

Sumak Kawsay: Ancient Teachings of Indigenous Peoples

Sumak kawsay - "good living" in harmony with our communities, ourselves, and most importantly, our living, breathing environment. Explore sumak kawsay in indigenous cultures and modern life.

Sumak Kawsay - “Good Living”



An ancient Quechua word, *sumak kawsay* means “good living” or the “good life,” and means more than our version of *la buena vida*. Often when we hear this, we may think of easy living, and a carefree yet connected lifestyle, but *sumak kawsay* is much deeper than this. Throughout South America, it is a way of living in harmony within communities, ourselves, and most importantly, nature.

***Sumak Kawsay* in Indigenous Culture**



The *sumak kawsay* way of living has permeated indigenous cultures for thousands of years.

Indigenous tribes, such as the Achuar and Kichwa, use their resources in a way that promotes regeneration, and regrowth. They embody community and well-being, and a co-existence with nature. Through living *sumak kawsay*, communities are able to preserve their unique culture and identity, and care for an environment that they know will provide for generations to come. *Sumak kawsay* is embedded in the ethical values of indigenous cultures.

***Sumak Kawsay* in Government and Moving Forward**



More recently, *sumak kawsay* has been [incorporated into Ecuadorian](#) and Bolivian governments as a way of granting rights to nature – and ultimately, to ourselves. The concept of *sumak kawsay* was incorporated into Ecuador’s [2008 Constitution](#), which was the first country to legally acknowledge rights of nature.

In moving forward, it can be a powerful global influence for governments and policy makers to initiate changes that will preserve the precious harmony we need to sustain ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.

Sumak kawsay values people over profit.

It is also a new way of viewing “developing nations” because it expresses a relationship with nature and surroundings that epitomizes the opposite of profit and commodification. A key piece is how development is defined: it calls for a decreased emphasis on economic and product development, and an increased focus on human development – not in population, but an enrichment of core values, spirituality, ethics, and a deepening of our own connection with pachamama.