



January 2009 Newsletter

Last year our efforts to set up an effective bilingual website that reached out to a Spanish public bore fruits. Not surprisingly some of these people are the first generation of grass roots Huichol who have access to the computer, because they are within the Mexican higher educational system. My essays about the introduction of roads to sack the forests, introduce alcohol and junk food, were well received by indigenous university students. They also noticed the extraordinary examples of traditional culture, which we present on our website, and which they prize above all, although such examples have generally disappeared from their environment.

By February of 2008, a senior undergraduate student from the Autonomous University of Nayarit (Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit), Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, who was also working with a Huichol website set up with fellow natives at his campus, contacted our non-profit organization to let us know how much they appreciated our perspective. They posted a link to our website on theirs. Subsequently, we were in touch by e-mail and able to meet personally on visits to Mexico, since their campus is in the area that surrounds the Huichol Sierra, to the West by the Pacific coast. In early summer of 2008, our secretary Diana Negrín visited several of the graduate and undergraduate students of this state university of Nayarit, in the capital city of Tepic. This is where they had formed and manage the Huichol website called **Pueblo indígena**.

At the beginning of the fall term, Wixárika or Huichol graduate students from the University proposed to the faculty that the university's weekly planner for the 2009 year be done on the theme of Huichol Culture. In early September they asked if we would provide images from our archive, which they found to have the best samples of Wixárika art. At the end of December, we were delighted to receive a few of the weekly planners that the Autonomous University of Nayarit gave us in return for the right to use our illustrations and the abbreviated explanations of their meanings. They also sent us a copy of their unique endeavor: titled *Taniuki*, or Our Word and subtitled a "Course of Wixárika as a second language". This Spanish Huichol textbook full of examples of comparative grammar and dialectical exchanges includes a CD.

We consider the weekly planner an exciting accomplishment because it was promoted by Wixárika people who had access to multiple other samples of their own arts and crafts. It is beautifully printed on about 70 pages, most of which are for notes in the days of the week; every month has a page dedicated to a Huichol illustration of a wonderful yarn painting, a weaving or a mask, which they selected from our archives. The illustration on the cover is a good representation of the yarn painting of Tutukila's "Idol of Our Grandfather", *Tatewari Memu'uya*, on a dark red background. The

undersigned wrote an introduction about the significance of Wixárika culture, which is preceded by a preface concerning his work as a specialist in the study and international promotion of their arts, in addition to more than 36 years in defense of their environment and conservation of resources.

It should be noted that our Spanish website has some advantages that are most important to its Mexican based audience: we are able to provide links to important articles, which appear in Mexican newspapers and relate to matters of concern to these native Indians and others in similar straits, because of their ecological or economic circumstances. Yvonne Negrín, our cofounder, has consistently updated the news on the Spanish website. It would be impossible to translate all this information into English. Nonetheless, our Spanish website has not yet been fully brought up to date when it comes to the translation of some of the essays written by the undersigned or explanations of significant yarn paintings, which exist in English.

The most significant news of the past year was that the very traditional community of *Tuapurie* refused to bow down to government pressures to build a new road through their territory. They formed a human barrier so the road building equipment, from trucks to bulldozers was unable to plough through their land, after cutting down nearly 300 of their trees. The municipal and state governments of Mezquitic and Jalisco claimed that the community had requested the construction of the road in a petition that was ultimately found to be a fake.

The community and its authorities have indicated they are clearly against any eco-tourism programs or lumber and or resource extraction, which have been promoted successfully in the neighboring Wixárika communities of *Tateikié* and *Wautüa*. This year we shall see how well the wishes of the community of *Tuapurie* are respected, as well as those of the third community of *Wautüa*, which adopted Tuapurie's stance, and whether they will perceive any compensation for damages caused by the road work that was carried out previously.

Towards the end of last year we updated a new essay on the importance of Our Mother Ocean, *Tatéi Haramara*, to the Huichol. This essay titled '***What draws the Huichol to Our Mother Ocean***' was written at the bequest of Patricia Díaz Romo, with material from fine yarn paintings by Tutukila Carrillo Sandoval, José Benítez Sánchez and an essay by the undersigned, with assorted photographs. The bilingual essay appears now on her website ***Huicholes y Plaguicidas*** and on ours which are linked.

We are looking forward to backing the *Wixáritari* in their efforts to conserve their land and cultural autonomous rights outlined by the United Nations and approved by the Mexican Federal Government under its current administration, by attending community meetings this year, as we did in February of last year when the decision to blockade the road was made. We expect many changes to occur in the near future with the approval of

electricity in some areas under certain conditions, and the dry season which makes road construction easier.

The immediate goals of the undersigned are to review the iconography and meaning of the sculptures made by Yauxali and Matsuwa and pair them, where they have been stored by our foundation's main financial contributor, then update the correspondence and work on the website, in Oakland, before returning to Mexico in mid-February.

Your donations are very important to keep our organization public, since the majority of our funding is received from a single source. Urgent funding is needed at this point to continue our assistance to Agustín Carrillo Sandoval, a Wixárika student in his last year of undergraduate studies at the Technological University of Guadalajara. Basic foundation overhead is covered for the next few months, but we need to raise additional funds in order to fairly compensate Wixárika consultants and to cover ongoing work in the field. We also need to acquire additional software so we can expand our creative abilities, and to add new interactive exhibits to the website. We thank you for your contributions, which have helped keep us a public foundation and a significant voice for the Wixárika people. We expect to soon be accepting donations online through Pay Pal. Small contributions add up to make possible significant new works and all donations no matter how small are greatly appreciated.

Juan Negrín
Founding Director