

## CATCHING FIRE: FOR OUR COMMON HOME

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### OBJECTIVES //

To understand the challenges for communities defending their homes in the Amazon through an active experience of defending or exploiting the forest for profit

**TIME //** 30-60 minutes

**GROUP SIZE //** 6-40 participants

### MATERIALS //

- A fairly large rectangular space to represent the Amazon (A gymnasium is a good choice or an indoor area cleared of tables and chairs; the game can be played outside, but will risk losing some objects, especially if played in the grass)
- Masking tape, a long rope or other objects to mark territory
- Two jars
- Four additional containers to distribute the four types of materials listed below

Approximately 25 of each set of the following objects:

- Small sticks foraged from a natural area (i.e. "Timber")
- Red blocks, plastic gemstones, or other small red objects (i.e. "Fire")
- Plastic toy cows, farm animals, erasers or other objects (i.e. "Cattle")
- Pebbles (i.e. "Sylvanite," used to make potash fertilizer)

Optional:

- Images of different species native to the Amazon rainforest:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon\\_rainforest#Biodiversity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_rainforest#Biodiversity)

### PREPARATION //

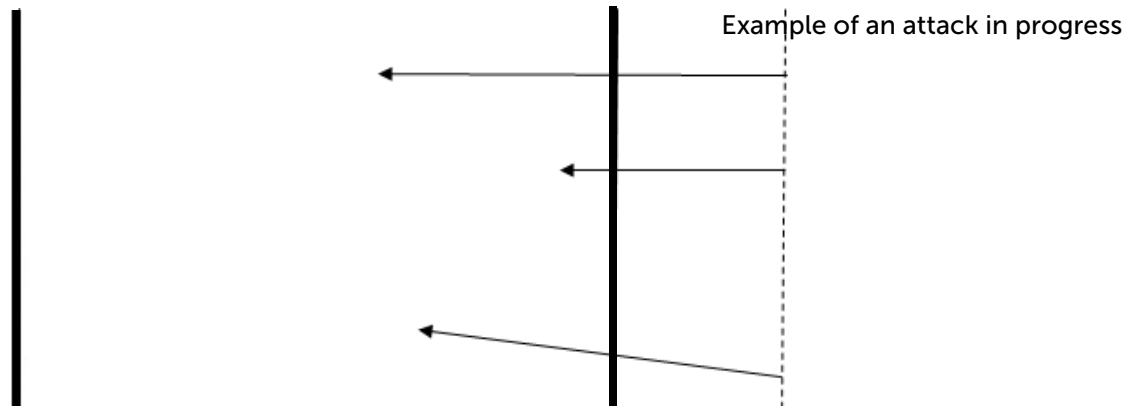
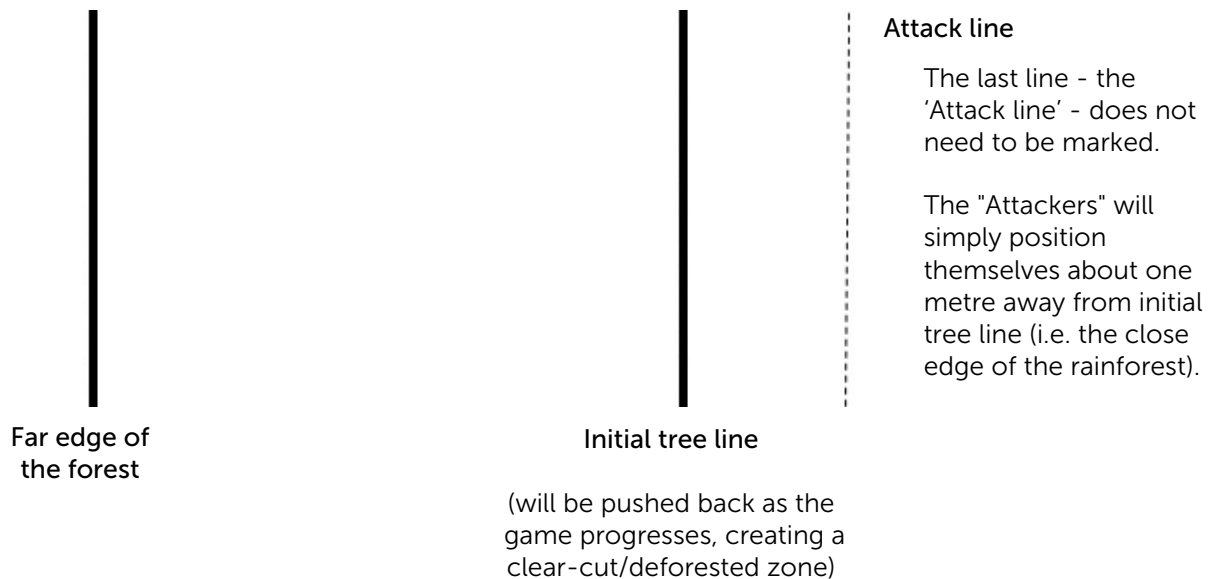
- Read the following D&P resources to familiarize yourself with human rights violations in the Amazon:  
Community Profiles (2 pages): [devp.org/sites/www.devp.org/files/documents/materials/devpeace\\_commonhome\\_community\\_profiles\\_en-v02.pdf](http://devp.org/sites/www.devp.org/files/documents/materials/devpeace_commonhome_community_profiles_en-v02.pdf)  
*Backgrounder (pages 1-4):* [devp.org/sites/www.devp.org/files/documents/materials/future\\_for\\_the\\_Amazon-backgrounder-en-v02.pdf](http://devp.org/sites/www.devp.org/files/documents/materials/future_for_the_Amazon-backgrounder-en-v02.pdf)
- Optional: To show the Amazon's enormous biodiversity, print out several images of plants and creatures native to that biome. You'll space them evenly throughout the 'Amazon' (Defenders') territory at the beginning of the activity

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- Using masking tape or space-marking objects, marking the two shorter edges of your rectangular activity area: the two lines will represent the edges of constitutionally-protected indigenous territory in the Amazon rainforest.

With six to 10 participants, set up a space approx. 6 metres long by 4 metres wide. For a larger group (eg. 40 participants), define a space up to twice as wide and twice as long.



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### ACTIVITY GUIDE

#### STEP 1 //

Divide the participants into two roughly equal groups: one group will be the Attackers and one group will represent the Defenders of the Amazon.

#### STEP 2 //

Have Defenders move to their side and explain the amazing biodiversity found in their homeland:

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rainforest, spanning nine countries. It serves as the lungs of the planet, absorbing carbon emissions and providing 20% of the oxygen we breathe. It helps stabilize the climate of the Earth, our common home. The Amazon rainforest is home to: 1/2 of all living plants and animals, 1/10 of the world's known species, 1/5 of the planet's fresh water and 1/3 of the Earth's forests.

**Optional:** If you're using them, lay down half of the species print-outs on the Defenders side.

Next explain importance of that territory to indigenous and traditional cultures and people living there:

30 million people live in the Amazon, including 380 Indigenous groups and 140 groups living in voluntary isolation. You want to defend your land from those who seek to tear it up and profit from it without regard to your community's physical or spiritual health, or basic needs.

#### STEP 3 //

Have Attackers stand on the opposite side and brief them on their role:

You work for a multinational company based in Canada or another rich country. Your role is to generate the most profit as you can from the fertile land of the Amazon from as many sources as you can (eg. logging, cattle ranching, mining). If the shareholders are happy with your progress, you'll get a big bonus.

**Optional:** Invite Attackers to get into their roles by asking: "What do you want to put your bonus towards?" Answers might include: a cottage, a new car, a trip around the world, a

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Caribbean cruise, a private jet, etc..

### STEP 4 //

Inform participants that, after a few minutes, the Defenders will become the Attackers, and vice versa. Explain the goal of the game is to defend the Amazon by having the least amount of land cleared for timber, cattle-ranching and mining operations by the other group.

### STEP 5 //

Tell Attackers that they will soon make their first foray into the forest by throwing twigs into forested territory, simulating the logging of the Amazon rainforest. The furthest thrown Timber object will represent the new 'tree line'.

### STEP 6 //

Picking up the Timber container, invite each of the attackers to pick an object from it and to place themselves on the 'Attack' line.

Explain that you will provide a countdown at which point the 'attack' can begin. Demonstrate the gentle underhand throw that Attackers need to use to toss the 'timber' into the rainforest (you don't actually need to throw the object),

### STEP 7 //

Inform Defenders that they must try to catch the objects before they hit the ground in order to 'protect' their territory. Place an empty 'Defense Jar' on their side near the dividing line, and inform them that they should place any objects they manage to catch in it.

### STEP 8 //

Ensure Attackers are ready and holding their objects below the waist (not above the head). When all Attackers are in line, count down: "3 - 2 - 1... Fire!" and watch as Defenders attempt to catch the objects.

### STEP 9 //

After all of the objects fall, have everyone pause. Invite defenders to place any objects they caught into the 'Defense Jar' situated near the dividing line. Objects not caught can be left on the ground for now (if safe to do so). The furthest flung timber (or fire) object should be left on the ground, for reference throughout the round: this is the new tree line.



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STEP 10 //

**Optional:** If you've placed images of native species of Amazon on the ground, were there any images sitting between the original tree line and the new tree line? If so, name and describe the plant/s or animal/s, crumple the sheet up, and toss them aside to represent their destruction.

Explain:

**As timber and/or fire objects create a larger and larger clear-cut/deforested zone, more and more species will be destroyed.**

STEP 11 // Fire

Invite Attackers to prepare for a new offensive by standing on the Attack line once more. This time, distribute a Fire object to each Attacker, and explain the purpose of setting fire to the logged area:

**Once land is cleared of valuable timber, you want to burn whatever's left to pave the way for cattle ranching.**

Inform Attackers:

**The only timber or fire objects that will improve your score are the ones that push back the rainforest's original border; in other words, it's in your interest to throw slightly further than where the furthest logging object landed.**

Complete Steps 7-10 for Fire objects.

STEP 12 // Cattle

Complete Steps 7-10 for the next category: Cattle (eg. cow figurines). Before counting down to the throw, explain to Attackers:

**For each cow that falls on the ground, you establish a ranch of 300 cattle, which you can raise and sell in the global export market.**

**The only cattle that will count towards your score are those that fall inside the area you've already cleared by logging and forest fires – ie. between the original tree line and the new tree line (demonstrate where this target area is); This is because the forest must**

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be cleared before ranches can be established there.

After each throw, invite Defenders to put the Cattle that landed inside the clear-cut, deforested area/s into the 'Attack jar' to give a point to the Attackers. Have other Defenders pick up Cattle that fell outside this target zone (ie. inside the dense rainforest that remains) and put them to one side (these objects will not be counted in the final score).

### STEP 13 // Sylvanite

Complete Steps 7-10 for the next category: Sylvanite (eg. pebbles). Before counting down to the throw, explain to Attackers:

**For each sylvanite piece that falls on the ground, you establish a deep shaft mine from which you can extract hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of raw material to make potash (fertilizer).**

**The only sylvanite objects that will count towards your score are those that fall inside the areas you've already cleared by logging and forest fires – ie. between the original tree line and the new tree line (demonstrate where this target area is); This is because the forest must be cleared before mines can be established there.**

After each throw, invite Defenders to put the sylvanite that landed inside the clear-cut/ deforested area into the 'Attack jar' to give a point to the Attackers. Have other Defenders pick up sylvanite that fell outside this target zone (ie. inside the dense rainforest that remains) and put them to one side (these objects will not be counted in the final score).

### STEP 14 //

Continue playing until Attackers have thrown at least one of each object. If all types of object have been thrown, you can give Attackers two objects to throw in a single turn and offer them any of the four objects they wish to throw (see 'Optional' section on page 7-8 for prompts).

### STEP 15 //

Play until half or all the objects are gone, but do not wait more than 10-15 minutes (or half the allotted time) before switching groups; this will help keep things moving.

### STEP 16 //

Once you decide the round is done, measure the amount of forest that was protected from illegal forest fires and logging by counting your steps from the far boundary of the forest to the nearest fire or logging object (ie. number of feet). In the meantime, have Defenders count:



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(a.) the number of objects they successfully caught in the 'Defense jar' and (b.) the number of cattle and sylvanite objects in the 'Attack jar'.

Once you're done measuring the number of feet of land successfully protected, have Attackers gather up all the logging and fire objects (and any other objects) strewn around the territory.

### STEP 17 //

Invite Attackers and Defenders to organize the objects by type and put them back into their original containers.

In the meantime, calculate the Defenders score:

- ...The # of objects in the defense jar
- ...PLUS the # of feet of forest NOT lost to fire and clear-cutting
- ...MINUS the # of cattle and sylvanite objects in the Attack jar

*Please note:* this may be a negative number.

### STEP 18 //

Announce the Defenders score to the group. Have participants switch sides. Repeat Steps 2-17 with them.

### STEP 19 //

Once both teams have had equal playing time, compare the total objects each team caught. The team with the highest score wins.

## OPTIONAL

### ADD REAL-LIFE TWISTS AND TURNS TO DEEPEN PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE //

Between rounds, make the following announcements about political developments to make the game more or less challenging for the Defenders:

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TO INCREASE DIFFICULTY	TO REDUCE DIFFICULTY
<p>New policy promotes resource extraction</p> <p>The new Brazilian government has made it easier for economic interests to exploit the Amazon. To represent these more relaxed environmental laws, Attackers can now throw two objects at once!</p>	<p>International Solidarity efforts emerge and grow in momentum</p> <p>Actions like writing letters and offering financial support to movements for justice can lead to positive social change and even freedom from oppression - D&amp;P's members' advocacy against Apartheid helped free Nelson Mandela, and the same goes for supporting communities defending the Amazon). Choose 1-2 Attackers to join the side of the Defenders.</p>
<p>Assassination of Land Defenders</p> <p>To represent the assassinations of land defenders that take place in the Amazon, (and if appropriate for your age group), announce the tragic 'murder' one or two of the land defenders. Have them either lie on the ground for the rest of the game (a visual reminder to the others) or have them join the Attackers.</p> <p>For younger participants, skip this, but consider having one or two them join the Attackers - this can represent the co-opting of social movements and influence of threats to life on human rights activists.</p>	<p>Widespread pressure results in policy change to defend the Amazon</p> <p>The actions of social movements can result in better policies to protect it. To represent this, either choose to apply one of the following impediments to the Attackers, or combine a few together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevent half of the Attackers from throwing in that round;</li> <li>• have Attackers step back one foot from the attack line;</li> <li>• have Attackers throw with their eyes closed;</li> <li>• have Attackers go back to throwing only one object (if they were throwing two).</li> </ul>
<p>The Extractivists get organized!</p> <p>To represent the efforts of those exploiting the Amazon to organize themselves, give allow the attackers an amount of time to organize themselves that is longer than the time given to the defenders (this represents the greater resources at their disposal)</p>	<p>The Land Defenders get organized!</p> <p>To represent the efforts of those defending the Amazon to organize themselves, allow the defenders a few minutes before the round to discuss their strategy for catching as many of the objects as possible.</p>



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### DEBRIEF

#### DISCUSSION //

This activity can bring out strong emotions among participants, so it is helpful to leave five to 10 minutes at the end to give them a chance to share their experiences as a group.

#### Sample discussion questions

- How did you feel playing the role of the Land Defender? What changed when you took on the role of the Attacker?
- How did you feel playing the role of the Attacker? What changed when you took on the role of the Defender?
- Did this role play game help you understand the forces at work in the Amazon? Why or why not?
- **Who do you think the 'Attackers' are in real life?**  
Draw out from participants that we might also be considered 'Attackers' (even though we live far away): even if we don't realize it, many Canadian families benefit from the exploitation of the rainforest through financial investments in companies that exploit the area. Our consumption of meat also connects us to climate change, and potentially Brazilian cattle ranching. On a positive note, by choosing to act in solidarity, we can shift from being 'Attackers' to 'Defenders.'
- From your experiences in this game, can you think of any ways to act in solidarity with land defenders in the Amazon and other threatened biomes?

#### FOLLOW-UP //

#### Suggestions for participant follow-up actions:

- Write a solidarity letter for the defenders of the Amazon:  
[devp.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/action](http://devp.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/action)
- Organize or participate in a THINKfast:  
[devp.org/en/thinkfast](http://devp.org/en/thinkfast)
- Sign the Intergenerational Pledge for our Common Home:  
[devp.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/pledge](http://devp.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/pledge)
- Plan a fundraiser for D&P's partners in the Amazon who are at-risk of violence
- Keep learning by reading and watching videos at:  
[devp.org/en/forourcommonhome/community-profiles](http://devp.org/en/forourcommonhome/community-profiles)