



Research Center

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HUICHOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEWSLETTER – FALL 2020

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[1] Introduction

The Huichol Scholarship Fund (HSF) is a charitable program that awards scholarships to Huichol university students to assist them in completing undergraduate university studies. (The Huichol refer to themselves as the ‘Wixarika’. We use the term ‘Huichol’ because it is the name most recognizable to our donors and supporters.)

Funded primarily by donations from American and Canadian expats with ties to Puerto Vallarta, the HSF is a tangible expression of support for the Indigenous population whose traditional territory incorporates Puerto Vallarta. The program is rooted in the belief that equipping more Huichol with university level education is a strategic way to ensure their communities have access to skills required to defend their cultural integrity and political autonomy in a hostile environment.

Started in 2018-19 with \$30,000 pesos in awards for six Huichol students, this year the HSF provided financial assistance to **sixteen students at a cost of \$100,500.**¹ (Detailed information about the 2020-21 students is available in an Appendix at the end of this newsletter.)

¹ All amounts of money mentioned in this newsletter refer to Mexican Pesos, unless otherwise indicated.

The HSF is run by the Wixarika Research Center (WRC) in Oakland, California, with administrative assistance from the Volcanes Community Education Program (VCEP)/Rotary Club and financial assistance from the International Friendship Club (IFC), both in Puerto Vallarta.

Despite steady growth, the HSF is nowhere near satisfying the demand for financial assistance from Huichol university students. (This year we refused funding to eleven fully qualified applicants.) There remains a large unmet need for more financial assistance.

You can donate to the HSF via credit card on the WRC website at:

<https://www.wixarika.org/donate>

Once you've made your donation, send us an email indicating you've donated to the HSF:

y.negrin@wixarika.org

brianmcdougall25@gmail.com

That way we can add your name to our email list and ensure you receive future newsletters.

[2] Overview of the 2020-21 applicants and current HSF students

This summer, we received eighteen applications from students seeking financial assistance. Although all applicants met the minimum requirements, our commitment to nine HSF students returning from last year meant we could only accept seven new ones this year.

As in previous years, our selection process required each applicant to have successfully completed at least one year of university while maintaining a high academic standard (at least a B average). In addition, applicants had to demonstrate a history of commitment to their home communities.

This year, selection of the new scholarship students was carried out by three members of the WRC Board with deep knowledge of the Huichol and their communities:

- **Diana Negrin** PhD: University of San Francisco and University of California Berkeley, co-founder of the HSF
- **Maria de la Cruz** PhD: San Jose State University, Advisor to the WRC Board
- **Yvonne Negrin**: Founder and Executive Director of the WRC.

The 2020-21 applicant pool

- **Gender**: There were seven women among the eighteen applicants this summer. Almost half the women applicants (3/7) were selected for scholarships, while about a third of the male applicants (4/11) were.
- **Characteristics of the successful applicants**: The new students selected this year combine solid academic achievement, a record of community involvement, and serious economic need. Typical were the following cases:

- a fourth year education student, specializing in natural science, with a passion for community-based projects that inform people about critical ecological issues like the use of herbicides;
- a nursing student in her final year who has been forced to work two part-time jobs to finance her studies;
- a third year civil engineering student who will use part of his scholarship to purchase supplies so he can create and sell craft items to finance his studies;
- a fourth year nursing student who already has some hands-on experience, but requires multiple trips to Guadalajara for eye surgery.

Overview of the 2020-21 HSF recipients

- **Recipients:** for 2019-20, the recipients are comprised of nine returning students and seven new ones for a total of sixteen. (See the Appendix for more details.)
- **Gender:** There are currently five women and eleven men receiving HSF awards. Two of the three HSF students who have completed their studies are women.
- **University:** Recipients are spread across many different Mexican universities, with four students at the Autonomous University of Nayarit in Tepic, three attending ITESO in Guadalajara and two at the Technological University of the Sierra.
- **Programs:** This year, the HSF is supporting five nursing students, four students in science/engineering programs, three law students, three students in education programs, and one in business administration.
- **Graduation dates:** While all but one of the nine HSF students returning from 2019-20 will complete their programs this spring, the seven new students are at various stages in their studies; three are scheduled to complete in 2021, with three more scheduled for 2022 and the final one in 2023.
- **Students continuing beyond 2020-21:** The HSF will carry over four of the seven new 2020-21 recipients into next year (2021-22), along with one of the nine HSF recipients returning from last year (2019-20). **As a consequence, if the HSF is able to raise the same amount of money this year as last, we can forecast an intake of about ten new students for 2021-22.**

New policy: supplementary awards

Starting in the spring of 2020, the HSF required existing scholarship recipients and applicants to provide us with information about their income and expenditures during their past year of study. Armed with that data, we identified two sub-groups of students who face much greater financial challenges than their peers: students who live in severe poverty and those with financial responsibility for dependent children. Because students in those two sub-groups are at greater risk of not completing their studies, we decided to make supplementary awards of \$3000 pesos to each of them. In the current year, four students are benefitting from that policy change:

- Student 1: very low income, high medical expenses
- Student 2: working mother with low income and dependent children
- Student 3: very low income

- Student 4: very low income and dependent children

Each spring, we survey HSF students to learn about their financial and academic experience and accomplishments. In 2021, we'll be watching for feedback from the four students who received supplementary awards this year.

[3] Testimonials from three 2019-20 HSF recipients



Bianca América (Tanima) Enríquez López is a 2020 law graduate from the Universidad Enrique Rebsamen.

My name is Bianca América Enríquez López, I am from Bajío del Tule, which is part of the community of San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlan, in the state of Jalisco. I am a proud Indigenous Wixárika woman, and three years ago I moved to Guadalajara in search of new opportunities and to study law.

During my university education, I experienced a number of obstacles such as too few opportunities in the labor market, geographic and financial barriers to moving around the city. Many times I faced discrimination and even a kind of spiritual violence. Nonetheless, I persisted, adapted to the big city, and completed my studies with a thirst to continue learning. Gradually, I became more active, building relationships with others engaged in the collective defense of human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples. I also had the opportunity to participate in various national and international meetings regarding culture, the defense of Indigenous lands, and Indigenous women's rights.

Completing my undergraduate studies in April 2020 required a lot of sacrifice, but I am very satisfied, despite how the pandemic dampened celebrations. Those of us who just graduated now face a difficult time finding work, lengthening the time it will take for us to purchase our degrees. The important thing is to persist and always be prepared.

I am now an intern at the State Commission for Human Rights in Jalisco, where I can apply what I've learned. I give free legal advice to abused Indigenous women, and provide monthly social services in Indigenous communities.

The road (to change) is long, and we all have to start at the bottom to achieve our goals, but nothing is impossible. I want to thank the Huichol Scholarship Fund, co-sponsored by the Wixárika Research Center, the International Friendship Club and the Rotary Club of Puerto Vallarta, for supporting me during my studies.

Thank you!

Xóchitl Xitlalic Chanes Aguil just completed her 2nd year as a law student at the Autonomous University of Nayarit.

Hello, my name is Xóchitl Xitlalic Chanes Aguilar, a student of the Autonomous University of Nayarit, and a native of the Indigenous community of Rosa Morada, Nayarit.



In my experience, it is important to support low-income Indigenous youth. Sadly, we are the most vulnerable population but also the one that has the most desire to move ahead. Unfortunately, for us it is quite difficult (to get a university education) because we must leave our home communities and look for work in an unfamiliar urban environment where we have few resources.

The life of a university student in the city is completely different from the life that we normally lead in our community, especially as it pertains to money. Our main financial needs include transportation to the university campus or to our job, housing and living expenses.

In my case, the scholarship helped me get internet in the community where I live and to support myself with computer equipment which was indispensable during the pandemic.

I am enormously grateful to all of you for your support. It helps a lot to receive the HSF award, because it assists me in paying registration, university fees, books and my degree. Getting the award helps me to get better grades despite economic difficulties that require me to work double-time to cover my costs. This type of support helps us to strengthen our education, contribute to the preservation of our community's culture and improve our quality of life.

Isaías Navarrete Chino (back row, fourth person from the left) just completed his 3rd year of forestry at the Autonomous University of Chapingo.



The Wixarika Nation: A Vision Toward the Future

Freedom of speech and my status as a member of the Indigenous Community of San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlán and its Annex of Tuxpán give me the right to express my gratitude to the place where I live and learn and to Our Mother Earth, Ta Tei Yurienaka.

In order to have an opinion about my community I first have to admit that I do not know its full history. However, I have been researching it, which has made me better informed. The research is not quantitative in nature, as with Western science.

My community, as with many other native communities in pluricultural Mexico, reveals its history in its customs, dress, beliefs, world vision, theology, praxis and even in its culinary habits. But all of this culture has deteriorated. Western culture devalues ancestral knowledge. In some cases only relics of what once existed remain. Look at nutrition. The consumption habits of the community have changed. Adoption of the diet imposed by capitalism, makes people dependent, and benefits the food industry controlled by a few companies.

Now is a time of change. We must plan for the future we want. As the future of the community, youth have a special role.

Why is a student from a prestigious university writing about his vision of the future, when he could be reviewing notes, hanging with friends, resting or even being lazy? I do this because I worry about the current situation of my community, which has not improved in my lifetime. I have established a mission for myself: development, health, quality of life, education, housing and transcendence.

[4] University studies during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic complicated the lives of many of our 2019-2020 students, creating new issues for the HSF. Last year, two HSF students dropped out of their university programs during the spring term, at least partly because of the pandemic. In addition, two other students, both scheduled to graduate last spring, were unable to do so because required courses were re-scheduled due to pandemic-related issues. (The latter two students, who are now scheduled to complete in December 2020, are currently receiving one-term scholarships of \$3000.)

Communications with last year's cohort of students indicated the shift of university programs from classroom-based to online instruction, created significant problems for some students. For example, one student was forced to spend the equivalent of her HSF award to pay for the internet connection she needed to study online.

Recognizing the 2020-21 academic year may create unprecedented financial needs for some of our students, we will monitor HSF recipients to ensure none of them drop out due to

unforeseen costs (e.g., for internet access). In planning for the 2020-21 academic year, we budgeted to ensure there is sufficient money available to bail out any student whose academic year is at risk because of unforeseen costs. In these uncertain times, having a small financial surplus gives HSF the flexibility to do that.

[5] News about the extra-academic activities of HSF funded students and HSF alumni

This year the WRC began including some HSF scholarship recipients and alumni in extra-curricular activities. The combination of social activism and civic engagement that many of the students demonstrate and the current dynamic social media presence of Wixarika youth has opened the door for creative collaborations across geographies. Most notably, on September 11 and 12 of the current year, the WRC coordinated an online conference that brought together over 30 Wixarika participants to speak on roundtables that included territorial defense, education, women's rights, youth activism and culture. Two of our HSF recipients, Isaías Navarrete and Tanima Bianca Enriquez, participated in these roundtable discussions, and one of this year's unsuccessful applicants, Watsiri López, also presented.

It is also worth noting that current and past HSF students have begun to create a small sense of community. As we move forward, we hope to find a way to create more opportunities to engage HSF students in academic conferences, public events, peer mentorship and research opportunities.

SEMINARIO PERMANENTE
Etnicidad, Pueblos Indígenas y Globalización

EL SEMINARIO PERMANENTE ETNICIDAD, PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS Y GLOBALIZACIÓN INVITA A LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA:

"12 DE OCTUBRE 2020: RESISTENCIA Y RECONSTITUCIÓN INDÍGENA EN TIEMPOS DE INCERTIDUMBRE"

PARTICIPAN:
Etsiékame Diaz Carrillo
Wixarika de México
Catalina Catrileo
Mapuche de Chile
Kaxho Nicolás
Maya Q'anjob'al de Guatemala

MODERA:
Diana Negrin da Silva
Universidad de California, Berkeley

JUEVES 15 DE OCTUBRE DE 2020.

18:00 HORAS (CENTRO DE MÉXICO)

Conferencia virtual:
bit.ly/Seminario12DeOctubre

f LIVE

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CUCEA
CVT

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www.occidente.ciesas.edu.mx

[6] Current HSF finances

The HSF began in 2018 with a budget of \$30,000, which provided \$5000 scholarships to each of six students. This fall, starting our third year of operation, the HSF provided financial assistance to sixteen students at a cost of \$100,500. Three quarters of that money came from individual donations from people like you. The remaining \$25,000 was donated by our sole institutional contributor, the International Friendship Club.

As the HSF has expanded, the program has operated with three financial and administrative objectives: (1) provide financial assistance to as many Huichol university students as possible each year; (2) do it in a financially sustainable fashion, and (3) ensure the volunteers running

the HSF program learn more about and improve upon our ability to meet the financial needs of students as well as the needs of our donors and supporters for more education and information.

Growing the HSF

Each year we have been successful in raising the number of student beneficiaries (from six to thirteen, and now sixteen), while improving both the amount students receive (from \$5000 pesos in year one of the HSF to \$6000 as of last year) and the flexibility of the support we provide (supplemental awards of \$3000 pesos for very poor students and those with dependent children. We hope to continue expanding and refining the program in the years to come.

Budgeting sustainably

Between September 2019 and August 2020 (the academic and HSF financial year), we raised a total of \$145,000 pesos. After disbursing most of those funds to students for their 2020-21 scholarships, we retained a surplus of about \$80,000 into next year. That amount ensures we can fully cover our existing scholarship commitments to the five HSF students returning next year, even if our 2020-21 fundraising is very unsuccessful. The surplus also gives us the flexibility to cover any emergency costs the current cohort of students might face due to unforeseen pandemic-related educational costs.

With the exception of some inescapable financial fees, every Peso the HSF raises is spent on Huichol students. All the labour involved in managing the program is voluntary.

Sustainable budgeting combined with developing a greater capacity to target our support is part of the process of improving the HSF as a program. With greater experience, we hope to refine our ability to forecast yearly expenditures and better determine how much of a surplus we need to meet all our future obligations to HSF students. (HSF funding continues each year until the student completes their undergraduate program.)

Fundraising

The main determinant of our budget remains the success of our fundraising activity. **The amount we raise during the next ten months will determine the number of students we can support next year.** (As mentioned above, if our fundraising activity is as successful as last year, we should be able to offer scholarships to at least ten new students in September of 2021.)

This year, we streamlined our fundraising process by channeling all donations through the WRC. Since February, Americans have been able to make tax-exempt donations via the WRC website, since the WRC is registered as a **501(c) 3 nonprofit public foundation**.

While Canadians are also encouraged to donate via the WRC website, we have not yet established a comparable tax-exempt process for Canadian donations. We are currently exploring such an arrangement with Rotary HIP (Honouring Indigenous Peoples), a group based in Toronto.

Learning about the needs of student beneficiaries and HSF supporters

The survey of student incomes and expenses initiated this spring gave us more information about our students and applicants, allowing us to refine the HSF program by awarding two types of scholarships: regular (\$6000) and enhanced (\$6000 + \$3000 supplement).

In the past, public meetings allowed us to learn more about what Puerto Vallarta-based HSF supporters and donors wanted to know about the Huichol and the HSF program. For example, during January-February of 2020, the HSF sponsored three events in Puerto Vallarta:

- **Film:** *Huicholes: The Last Peyote Guardians*, with discussion by Kevin Simpson
- **Lecture:** *More than Beads and Peyote: The Huichol Struggle for Cultural Survival*, Brian McDougall
- **Discussion:** *Questions and Answers about the Huichol Scholarship Fund*, Brian McDougall

This year, the pandemic is driving our live interaction with supporters online. In early 2021, we hope to continue and deepen the knowledge of our supporters with at least two online events:

- **January:** *The Covid-19 pandemic in Huichol territory: implications for youth and education*, speakers: Diana Negrin Ph.D. and Maria de la Cruz Ph.D. (Details to be determined)
- **February:** *Update about the Huichol Scholarship Fund in 2020-21*, speaker: Brian McDougall (Details to be determined)

[7] Projects for 2020-21

During the current 2020-21 academic year, HSF volunteers will work on a number of projects to improve the program, including the following:

- Explore possible creation of a network for current HSF students and alumni, to encourage mutual assistance and co-operation in their studies, careers and efforts to support their communities;
- Replace the in-person HSF education and information sessions for HSF supporters, previously held at the IFC office in PV, with online sessions;
- Create a new channel for tax-exempt donations for Canadians, comparable to the one that now exists for American donors;
- Develop a strategy for shifting from one-off donations to regular annual donations;
- Develop a beginner's guide to published and online sources (in English) for those who want to learn more about Huichol history, culture and current events.

[8] How the HSF is run

The HSF is run by the Wixarika Research Center (WRC), a 501(c) 3 nonprofit public foundation, based in Oakland, California. In managing the program, the WRC gets administrative assistance

from the Volcanes Community Education Program (VCEP)/Rotary Club Sur in Puerto Vallarta and financial assistance from the International Friendship Club (IFC), also in Puerto Vallarta. The WRC is a public foundation with more than 48 years of commitment to documenting and preserving Huichol art and culture, and working with Huichol communities on sustainable development projects.

The HSF was created in 2018 by the same two people who administer it on a day-to-day basis today: Diana Negrin da Silva and Brian McDougall.

Diana Negrin da Silva is an Oakland-based university teacher (University of San Francisco and University of California – Berkeley), whose academic research has focused on the experience of Huichol university students, among other things. In addition to being a Board member of WRC, Diana has long-term family connections with and roots in the Huichol community. She is a frequent organizer of and contributor to conferences on issues of concern to the Huichol (e.g., sacred plants), and curator of the 2018-19 *Grand Masters of Wixarika Art* exhibit in Guadalajara. **Diana runs the application, selection, and award distribution processes, while maintaining regular contact with our students.**

Brian McDougall is an adjunct professor of Indigenous and Canadian Studies at Carleton University, and former federal public servant. He runs a historical walking tour business in Ottawa, and gives public lectures on Canadian and Mexican history in both Ottawa and Puerto Vallarta. Brian draws on his Government of Canada experience working on Indigenous post-secondary educational issues to do **fundraising, education, and communication with HSF donors and supporters.**

From the start, Diana and Brian have been assisted and advised by a number of key supporters, including:

- Dan Grippo (Board member and past President of the International Friendship Club in Puerto Vallarta)
- Art Fumerton (Founder and Director of the Volcanes Community Education Project in Puerto Vallarta)
- Kevin Simpson (Owner of the Collectika and Peyote People Galleries in Puerto Vallarta),
- Maria Cruz (Lecturer in Mexican American Studies and Director of the Aspire/McNair Scholars Program at San Jose State University, and Advisor to the WRC Board), and
- Yvonne Negrin (Founder and Executive Director of the WRC, based in Oakland).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE HSF: brianmcdougall25@gmail.com

APPENDIX: LIST OF 2020-21 HSF RECIPIENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES

	NAME	COMMUNITY	M/F	UNIVERSITY	DEGREE	GRAD DATE
<i>New scholarship recipients in 2020-2021</i>						
1	Carlos R C L	Nueve Colonia, Mezquitic, Jalisco	M	Universidad de Baja California	Education & natural sciences	2021
2	Gabino V G	Mesa del Tirador, Bolanos, Jalisco	M	Universidad Tecnologica de la Sierra	Nursing	2022
3	Eduardo C C	Otatiste, Nayarit	M	Universidad Tecnologica de Nayarit	Civil engineering	2022
4	Xitali R S	Paso de Alica, Nayarit	F	Instituto Technologico de Tepic	Nursing	2022
5	Sliverio de la R	Naranjito de copal, Nayarit	M	Universidad Tecnolologico de la Sierra	Nursing	2021
6	Yuli B M	Guadalupe Octoan, Jalisco	F	Universidad Tecnologica de Enfermeria	Nursing	2023
7	Daisy L A	Platanitos, Nayarit	F	Centro Universitario Tecnologica de Enfermeria	Nursing	2021
<i>HSF scholarship students returning from 2019-2020</i>						
8	Herminio R	San Andres Cohamiata	M	ITESO	Law	2020
9	Felix B	San Andres Cohamiata	M	ITESO	Civil engineering	2021
10	Isais N C	Tuspan de Bolanos	M	Universidad Autonoma de Mexico Chapingo	Forestry	2021
11	Dagoberto R G	San Miguel Huaixtita	M	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Law	2021
12	Eusebio de la C C	Tuapurie	M	ITESO	Business administration	2021
13	Virginia E de la C	Tepic	F	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Pharmaceutical science	2020
14	Xochitl X C A	Rosemoreda, Nayarit	F	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Law	2022
15	Prudencio R C	Potrero de la Palmita, Nayarit	M	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Education	2021
16	Casiano M C	San Andres Cohamiata	M	Universidad Pedagogica Nacional, Nayarit	Primary education (Indigenous)	2021
<i>HSF students who completed their programs (HSF alumni)</i>						
1	Geidy B D	Tuxpan de Bolanos	F	Universidad Tecnologica de Nayarit	Logistical engineering	2019
2	Acquileo C D	San Miguel Huaixtita	M	Instituto Technoligico Jose Marino Molina	Electromechanical engineering	2020
3	Bianca A E L	Bajio del Tue, Waut+a	F	Universidad Enrique Resamen	Law	2020