# **Lula will seek to reverse Amazon deforestation**

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**Body**

Rio de Janeiro (AP) - Shaking a traditional rattle, Brazil's new head of indigenous affairs recently walked through every corner of the agency's headquarters, including the coffee room, as she invoked the help of the ancestors during a ritual cleansing.

The ritual had extra meaning for Joenia Wapichana, Brazil's first indigenous woman to head the agency charged with protecting the ***Amazon*** rainforest and its people. Once she is sworn in next month under the administration of new President Luiz Inácio da Silva, Wapichana promises to clean house at an agency that critics say has allowed the ***Amazon***'s resources to be exploited at the expense of the environment.

As Wapichana performed the ritual, indigenous people and officials enthusiastically chanted "Yoohoo! Funai is ours!" a reference to the agency she will head.

Environmentalists, indigenous peoples and voters sympathetic to their causes were important to Lula's narrow victory over former president Jair Bolsonaro. Now Lula seeks to fulfill campaign promises he made on a wide range of issues, from expanding indigenous territories to halting the rise of illegal ***deforestation***.

To carry out these goals, Lula is appointing well-known environmentalists and indigenous people to key positions in Funai and other agencies that Bolsonaro filled with agribusiness allies and military chiefs.

In his first two terms, Lula had a mixed record on environmental and indigenous issues. And he will surely face obstacles from Bolsonaro-sympathetic state governors who still control swaths of the ***Amazon***. But experts say Lula is taking the right first steps.

Meanwhile, Bolsonaro's supporters fear that Lula's promise of stricter environmental protections will hurt the economy by reducing the amount of land open for development and punish people for activities that were previously allowed. Some in agribusiness have been accused of providing financial and logistical assistance to protesters who earlier this month stormed the presidential palace, Congress and the Supreme Federal Court.

When Bolsonaro was president, he stripped Funai and other agencies responsible for environmental oversight. This allowed ***deforestation*** to soar to its highest level since 2006, as developers and miners who took land from indigenous peoples faced few consequences.

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