

WIXARIKA

Spring 2022 Newsletter

May 2022

Dear Friends, Donors and Subscribers,

As this is our first newsletter of 2022, we would like to wish everyone a healthy, happy, and peaceful year, despite the many personal and collective tragedies we continue to face. The Wixárika Research Center has been committed to continuing our cultural and ecological work as we usher in a number of big changes this year that include moving our office to a new location in the East Bay. Please read on to learn more about our upcoming move, the ongoing scholarship program for Wixárika university students, the agroforestry project in Wirikuta and the very active political events that Wixárika community members have been leading.

Ten years defending Wirikuta – Renovating the candles of the world

In 2010, we learned that First Majestic Silver planned to carry out mining activities in the area of Real de Catorce in San Luis Potosí. Specifically, the project threatened Cerro del Quemado, or Reu'unaxi, the sacred mountain peak where the sun is said to have risen for the first time. We initiated a global campaign with Cultural Survival in the winter of 2010 and have since continued our support of the Wixárika people's efforts to protect this biocultural reserve and sacred place from extractive industries like mining and large-scale agriculture.



Full moon rising over Cerro Quemado ~
March 18, 2022
Photograph ©Tracy Barnett 2022

This March, we were happy to participate in an important mobilization to defend the sacred pilgrimage route of Wirikuta from some of the most recent avalanche of extractive and polluting industries—as detailed in our 2021 newsletters. A group of volunteers came together under the name of Sincronía Wirikuta to help raise funds to pay for the transportation of people from various Wixárika communities in the states of Jalisco, Nayarit, and Durango to attend a ceremony for “The Renewal of the World” on March 18 and 19, 2022. Non-Indigenous allies and members from several Indigenous communities that include Veracruz, Sonora and Nayarit also attended this

gathering that marked ten years since a similar large ceremony had taken place at the height of the conflict with Canada's First Majestic Silver. On the 17th of March, dozens of people gathered in the ejido village of Las Margaritas where they were met by the members of Sincronía Wirikuta and several local small farmers. On the 18th, the Wixaritari made their way to Real de Catorce, from where they continued on foot to the sacred peak of Reu'unaxi which sits at about 12,000 feet above sea level. The WRC made a monetary contribution for the mobilization and Diana Negrín was invited to travel with the traditional authorities of the various communities, the Consejo Regional Wixárika for the Defense of Wirikuta, the Union of Wixárika Ceremonial Centers, and Ambrosio López, the chanter who would lead the

ceremony to “renovate the candles of the world”. By nightfall, nearly 600 people gathered atop Reu’unaxi where a vigil under the full moon began with the chanting of López and accompanying mara’akate. The next day, ritual work continued and several animals were sacrificed and then redistributed to families and small farmers after their blood was used to bless the Xiriki (temple) and to close the work done over the previous hours. López explained that our climatic distress and social unrest is a product of long brewing imbalances between our human and non-human worlds, and he signaled that prior to the year 2000 we had been given various warnings but did not make the changes necessary and thus are now suffering important consequences that are still reversible. It was after that the political work began. Under the hot midday sun, the [Declaration of Wirikuta](#) was read by Zitlali Chino, President of “Consertación Agraria” of Wautia. The declaration listed the urgent need to put an end to all further agro-industrial and mining projects in the Natural Protected Area of Wirikuta, and detailed the need to replace these predatory industries with regenerative models that can restore and better take advantage of the region’s unique biodiversity.

While the majority of the 500 or so Wixaritari returned to their communities, a small contingent remained in Las Margaritas to rest and leave offerings at the altar of Tamatsi Kauyumarie. Diana then accompanied the smaller commission to Mexico City along with members of the Committee for the Defense of Water and Land of Catorce. There, they took offerings to several sacred places that included the Villa de Guadalupe, a cave next to the pyramids of Cuicuilco, Cincalco (an ancient cave related to the rain deity, Tlaloc in the forest of Chapultepec), and the Templo Mayor where a fire had been lit in their honor. After press conferences, the Wixaritari were finally received on March 23rd by the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and first lady, Beatriz Gutiérrez Müller. In the midst of the president’s continued contentious relations with environmentalists, the commission chose to use culture as a way to get the president to listen. [Ambrosio López, blessed everyone present](#) and then gave a copy of the declaration to the first lady before Minjares Bautista Valdes of the Consejo Regional Wixárika listed the demands of his people to the president.



Wixárika representatives pose for a picture with the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, March 23, 2022
Photograph ©Gobierno de México 2022



Minjares Bautista lights a candle held by the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, March 23, 2022
Photograph ©Gobierno de México 2022

The president promised to protect sacred lands and prohibit mining, reiterating that the indigenous people are the backbone of Mexico. In addition, he promised to visit one Wixárika community per year until he ends his term. Most significant was the invitation and promise to

complete what is being called a “Plan of Justice” for the Wixárika People – which is the current government’s strategy to tackle land, water, and infrastructure matters across Indigenous communities in Mexico. As of this writing, the second general intercommunal assembly was held in the Náayeri community of Jesús María to work on the details of this plan. After the Yaqui of Sonora, the Wixárika are the second Indigenous group of Mexico to work on a “Plan of Justice” with the representatives from the Federal Government.

Caravan for Wixárika Dignity and Consciousness



Caravan for Dignity & Justice – Photograph ©Tracy Barnett 2022

On April 25th, more than 200 members of the Wixárika community of San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlán (Wautia) and Tuxpan de Bolaños (Kuruxi Manuwe) began a caravan on foot to Mexico City. This nearly 1,000 kilometer walk in the sweltering heat marks an urgent cry to reach President López Obrador and demand the restitution of 10,700 hectares of land, already won in the tribunals. Accompanied by their legal representative Carlos González of the Congreso Nacional Indígena, throughout the many weeks of

journey, the caravan has been supported by local organizations and covered by [community news outlets](#). On May 26, the caravan reached Mexico City to make a final plea to the federal government to intervene in this community land matter that was initially resolved in [1953 by the courts](#). Despite several legal

victories, non-Indigenous cattle ranchers remained present and expanded their presence until some restitutions were finally effectively carried out in the early 2000s. On Friday May 27, the delegation was disheartened by the presidency’s deaf tone which led the caravan to stage an encampment outside the presidential palace, at the center of the ancient heart of Tenochtitlán. During the weekend encampment, the Wixaritari transmitted their demands but also played traditional music and danced live on their social media outlets. On Monday

May 30, the president finally agreed to meet with five members of the delegation and accorded to carry out the land restitution through the appointment of two federal representatives. If you would like to learn more about this history, we invite you to explore our online archive and Facebook pages.



Caravan encampment in the Zocalo in front of the Presidential Palace. Photograph ©Primitivo Chino Serio 2022

Wixárika Scholarship Fund

Thanks to the interest and generosity of our donors, we will once again be able to give scholarships to 20 students for the 2022 – 2023 school year. Among those who received scholarships last year, several have or will graduate: Prudencio Rivera Carrillo (Education, December 2021), Silverio de la Rosa Muñoz (Nursing, February 2022), Beatriz Ramírez (Psychology, June 2022), Cristian Rey Pacheco (Agrobusiness, May 2022) and María Fernanda Ramírez Gamboa (Biomedical Engineering, June 2022). Since 2018, we have provided scholarships to 33 students, 14 of which have now completed their studies. We are calculating that we will have 12-14 students carry over to the 2022-2023 academic year, allowing us to bring in 6 to 8 new scholarship recipients. This year our application process has also moved online in order to better streamline our work.

During the winter, we hosted three fundraising events for our scholarship fund thanks to the combined work of Brian McDougall, Jimena Márquez and Diana Negrín. The first was a talk on Wixárika culture by anthropologist and HSF volunteer Jimena Márquez (Mexico/Canada), the second was a talk given by education scholar Manuel López Delgado (Rarámuri/Ciudad Juárez), and the third featured two scholarship recipients, Zulema de la Cruz and Alejandro Cosío. All three can be viewed on our [YouTube](#) channel. Lastly, we will soon post the “Spring Huichol Scholarship Fund Update 2022” written by HSF scholarship co-founder, Brian McDougall. This will provide a thorough update on our students and fundraising.

Wirikuta Agroforestry Project

We are excited to announce that our agroecological pilot in Wirikuta has continued to gather support and enthusiasm. Some of you may remember that in July 2021 Wixárika youth and small farmers who live in the high plateaus of San Luis Potosí participated in planting the first plot of land with alleys of mesquite trees, agave, corn, and beans. The participants took part in a workshop on the uses of mesquite and learned how to grind and ferment agave midribs or “pencas” to produce forage for the small landowners’ goats, sheep, and cattle. Since July 2021, we have continued to tend the plot, monitor changes in the area and plan for our various phases of work with our fantastic team that is led by Diana Negrín and Gerardo Ruiz Smith and comprises two previous scholarship recipients, Carlos Carrillo (Tuapurie) and Isaías Navarrete (Muyewe Kuruwe). We also are now joined by Mariola Sánchez from (Wautia) who attended last year’s free workshop.

The project aims to develop a multidisciplinary series of hands-on initiatives that seek the biocultural restoration of the Wirikuta region through agroecological initiatives, nurseries, and a community center that functions as an incubator for agroecological information and education, economic networks, and cultural production and exchange. Over the coming years, our interdisciplinary team will work to co-create models for a more holistic agroecological use of the endemic lands that foment soil and water restoration and provide outlets for local economic production, while helping educate and conserve this sacred Wixárika pilgrimage place.

We are happy to announce that we will host three days of free workshops for Wixárika youth and local residents of Wirikuta this coming July 29, 30 and 31. For more information, please visit our website's special projects section and if you can, help support this budding work with a donation!

Website and Online Archive

This year, the WRC website and online archive is being rebuilt in Drupal 9. As we are a bilingual archive, this entails a large amount of work. The rebuild was necessary because Drupal 7 is being retired and security patches will no longer be issued after November 2022. Aside from the security of our website, the big advantage we'll have with Drupal 9 is that it will be far easier to upgrade to future versions thanks to the new migration feature that was first released in Drupal 8. Two very generous donors stepped up and committed to covering the cost of this work. As you can imagine, we are extremely grateful for this very generous donation which is making this important work possible. The rebuild is expected to be completed on schedule in November 2022. In the meantime, we invite you to visit our online archive for new content, and our [online store](#) where you can purchase Jay Fikes' recent book on kieri, Diana Negrín's book on Wixárika youth activism and our trilingual catalogue of Wixárika art and culture.

Part-Time Web Content and Archive Position

In the coming year, we will have the opportunity to hire a Wixárika woman to work on building out the historical documents archive and to expand our online content. Our candidate is someone who has worked with us before and is very familiar with the archives gathered from the work done by Juan Negrín in the 1970's through the 1980's and beyond. She worked with us for two months in 2018 and scanned into PDF format a large body of community and government documents, newspaper articles, environmental studies, and interviews. Since she is the one who did all the preliminary work, she is certainly best suited to uploading and organizing the documents to the online archive. We will be holding talks with her soon regarding salary and the length of time she can commit to working with us, and we ask that you consider supporting our general fund to help us cover the cost of hiring the help needed to expand our operations.

We Are Moving Our Office

After 21 years, we will need to find a new office space. We know this will be a challenge since rents have soared in the Bay Area since 2001, but we hope to secure a space we can afford. Since our founding, we have always been able to count on sufficient office space in the home of our directors, Juan and Yvonne Negrín. Since Juan passed away, almost seven years ago, it has been difficult for Yvonne to keep on top of a large house and all the expenses that go along with it. This September, she will transition to a small apartment and will no longer have space to accommodate our office. The search begins now for a small but adequate space that is affordable. We will keep you informed as to our progress and give you an update in our next newsletter. In the meantime, we hope that some of you will consider signing up to make a

monthly donation, in any amount, to help cover our general expenses which includes rent, utilities, internet, and hiring people for specific work such as archival work. No matter how small, donations add up and can make a big difference. Monthly donations represent predictable income for us and are easily affordable for many people looking to support our foundation. If you are able, please consider a monthly donation to help support the valuable work we are doing. We greatly appreciate every donation no matter how small, and credit card donations through our website are secure.

If you buy through Amazon, go to smile.amazon.com and choose the Wixárika Research Center as your charitable organization of choice and we will receive a donation equivalent to 0.5% of your purchase.

¡Pamparius / Pamípariyutsi (Thank you)!



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