

ANCESTRAL BEAUTY

Honouring Ancient Traditions



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Author | Alice Leeburn



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In an oversaturated beauty market, sacred rituals, ancient wisdom and authentic storytelling offer a reassuring alternative, powered by naturally potent, sustainably sourced regional ingredients. Indigenous cultures from Africa, Australia, and South American and Native American communities offer exciting beauty narratives, providing much-needed representation for marginalised communities.

Summary

Reviving Age-Old Rituals & Remedies

As consumers seek ever more natural, holistic and spiritually charged self-care, the allure of archaic but reassuringly authentic beauty rituals shines through. From ceremonial celebrations to medicinal herbs and ancestral family recipes, Indigenous people are keen to honour their traditions and share generational knowledge with an equally engaged non-Indigenous audience.

Activism, Representation & Empowerment

With many Indigenous people having experienced racism, marginalisation and little representation in mainstream culture, Indigenous-owned beauty brands and initiatives are empowering consumers to reclaim their cultural identity. It's all about creating new beauty standards, education, and raising awareness.

Rooted in Sustainability

Raised with a deep-rooted respect for nature, Indigenous cultures are connected to all living things – from water to plants and animals – and understand the importance of protecting these eco-systems. This ethos continues for Indigenous beauty brands, which employ the local community to ensure sustainable sourcing, safe formulating and planet-first packaging.


Indigenous Ingredients

From potent healing herbs and aromatic resins to nourishing nut oils and vitamin-packed fruit, Indigenous communities are guided by native ingredients and a deep-rooted respect for nature. Independent beauty brands are learning from this, increasing their sustainability efforts by investing in the local and regenerative sourcing of raw materials.

At A Glance

Innovation Platforms

 Inclusivity Outlook

 Sustainable Futures

 Wraparound Wellness

Topics

Ethics

Haircare

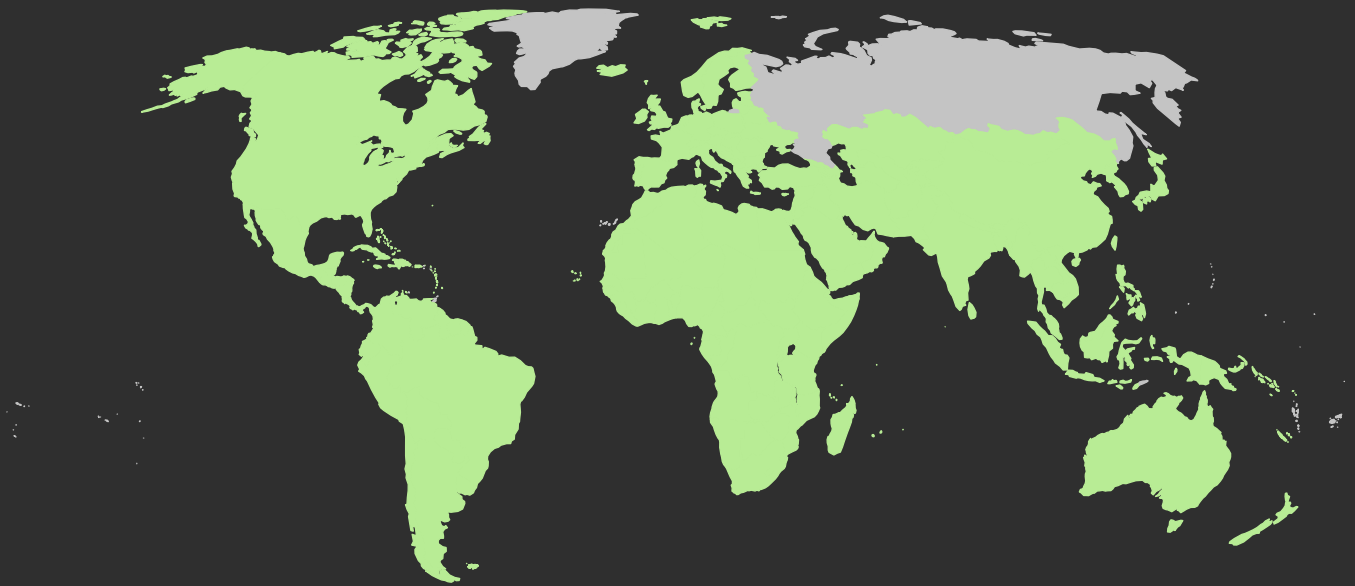
Ingredients

Natural & Organic

Race and Cultural Diversity

Skincare

Regional Focus



Trend Duration

Now

2 yrs

4 yrs

6 yrs

8 yrs

10 yrs

12 yrs

Key Stats

General

476m

There are 476 million Indigenous people worldwide, spread across over 90 countries

5k

There are more than 5,000 different Indigenous peoples, speaking over 4,000 languages

9.7m

There are currently 9.7 million Native American people living in the US, and they make up 3% of the total population

2.9%

Overall, Native Americans make up 2.8% of US beauty buyers, and account for 2.9% of beauty dollar sales

Reviving Age-Old Rituals & Remedies

71%

In a survey of 2,000 Americans, the benefits of self-care cited by respondents include increased happiness (71%), boosted self-confidence (64%), and higher productivity (67%)

35%

In the US, more than a third (35%) of consumers agreed their focus on looking after themselves generally had increased during Covid-19 lockdowns, while 31% said they loved themselves more

\$1.6bn

In the US, the Black haircare market was worth \$1.6bn in 2021

Activism, Representation & Empowerment

80%

While accounting for just 5% of the world's population, Indigenous people protect 80% of the Earth's biodiversity in the forests, deserts, grasslands and marine environments in which they have lived for centuries

13%

Hispanic consumers spent 13% more than the average consumer on beauty and personal care in 2020

79%

Indigenous-owned Canadian beauty brand Cheekbone Beauty's audience is 79% non-Indigenous

Rooted in Sustainability

23%

Waterless soap, bath and shower products now account for 23% of the personal care market in the US

12%

In 2020, nearly 12% of global beauty and personal care launches in the soap, bath and shower category claimed to be waterless

Indigenous Ingredients

AUS
\$81.5m

Australia's native food industry was worth AUS \$81.5m in 2019-20, with the potential to double by 2025

X2

Australian native ingredients like river mint and quandong peach are on-trend – with the industry expected to double between 2020-25

25%

First Nations representation in the native agricultural supply chain is thought to be less than 2%

Reviving Age-Old Rituals & Remedies

As consumers seek ever more natural, holistic and spiritually charged self-care, the allure of archaic but reassuringly authentic beauty rituals shines through. From ceremonial celebrations to medicinal herbs and ancestral family recipes, Indigenous people are keen to honour their traditions and share generational knowledge with an equally engaged non-Indigenous audience.

- **Sacred Self-Care:** With self-care now regarded as much more than a pampering session (benefits cited by US consumers include increased happiness (71%), boosted self-confidence (64%) and higher productivity (67%) – [Vagaro](#), 2021), consumers are seeking holistically empowering practices.

Inspired by the rituals of ancient Egyptian pharaohs, UK skincare start-up [Hayaty Natural](#) views beauty regimes as a manifestation of self-love, not aesthetic gain. Packaged in luxurious gold and enriched with soothing aromatics such as Egyptian Black Seed Oil, the luxurious [facial formulas](#) celebrate progress over perfection with ‘before and after’ imagery.

Fusing Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with spiritual practices of reiki, aromatherapy, crystal healing and astrology, US lifestyle brand [Pink Moon](#) offers alluring yet accessible wellbeing products. The rose-petal-rich [Celestial Sun Brew](#) can be drunk as a calming tisane (herbal tea/infusion), or used as a soothing facial steam or hair rinse.



Hayaty Natural



Hayaty Natural



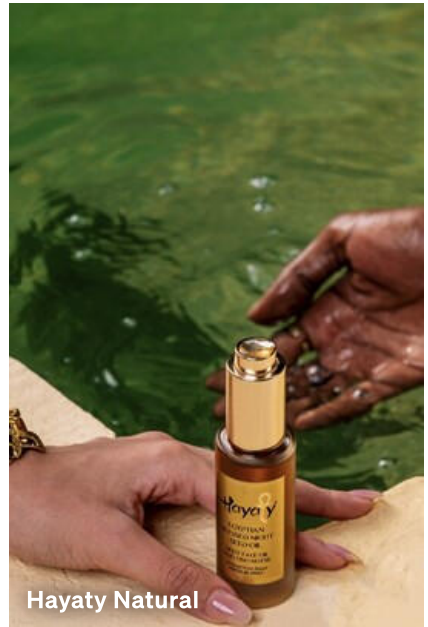
Hayaty Natural



Hayaty Natural



Hayaty Natural



Hayaty Natural



Pink Moon



Pink Moon



Pink Moon



Pink Moon



Pink Moon



Pink Moon

- **Magical Hair Potions:** As the 'skinification' of haircare continues, consumers are seeking 'miracle' formulas that boost growth and shine.

Known for their lustrous, waist-length tresses, Chad's Basara Arab tribe's ancient ritual of Chébé involves toasting seeds from the 'magical' [croton gratissimus](#) tree (known as chébé), pounding them into a powder, and then braiding the paste into their hair. Contemporary Chadian brands [Beit Mama](#) and [Salwa Petersen](#) use chébé as a strengthening and lengthening ingredient.

- **Beautiful Body Art:** Dating back to the Bronze Age, henna body art has been adopted for ceremonial use, crossing over into mainstream culture.

Symbolising tribal identity, strength, bravery and beauty, the Filipino tradition of [batok](#) taps a hafted tattoo needle into the skin with a small hammer. The last known [mambabatok](#) (traditional tattooist) of the Kalinga tribe, 106-year-old Apo Whang-Od, graced [Vogue Philippines' Beauty Issue](#) in April 2023 – becoming the magazine's oldest ever cover star.



Salwa Petersen



Salwa Petersen



Salwa Petersen



BeIt Mama



BeIt Mama



BeIt Mama



Vogue Philippines



Vogue Philippines



Vogue Philippines

VOG

- **Scentsual Storytelling:** As explored in [Sensory Self-Care](#), beauty brands are finding unusual ways to offer sensorial experiences, with ancient artefacts offering huge potential.

An immersive exhibition hosted by Los Angeles' The Institute for Art and Olfaction, [Bagh-e Hind](#) interpreted artwork from 17th-century India via specially created scents with notes of rose, narcissus, smoke, iris and [kewra](#).

Fusing perfume rituals from the East and West, Omani fragrance house [Ojar](#) showcases traditional Persian notes of rose, honey and frankincense; while Ivory Coast perfumer [Olfacto Beauty](#) celebrates African heritage and ingredients, such as Outre Noir's woody citrus with Haitian vetiver.



Bagh-e Hind



Bagh-e Hind



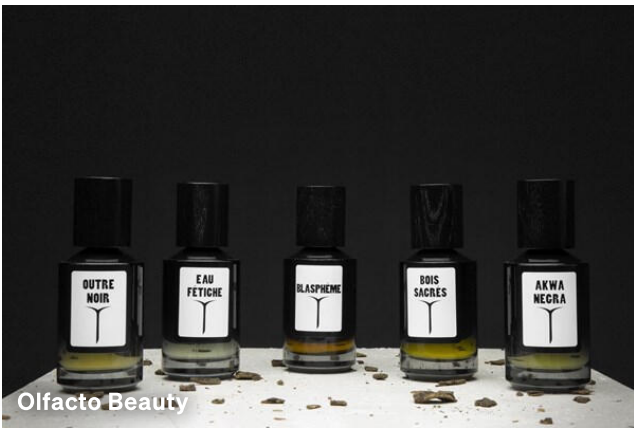
OJAR



OJAR



OJAR



Olfacto Beauty



Olfacto Beauty

- **Biodiverse Philosophies:** The Amazon rainforest is home to thousands of plants used in the beauty industry. Brands are learning from Indigenous people to formulate authentic, high-performance products and sustainable sourcing systems.

When creating his eco-beneficial lifestyle brand [Costa Brazil](#), [Francisco Costa](#) spent time with the country's [Yawanawá](#) people to experience their daily rituals, ceremonies and spiritual connection with the earth. Meanwhile, US-based [Amazonian SkinFood](#) works with rainforest settlements to curate and ethically source a selection of potent skincare ingredients, thus creating a positive social, economical and environmental impact. “When the ancestral knowledge of the Indigenous people is lost, the whole world will lose the ability of living a more harmonious life with nature and its abundance,” [said](#) co-founder [Shane Lindner](#).



Costa Brazil



Costa Brazil



Costa Brazil



Amazonian SkinFood



Amazonian SkinFood

- **Captivating K-Wellness:** While K-beauty diversifies into ever more scientific innovation, beauty insiders are tipping K-wellness, with its roots in ancient Korean herbal medicine, as the next big thing.

Seoul-based intimate care brand [Riley House](#) borrows from bygone bathing rituals with menthol-like [mugwort bath soaks](#) to alleviate menstrual cramps, with selfie-friendly millennial branding.

With a holistic mind/body healing philosophy, US/Korean skincare start-up [Chogongjin](#) harnesses the youth-preserving powers of herbs and roots and a fermented complex of thyme, Korean angelica and Cornelian cherry.



- **Authentic Family Stories:** The allure of family recipes passed down through generations holds a special magic.

Co-founded by Spokane Tribe siblings Marina and Monica, US hair and bodycare brand [Sister Sky](#) honours its ancestors' herbal healing recipes and harvests ingredients from ancestral land. Its original and bestselling product, [Kevin's Care Body Lotion](#), blends marshmallow root, witch hazel extract and horsetail herb to soothe eczema.

Meanwhile, contemporary Canadian Cree [medicine woman](#) Carrie Armstrong worked with her grandmother and elders to create [Mother Earth Essentials](#) – a healing bath and body line to share generationally taught culture, spirituality, and [medicinal plant knowledge](#).



Sister Sky



Sister Sky



Sister Sky



Mother Earth Essentials



Mother Earth Essentials



Mother Earth Essentials

Activism, Representation & Empowerment

With many Indigenous people having experienced racism, marginalisation and little representation in mainstream culture, Indigenous-owned beauty brands and initiatives are empowering consumers to reclaim their cultural identity. It's all about creating new beauty standards, education, and raising awareness.

“Representation matters, I didn't have that growing up. I don't think we realised as a society how important that was until recently – every community deserves to be represented.”

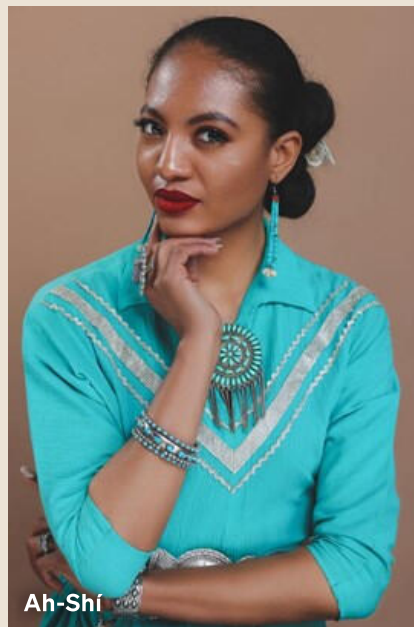
Jenn Harper
Founder, Cheekbone
Beauty

- **Real Representation:** Growing up on an Arizona Navajo Reservation, Ahsaki Báá LaFrance-Chachere was frustrated by the lack of representation of Indigenous culture in the beauty industry, and watched her family mix foundations to match their skin tone. Creating luxury cosmetics brand [Ah-Shí](#) to empower the next generation, her bestselling, anti-ageing [Hi Def Foundation](#) is now available in 28 shades, and she opened the US's first Native American-owned beauty brand storefront in 2020.

A member of the Alaskan [Gwich'in](#) and Dakotan [Oglala Lakota](#) tribes, US model and climate action activist [Quannah Chasinghorse](#) is the new global ambassador for US haircare brand [John Paul Mitchell Systems](#). She shares her cultural heritage and traditions in the brand's [Iconic Hair](#) campaign.



Ah-Shí



Ah-Shí



Ah-Shí



Quannah Chasinghorse x Paul Mitchell



Quannah Chasinghorse x Paul Mitchell



Quannah Chasinghorse x Paul Mitchell

- **Celebrate with Colour:** While Native American-owned brands are keen to distance themselves from appropriated Aztec-style designs, vibrant colour and pattern is culturally significant.

With the tagline “Proudly Indigenous, Unapologetically Beautiful”, US-based [Prados Beauty](#)’s rich pigments are inspired by founder [Cece Meadows](#)’ Yaqui and Comanche heritage. Arizona-based [Shí-Fawn Chee](#) created [Blended Girl Cosmetics](#) while studying make-up artistry. Best-known for its [kaleidoscopic eye palettes](#), the brand donates a portion of its profits to Indigenous charities.



Prados Beauty



Prados Beauty



Prados Beauty



Blended Girl Cosmetics



Blended Girl Cosmetics



Blended Girl Cosmetics

- **Climate-First Campaigns:** With Indigenous people [forced to defend their land and water from pollution, theft and destruction](#), beauty brands can raise awareness of these issues.

A collaboration with [Indigenous Peoples Rights International](#) and [The Blue Planet Project](#), British eco-beauty giant Lush's [Land Defenders, Water Protectors](#) initiative is raising funds in the US, donating 100% of the purchase price of its limited-edition [Guardian of the Forest](#) bath bomb.

And highlighting that many First Nations communities don't have access to clean drinking water, Canadian colour cosmetics brand [Cheekbone Beauty](#)'s 2022 [#glossedover](#) campaign marketed an "unsellable" lip gloss line made with contaminated water.

- **Owning the Indigenous Tourism Opportunity:** Although they comprise less than 5% of the world's population, Indigenous people protect 80% of the Earth's biodiversity (WWF, 2020). With the spa and wellness industry collective [Global Wellness Summit](#) declaring [Indigenous wellness tourism](#) a key trend for 2023, a rise in Indigenous-led travel tours on ancestral land allows travellers to experience local wellness practices such as medicinal herb foraging, while enabling local communities to protect their land and culture from outside commercialisation.



Rooted in Sustainability

Raised with a deep-rooted respect for nature, Indigenous cultures are connected to all living things – from water to plants and animals – and understand the importance of protecting these eco-systems. This ethos continues for Indigenous beauty brands, which employ the local community to ensure sustainable sourcing, safe formulating and planet-first packaging.

“Indigenous people are the OGs of sustainability.”

Jenn Harper
Founder, Cheekbone
Beauty

- **Sustainable by Nature:** Embracing the concept of [Two-Eyed Seeing](#) (which marries ancient Indigenous wisdom and western science) and [The Seven Grandfather Teachings](#) (meaning what we do today impacts the next seven generations), Cheekbone Beauty is inherently sustainable.

“We take Indigenous teaching and incorporate that into the making and creating of products,” founder Jenn Harper told Stylus. “From the harvesting of every raw ingredient, to how to make our formulas biodegradable and packaging that won’t end up in landfill –we think about our goals and work backwards.”

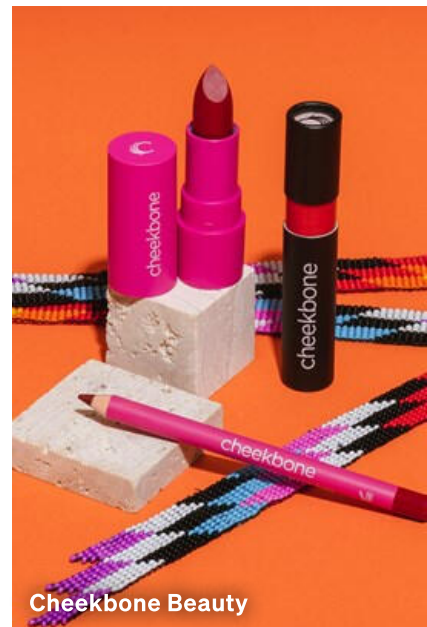
Operating an in-house, chemist-run ‘Indigenous Innovation Lab’, the brand also recently signed a partnership with Canadian environmental non-profit [Canopy](#) to explore sustainable packaging innovation.



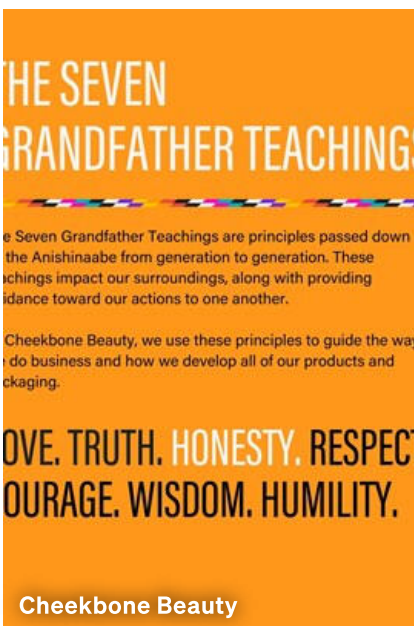
Cheekbone Beauty



Cheekbone Beauty



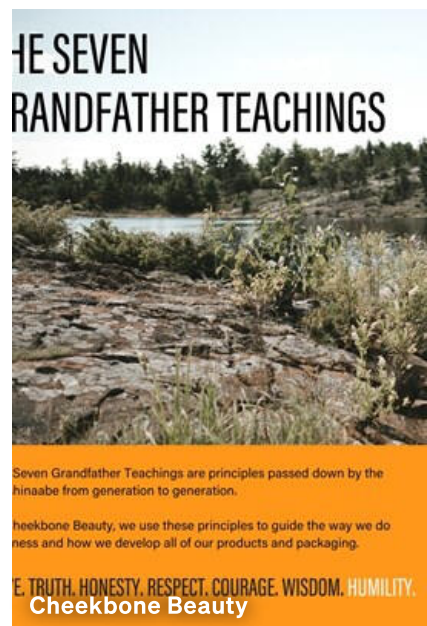
Cheekbone Beauty



Cheekbone Beauty



Cheekbone Beauty



Cheekbone Beauty

- **Ethical Sourcing:** Beauty brands are supporting Indigenous culture, commerce and crops by working with local producers.

Amazonian SkinFood will place a QR code on a soon-to-launch product that highlights the family that harvested its copaiba resin oil, as well as their location. Meanwhile, British wellbeing brand [Plantopia](#)'s Australian sandalwood essential oil is supplied by an Aboriginal-owned and certified venture that generates community investment while protecting the central desert forests.



Plantopia



Plantopia



Plantopia

- **Wild Harvesting:** Indigenous-owned brands show respect for the land, and support the local community. In Canada, [The Yukon Soaps Company](#)'s handcrafted soaps and essential oil blends feature wild botanicals gathered by elders and local children; Quebec-based [Sequoia Soaps](#)' unique marbled bars contain handpicked herbs; and [Skwálwen Botanicals](#) is built upon Squamish First Nations' [ancestral plant relations](#), with seasonal harvesting affecting product output.



Yukon Soaps Company



Yukon Soaps Company



Sequoia Soaps



Sequoia Soaps



Sequoia Soaps



Skwálwen Botanicals



Skwálwen Botanicals



Skwálwen Botanicals

- **Solidly Sustainable:** Already a traditional format in Indigenous personal care routines, waterless soap, bath and shower products now account for 23% of the US personal care market ([Future Market Insights](#), 2021).

Chinese-British brand [Yao Secret](#)'s shampoo bars feature ritually prepared fermented rice water sourced from women of the Red Yao tribe in China, whose generations-old formula nourishes hair and encourages growth. Elsewhere, inspired by Native American culture, French brand [Maison Dakōta](#)'s refillable skincare and fragrance balms are housed in lipstick-like tubes emblazoned with [animal totems](#).



Yao Secret



Yao Secret



Yao Secret



Maison Dakōta



Maison Dakōta

Indigenous Ingredients

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- **Personalised Plant Prescriptions:** Inspired by the brand's travels and its book, [An Atlas of Natural Beauty](#), Parisian heritage brand Officine Universelle Buly's [Plant-Oils](#) are made with a variety of Indigenous plants that naturally benefit the skin and hair of people who hail from the same land.

"The growth of Marula on the African continent followed the migratory movements of the Bantu people, who consider it the tree of life," co-founder Victoire de Taillac told Stylus. In Namibia, the fruit's kernels are pressed to produce a vitamin-rich oil – a customary skin and hair hydration ritual for women of that region.



- **Aussie Farm-to-Face:** Growing demand for A-beauty means Australian First Nation farmers are finding lucrative opportunities in the cosmetics industry.

Infused with Indigenous botanicals, [Palmolive SkinFood](#)'s new [campaign](#) supports native agriculture. The proprietary ingredient in its Native River Mint Foaming Hand Wash is supplied by [Pundi Produce](#), a South Australia Riverland farm that uses the ancient Mayan and Aztec agriculture method of [aquaponics](#) – a circular system that combines aquatic animals and water-based plants – to encourage faster crop yields, biodiversity, and water conservation.



- **African Super Ingredients:** An abundant continent of diverse raw ingredients, Africa is celebrated for its nutrient-rich oils.

Drawing inspiration from her Republic of Congo upbringing, former model [Natacha Paugam](#) created [Ustawi](#), a skincare brand that nourishes melanin-rich skin. Inspired by family recipes, the [formulas](#) use ethically sourced local ingredients, including African superfruit baobab and detoxifying organic myrtle leaf.

The Cape Aloe Serum by South African slow beauty brand [The Natural Africa](#) contains aloe ferox, which has been used as a medicinal ingredient for years by indigenous tribes of Southern Africa for its antiviral and antimicrobial properties. Containing the antioxidant aloin, it also enhances skin repair and healing.



- **The Amazon Effect:** Some of the Amazon rainforest’s plant species are so potent, they’ve led to single ingredients being used as the basis of entire beauty brands.

US fermented skincare start-up [Cacaye](#) sources its namesake essential fatty acid-rich nut oil from Colombia. NYC haircare brand [Rahua](#)’s “rainforest-grown beauty” line was inspired by the long locks of the Quechua-Shuar tribe, from whom the company sources its rahua oil. And Costa Brazil hopes to sustainably lab replicate its hero ingredient [breu branco](#), an aromatic resin with mood-enhancing properties.



Cacaye



Cacaye



Cacaye



Costa Brazil



Rahua



Rahua



Costa Brazil



Rahua

- Keep Ingredients Lists Simple** “Consumers are more aware than ever that modern beauty products are industrially processed, and are looking for more simplistic natural formulas that can achieve the same results,” says Victoire de Taillac, co-founder of Officine Universelle Buly. Reducing your ingredients and clearly listing their benefits will resonate with consumers eager to get back to basics.
- Contextualise Sustainable Packaging Choices** “Right now, we’re in a world where plastic has been completely vilified, but we’re destroying forests – just because something is paper, doesn't make it better,” says Cheekbone Beauty’s Jenn Harper, who also uses aluminium tins and [post-consumer resins](#) (a second life for plastic). Sustainability is a nuanced subject, and brands need to provide context for consumers.
- Explore Cross-Category Partnerships** As we move towards a more circular economy, food producers are finding opportunities for their ingredients in the beauty industry, closing the loop and combatting waste. Founded by a family-run dairy farm, Tasmanian skincare brand [Ewe Care](#) uses unwanted [Awassi](#) sheep’s milk in its soothing face and bodycare formulations.
- Be Accountable For Your Products** “What we haven’t thought about deeply as consumers is that there is almost certainly a negative impact with an inexpensive product,” says Harper. Brands must be accountable for the products they bring into the world, and smaller independents are pushing everyone to make great, ethically made products for a fair price.