

Baka Community Lifestyle

Food in the rainforest

Baka communities move from place to place in search of food that the forest provides, including animals, fruit and vegetables. They stay in one area for a while and then move to set up a new camp in a different part of the forest.

The men hunt in the forest using bows and arrows and spears. They think carefully about what to hunt to protect the rainforest, and they make sure not to hunt too many of the same species so it survives to provide meat in the future.

Women gather wild fruits, nuts, mushrooms and vegetables such as yams. They also collect honey from beehives in the trees.

Homes

The women build temporary huts constructed from bowed branches covered in large leaves, called Monglus. Other leaves are added to make the roof waterproof. The huts are small inside and have items such as beds and shelves made from wood we collect in the forest.

Daily life

The Baka communities practice traditional medicine using the healing powers of the rainforest plants and skills handed down from generation to generation.

They weave baskets and mats out of leaves and other forest material. They also make hunting weapons, musical instruments, cooking equipment and clothes from the materials that they harvest from the forest.

Religion

The Baka communities worship a forest spirit known as Jengi, considered the great spirit and guardian of the forest. They sing songs accompanied by drumming, traditional dances and perform drama. These are linked to the workshop of the forest and each successful hunt is followed by a dance of thanksgiving.

Threats to the Baka communities

Some of the Baka people are being forced from the forests for a number of reasons.

Industrial logging is the biggest threat. It wipes out our traditional forest homes, spiritual sites and hunting grounds, leaving us nowhere to sleep and no food to eat. The wood that is logged is then usually sold to Europe and the rest of the world.

Commercial hunting follows industrial logging. Loggers open roads into the forest which encourages commercial hunting of the rainforest animals, so the Baka people cannot hunt traditional to provide meat for their families.

National Parks are another threat. They are designed to protect areas of wildlife, but this has resulted in Baka forest people being told to leave their land and denied access to the forest that has been their home for generations.