

# WIXARIKA

## Research Center

### Summer 2025 Newsletter

Dear Friends, Donors, and Subscribers,

We hope everyone has been in good health and is enjoying this season wherever you may be. As always, we are grateful for your ongoing support and interest. These past several months have been busy for the Wixarika Research Center and we have good news to report.



Sacred Oasis in Wirikuta Tuimaya'u,  
Photograph ©Juan Negrín 1990

#### **Wixarika Sacred Pilgrimage Route Added to UNESCO's World Heritage List**

After years of hard work by the Wixarika people, their authorities, NGO's, lawyers, and many allied organizations around the world, the defense of Wirikuta finally bore fruit. On June 12, 2025, 20 sites sacred to Mexico's Wixarika people were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List, becoming the first such recognition for a living Indigenous tradition in Latin America. "This recognition is of the utmost importance for Mexico because it is the first time in all of Latin America that a cultural expression linked to a living and active Indigenous tradition has received this

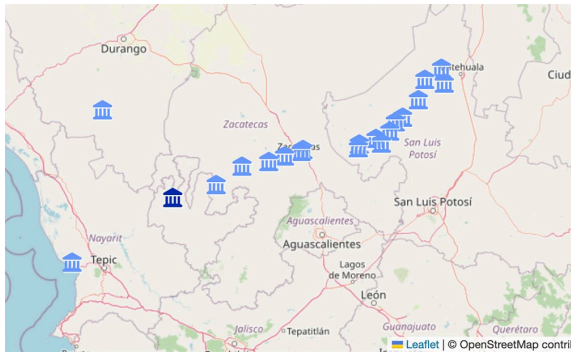
international recognition", Mexico's Minister of Culture, Claudia Curiel de Icaza, said. UNESCO highlighted the route—which connects sacred sites from the Pacific Ocean to the Chihuahuan Desert—as one of the most representative pre-Columbian pilgrimage routes still in use in the Americas. The route's inscription on UNESCO's list requires the creation of a management unit and the implementation of a Comprehensive Plan for Management, Conservation and Safeguarding, with direct participation from the Wixarika authorities and elected representatives. "Our people hope that this registry will be one more tool for the protection of our sacred territories that will allow us to eradicate the extractive and agro-industrial threats that harm our territories and culture," the Wixarika Regional Council said in a statement.<sup>1</sup>

The UNESCO designation is the result of a long process initiated by the non-profit organization Conservación Humana or CHAC. The nomination of Wirikuta as a World Heritage Site gained momentum in 2011 as mining concessions threatened this key pilgrimage destination, making international recognition another tool for the conservation of Wixarika territory. The Wixarika Regional Council and the Wixarika Union of Ceremonial Centers gathered for a press conference on July 17<sup>th</sup> to declare their support of the measure and place the question of environmental and cultural protection of Wixarika territory back on the president's agenda. While there was general celebration of the designation, the Wixarika Union of Ceremonial Centers declared their inconformity with the

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes from [The Mexico News Daily](#).

process and the lack of meaningful participation across Wixarika communities and organizations. Differences in perspective exist across communities, leaderships, and organizations, but our hope is that this designation provides a new level of protection. The Wixarika Research Center was asked in the summer and fall of 2024 to review the draft of the UNESCO nomination, and we provided several suggestions that included expanding and updating the route to better reflect the sacred pilgrimage geography, incorporating the standardized Wixarika orthographies and place names, and the gathering of input across Wixarika community representations. Ultimately, of the 20 sacred sites that UNESCO listed, only one is in Nayarit (Waxiewe in San Blas) and one in Jalisco (Te'ekata or Teakata in the community of Tuapurie). Surprisingly, Xapawiyemeta, located in Lake Chapala, was not included in the list despite it being central to the sacred geography. On the other hand, several locations were designated in the states of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí. We will be posting news



Map ©ICOMOS World Heritage Committee, map of designated sites on Wixarika Sacred Route.

that becomes available in print and video to our online archive to keep you current. Under “News” we have a separate section for news on Wirikuta, and we will have all the links related to this topic listed there, be it print or video.

### **Fundraising Events**

On October 26, 2024, we held our first in-person event since the Covid-19 pandemic. Board members Catarina Negrín and Vanessa Sequeira helped organize a beautiful event in Berkeley that showcased vintage Wixarika yarn paintings,

photographs taken by our co-founder, Juan Negrín, and books. Dozens of local guests gathered and learned more about our 24-year history, including our dedicated work building an online archive based on the digitization of our archive on Wixarika history, art, culture, and ecology. Our bilingual Spanish / English website also includes materials from other archives to make scholarship about the Wixarika available in open access format. The fundraising event explicitly sought to raise money for our general fund to continue to pay for the ongoing construction, maintenance and hosting of our archive, as well as to support two part-time positions that provide content, editing, and social media postings. We are grateful to our local Bay Area community for making this event a success! We continue to have a selection of vintage yarn paintings for sale to support our ongoing work. For more information, please email us at [inquiries@wixarika.org](mailto:inquiries@wixarika.org)

On March 26 of 2025, we held our yearly online fundraiser for the Wixarika Scholarship Fund. This year we had our longtime colleague, Juan Aurelio Carrillo Ríos, moderate a conversation with three of our current scholarship recipients. Carrillo directs recruitment and retention of Indigenous students for the Autonomous University of Nayarit and has been involved in our yearly call for applicants. “Opening Paths: A Panel with Wixarika Professionals” featured Carlos Carrillo (Nueva Colonia, Tuapurie class of 2021), Hermelindo López (Santa Cruz, Wautia class of 2024) and Alma Robles (Mesa del Tirador, Wautia class of 2024). You can view the recording of the conversation in our video archive [here](#).

## Our Commitment to Ecology and Culture Continues

Over the past several years we have helped coordinate initiatives that thread together our founders' long-term commitment to ecological initiatives in Wixarika territory. We have continued to be recipients of the Chacruna Institute's Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative, a small grants program that provides investments for community-engaged work in Indigenous communities across the Americas. In 2022 and 2023, they provided some support for our agroecology trainings in Wirikuta, and last year their support allowed us to provide the funds for the purchase and installation of broad band internet for the community high school of Tamatsi Páritisika's new campus in Nueva Colonia. This coming year, we are excited to be developing a beekeeping initiative in collaboration with the high school and our longtime colleagues at [EtnoEco Cultura y Medio Ambiente](#), a non-profit organization in Jalisco that specializes in environmental education and grassroots economies. We look forward to sharing more about this initiative in our next newsletter.

### Wixarika Scholarship Fund



Bianca América Tanima Enríquez,  
Director of INPI Jalisco

Tule, Wautia class of 2020) is currently the director for the state of Jalisco of the Institute for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (INPI for its Mexican acronym), the highest government position for matters relating to Indigenous communities. As such, not only does Tanima serve her Wixarika communities, but she also directs all programming for other native communities in the state of Jalisco, including Indigenous migrants from other areas of the country. Mario de la Cruz Carrillo (Arroyo de Cañaveral, El Nayar class of 2024) has continued to follow his dream of being a mathematics teacher in Wixarika communities in Nayarit and most recently traveled to Colombia for a conference on mathematics. And lastly, in June we also had the surprise visit of Zulema de la Cruz (El Roble, El Nayar class of 2023) who traveled to the Bay Area on a vacation that included Southern

Since 2018, the Wixarika Research Center has given multi-year scholarships to Wixarika undergraduate students and, as of the spring of 2025, we have supported 78 students with degrees in law, nursing, medicine, nutrition, forestry engineering, education, mathematics, architecture, agronomy, and more. Most of the graduates are serving their communities and working in their area of undergraduate specialization, and several have pursued their master's degrees. Our goal is to support 20 students per year with full-time scholarships of \$8,000 pesos. This past year we had 12 students graduate which left us with 8 continuing students. We are glad to have accepted 12 new students, from five communities in three states, for the 2025–2026 school year. We admire the trajectories of our scholarship recipients and would like to share some successes. Bianca América Tanima Enríquez (Bajío del



Zulema during her visit to the San Francisco Bay Area – July 2025



California, Oregon, and Seattle. While in the Bay Area, Zulema visited the UC Berkeley campus, explored San Francisco on bike and ferry, and visited our home office in Berkeley. Upon her return to Mexico, she received news that she was admitted into the ITESO's graduate program in Sustainable Design. She received a degree in architecture and recently finalized three years in Tijuana where she worked on LEED environmental certifications for buildings.

We know that each donation for the scholarship fund makes a small but valuable financial dent in students' ever-increasing expenses, whether this be paying for monthly internet access or purchasing nursing uniforms and other school materials. The scholarship program is also an important recognition for students as they encounter the daunting realities of university life, expenses away from their family homes and communities, and discrimination. Jesús Hakatemay Rentería (Wautia class of 2025) shared the following in his exit questionnaire: "Each donation, small or large, has been like a seed of hope that now blooms in my education and in my future. Thanks to your support I now advance with confidence toward my goals, bringing with me the pride of my Wixarika heritage and the commitment to give back to my community. Your help not only gave me opportunities, but it also inspires others to believe in the power of education. Every peso, dollar, or euro donated is a vote of confidence in youth like me, and we promise we will not take it for granted."



Jesús Hakatemay Rentería  
Wautia, Class of 2025

If you wish to donate to the scholarship program, please go directly to our donation link and specify in special instructions that you would like your one-time or monthly donation to be directed to the scholarship fund.

We would like to take this moment to thank our board of directors and advisors as well as those who volunteer their time to strengthen our work and participate in our yearly scholarship application review. As always, we invite the public to share any content that may be relevant for our growing online archive. This includes photography, video, essays and news about Wixarika land, culture and politics. We are particularly interested in making accessible academic works in PDF that can contribute to our online library and bring these works closer to students across Wixarika and non-Wixarika communities alike.

Lastly, if you haven't done so already, please visit our [online store](#) to check out our new puzzles based on two exquisite yarn paintings by Juan Ríos Martínez and Xitaima Lemus de la Cruz. Each puzzle is 500 pieces with a cost of \$30 USD plus shipping and handling. Every purchase supports our ongoing work!

Pampariyutsi/Thank you



*The Wixarika Research Center is a 501(c) 3 non-profit foundation, and all donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.*

2329 Grant Street, Berkeley, CA 94703-1715  
Email: [inquiries@wixarika.org](mailto:inquiries@wixarika.org) – Website: [www.wixarika.org](http://www.wixarika.org)