the bear, does it also have some cultural significance?

Jéssica: It is more as an object of preservation, since they are already quite rare.

Lina: Is the scarcity more due to climate change issues or is it related to humans?

Jéssica: More than anything, it's because of anthropological activities around there, so what do people do? For example, the bear attacks cattle, cows, so people kill them. It also eats corn, attacks crops, which is why they are killed and their population has decreased.

Lina: Do you know of any plants that are important to the community?

Jessica: Yes, there are some plants here. The "Yanten" is used for stomach pain. Here they also use guava (guava leaf) for stomach pain, for indigestion. The "Cola de caballo" (Horsetail-Equisetum) plant is also used for the stomach, as well as lemon leaves. They are all taken in infusions. Usually people are not accustomed to going to hospitals, only at home most of them take infusions when something hurts.

Lina: Is this knowledge that is transmitted in each house? Or is there a specific person that people turn to when they are sick?

Jéssica: No, the majority that are born here are already acquiring their knowledge in their houses. We are always learning because our parents have done the same, and they transmit this to us. For example, when a tooth hurts, what is done? Well, they take the "dandelion", as they commonly say, and they chew it where the tooth hurts and the pain goes away.

Next, we talk about typical festivities in the area (something strange happened and a part was not recorded)

Jéssica: We have "The Fox Run"

Lina: What is the fox running?

Jéssica: It's when a horse with its rider dresses like a fox and they go up the mountain and the others (people from the community) have to catch them and remove his tail (the horse is the fastest in the area). They go along some "trochas" (unpaved roads) super fast just to not be caught, and whoever can catch them keeps the title of the new "Fox". With that example you can see how our traditions have changed, because before it was different. Now, for example, the festivities organized are all about livestock or something related to cattle.

Before, for going through these roads you needed to either walk or go in a horse, there were no tracks or any well defined path. Now you can see a well defined road that connects the two regions of the Amazon and the Andes, but before, my grandma used to tell us that she had to ride a horse to try to get from one point to the other. This change is due to the agricultural activities, to have better access. In this area there is not much industrialization like other places, but just with the building of the road you can see how the livestock and agricultural activities are changing this place.