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[00:02 - 00:33] Man Narrator: [music starts playing] Welcome to "Protecting Hope", stories of successful sustainable tourism[breathes]. Join us as we travel the globe listening to impactful stories about how sustainable tourism to protected areas contributes to environmental conservation[breathes], local economies and human wellbeing[breathes]. This podcast is brought to you by the Center for Protected Area Management at Colorado State University[breathes], in partnership with the US Forest Service International Programs Office[breathes], and is supported by funding from the US Agency for International Development.

[00:39 - 00:44] Woman Narrator: Episode 2: Diversity is Our Strength with Gabriela Fontoura.

[00:48 - 01:13] Ryan Finchum: Hello everyone. My name is Ryan Finchum. I'm the director of our center for Protected Area Management at Colorado State University, and I'm going to be one of your hosts of this podcast, "Protecting Hope"[breathes]. Today I'm with Gabriela Fontoura from Brazil[music stops]. Gabi, as most people call her, is the director of Estação Gabiraba, a community-based tourism operator in the Amazon[breathes]. Welcome, Gabi.

[01:14 - 01:26] Gabriela Fontoura: Hi, Ryan. Hello, everybody. Hello, dear[unintelligible] friends, and all our listeners, protectors of hope. It's great to be here today. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

[01:26 - 01:45] Ryan Finchum: It's so great to be back in touch with you. Uh, I know we, we, you know, we worked together on a workshop in Acara in Western Amazon with the Forest Service[breathes], uh, which is where we first met. Um, and then you participated in a US site visit with us focused on sustainable tourism, I believe in[breathes], in 2019. Is that right?

[01:45 - 02:11] Gabriela Fontoura: Yes, yes. It was an amazing opportunity to learn together. Yes. So I'm also really grateful to be in touch again and especially talking about these amazing news, the, the podcast that you are just launching now. It's very nice[breathes] to have this kind of media in this kind of space, to discuss, and to talk with other people that are working in protected areas and tourism around the world.

[02:11 - 02:17] Ryan Finchum: Great, great[breathes]. Why don't we start off? Why don't you just tell us a little bit about yourself and, and kind of what you're, what you're working on?

[02:17 - 02:58] Gabriela Fontoura: Okay, so I was born and raised in Belém. That is the capital of Pará state in the Brazilian Amazon region[breathes]. I have a bachelor's degree in tourism from

the Federal University of Pará and a specialization course in environmental studies[breathes]. I'm currently a master's student in local development at the University of Padua in Italy. And as you said in 2007, I founded and since then I am the director of Estação Gaboraba, a community-based tourism operator in the Amazon, where I have been working for the last 15 years on sustainable tourism and conservation as a consultant, also for several organizations.

[02:59 - 03:06] Ryan Finchum: Tell us a little bit about Estação Gaboraba. What, what is the, what does this business do? How, how do you operate? Tell, tell us a little bit more.

[03:06 - 04:04] Gabriela Fontoura: Okay, so we started in 2007. And I'm saying that because it's nice to see that this year we celebrated 15 years of operation. So Estação Gaboraba, uh, is a tour operator. We do usually a lot of kind of projects of implementing of plan- planning, first of all, but implementing[breathes] these kind of trips based on what the communities think, that is the main things they want to show and to share with the visitors. So it's a new, like a new way of doing business because, for example, also there are some communities that says[breathes], "Okay, let's do it. We really want to do it. We want to create together this kind of trip and services and products here[breathes]." But for us, it's fine to have four groups per year because we don't want to substitute our traditional, for example, activities or we don't-

[04:04 - 04:04] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[04:04 - 04:58] Gabriela Fontoura: Want too much tourism because we need to have time to other kind of activities that we already... uh, run here in our place, and that's also fine. So what I like about Estação Gaboraba is that we have- we follow the principles of community-based tourism, and... we... all around the territories where we work with, we practice these principles, but we do not have like a magical receipt, like we- in each place, we need to talk with people and it needs to make sense for them. And we create together. So we have so many different realities among the most then 20 communities where we work with. So it's very interesting and very like challenging in a very good way. That keeps us like always moving and always rethinking our role as-

[04:59 - 04:59] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[04:59 - 05:07] Gabriela Fontoura: Planners, our role as management of tourism activities and also as partners of local communities.

[05:07 - 05:08] Ryan Finchum: So it's tourism happening on their terms?

[05:09 - 05:14] Gabriela Fontoura: Exactly. They are the owners of the tourism in their territories. And we are-

[05:15 - 05:15] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[05:15 - 05:27] Gabriela Fontoura: Really, really proud of[breathes] being part of this kind of innovation in business, in, in tourism. And thanks to them[breathes] that accepted also this challenge of work together with us.

[05:27 - 06:07] Ryan Finchum: Well, you know, as I think as, as people that work in sustainable tourism, um, you know, we kind of- we come into developing, um, a trip, or a, a product with, with some idea of what sustainable tourism is in mind. But as we work[breathes] with communities, especially local and indigenous communities, I think we end up learning a lot from them about what is reasonable, what is feasible[breathes]. I'm just curious, from all these 20 plus communities that you work with all over the Amazon[breathes], what are- what's, what's something you've learned from these local indigenous communities that's maybe influenced your work or changed your mind a little bit about sustainable tourism[breathes]?

[06:08 - 07:17] Gabriela Fontoura: Yeah. So first of all, maybe it's nice to... to say a little bit what I consider like sustainable tourism. So, um, thinking about that for me, like sustainable tourism is,

uh, a tourism that is made not only based on individual values[breathes], or just looking to the necessities and the demands of tourists, that most of times when we are planning, we think about the tourism, what the tourists would like to do here, what the tourists are interested on, see on, you know. But, uh, for me, like the sustainable tourism is the one that, um[breathes][music starts playing], is based mainly on collective goals and on what makes sense for local actors in each destination where it takes place. And when I say local actors here, I mean social actors as the communities, for example, uh, as we highlighted before, but also non-human actors as rivers, as mountains, forests, and so on. So[breathes], uh, I think this is one part of what I learned from all these peoples, and especially thinking about the non-human[breathes] actors.

[07:17 - 08:08] Gabriela Fontoura: There is something in our society so hard. And so at the first moment you think, what do you mean[laughs] about non-human actors? Like they, they do not have any thing to do with that. But yes, they have a lot. And I, I think it's one of the big lessons I took from the indigenous people in the Amazon is considering, um, that it's not possible to divide human in nature, like, uh, this is a very strong, different way of thinking and acting. It's hard at the beginning, but it's really interesting when you can see that there's so many other ways of living, of making decision, of thinking about nature and people[breathes], and like, so it's very nice that the diversity is our strength in this way? Yes.

[08:08 - 08:46] Ryan Finchum: Mhm. And when you're, I mean, when you're invited into somebody else's home. Um[breathes], it's[music stops] always important to make sure you're, you're following and learning from the customs and the way, and the way they do things. And so, even if it's maybe uncomfortable or initially a little strange or different for the visitors[breathes], what a gift to be able to have a, have a look into the life of the way people make decisions and hopefully visitors come back, you know, feeling a little more connected to nature, and, and thinking that nature should be playing a, a more important role than many cultures around the world that have driven kind of uh, a, a wedge between humans and nature, which is an unnatural wedge, you know?

[08:46 - 08:59] Gabriela Fontoura: Yes, uh, totally. And also, this is another very important lesson learned that, uh, the tourism, it should promote, like mutual opportunities of learning and teaching[breathes].

[08:59 - 08:59] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[08:59 - 09:13] Gabriela Fontoura: And like, if we, uh, go with this idea, for example, of dominant society or something like that, for example. And that, oh no, it's not possible. Like how the hills are not happy with me today because-

[09:14 - 09:14] Ryan Finchum: Yes.

[09:14 - 09:32] Gabriela Fontoura: I proceeded in a different way. I didn't respect the way that people suggested me to go there. And now we have this big storm[breathes]. So- but... if you feel like that, what happened is that you go and you come back, close it like to the opportunity of learning and teaching, like together[breathes].

[09:33 - 09:33] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[09:33 - 10:32] Gabriela Fontoura: So it's much more. Yes. Um, I think much more... uh, interesting if you can open a little bit this, this idea, and also have a chance to do that. What you said like to go inside the home of someone[breathes] and really enjoy this company in terms of being a visitor that received so much care, so much love. But in, in not the way that I expect that love and care means, but the way that those people are showing me with their actions, and the way of looking, and offering me the best food I ever ate, and like the best place inside the house to put my hammock. So try to get out a little bit of our dominant way of doing things, and notice

how different, and beautiful things happen[breathes] in our diversity of ways of living, and deciding how to do things.

[10:32 - 11:00] Ryan Finchum: That's wonderful. Yeah[stutters], we- like we said in the beginning, you know, we think about the Amazon in terms of trees. You know, we kind of think of it more on the natural side of diversity. But I think[breathes] what you're highlighting really is that there's so many different kinds of diversities in the Amazon, from peoples, to nature, to ways of doing, to ways of thinking, to ways of traveling, to ways of perceiving. I mean, it's just, it's amazing if we can think about all those different kinds of diversities. Um, it's, it's pretty special. Yeah.

[11:01 - 11:56] Gabriela Fontoura: Yeah. We have a, a researcher, Brazilian geographer called, uh, Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves that says, we do not have, we don't have the Amazon in singular form. We have the Amazons because each area in the Amazon, and we are just talking about Brazil, Amazon. But if you think the Amazon is this wonderful biome that takes the nine countries like that has party now- nine countries in Latin America. But just talking about Brazil, Amazon... each area is this huge universe of possibilities. And when you talk about the indigenous peoples, each people is also a universe of knowledge, and wisdom, and different ways of doing things. There is not just one way of indigenous people thinking or doing things, but so many interesting ones.

[11:56 - 12:16] Ryan Finchum: Mhm. Well, um[tongue click], let's see this, this has been a great conversation. Um, but before I- we wrap up, I, I'd like to remind us all that the name of this podcast is called "Protecting Hope". And so I wonder if you would share with us, what about sustainable tourism gives you hope for the future?

[12:17 - 13:31] Gabriela Fontoura: Okay, so I think that, um[music starts playing], well, we talked a lot about this, the value of the local communities and their knowledge and the sense of collectivity they respect and the care for people and environment[breathes]. I think it gives me a lot of hope[breathes]. Uh, and also this process that we were talking about, the participatory process of tourism planning and territorial management gives me hope because there is no way of, uh, thinking about the future. Like without considering process, there are much more organic and participatory, like[breathes], uh, talking and listening, local people, local entrepreneurs, local governments. So listen, people on the field about their future, what they consider that, what they want, what their dreams, their desires about the future of the tourism in their own territories. I think we, we... we're thinking about that. Yes. And also, I don't know, but of course, what gives me hope is this possibility of working collectively and feel that I'm not doing any single action alone[breathes].

[13:31 - 13:31] Ryan Finchum: Mhm.

[13:31 - 13:49] Gabriela Fontoura: So it gives me a lot of hope. Being part of a group of so special people that decided to build together, uh, a society that can be more inclusive, more participatory is something that. Yes, it's for me, it's... it's really beautiful and I'm very grateful.

[13:49 - 14:04] Ryan Finchum: Mhm. That's wonderful I love those[music stops]. Well thanks Gabi for your time today. Really, uh, it's been amazing. Congratulations on all your work[breathes]. Um, and although I've been to the Amazon many times, I, I think I need to go back now and[breathes], and experience one of your trips, uh, to see how-

[14:05 - 14:07] Gabriela Fontoura: Yes, for sure. Please be invited.

[14:07 - 14:07] Ryan Finchum: Yeah[laughs].

[14:07 - 14:43] Gabriela Fontoura: Yes. It will be amazing. Yes. And all, all- also, I would like to thank you very, very much for all your trust, your friendship with people in the Amazon, like in

different- we, we met in different[breathes] moments. But also, I know about your work and[unintelligible] work in the Amazon, and[breathes] I really want to thank you. And thank you all our listeners that have[laughs] patience with my English. But yes, I would like to, to thank you all for, for[music starts playing] being part of this beautiful community of protectors of hope[laughs].

[14:43 - 14:54] Ryan Finchum: Thank you. Thank you, and thanks to all of our listeners. Thank you for being a part of this podcast and participating in our Sustainable Tourism Community of Learning and Practice[breathes]. We'll talk to you all soon.

[14:56 - 15:06] Man Narrator: Thank you for listening to "Protecting Hope". To find links and resources from today's episode, visit the Center for Protected Area Management's website, or follow us on Instagram and Facebook.

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