

WIXARIKA

May 2014 Newsletter

Dear Subscribers,

During the past year we have been kept busy with our renewed activities in the field. In June of 2013, we received a generous grant from Lush Cosmetics to help us finance the building of a wood drying solar oven for the independent (autonomous) preparatory school, located in the community of Tuapurie (Santa Catarina Cuexcomatlán). Building the solar oven is the



Constructing the solar oven ~ Photo © Gerardo Ruiz Smith 2014

first stage of the [Eco-Forestry Project](#), which we hope to complete by this time next year. Construction began in early April and we will be returning this month to install the windows, doors, the roof and solar panels. Once construction is completed we will begin training students on how to dry lumber and measure moisture with a hygrometer.

Beginning immediately, we need to start fundraising to

cover the construction costs of a workshop, small greenhouse, and for the purchase of carpentry tools. Ideally we would like to build the workshop at the end of this year's rainy season which is late September or early October in order for students to take advantage of the installations during the 2014 – 2015 school year. Once you have read about the Eco-Forestry Project we are sure you will understand its importance and why we are committed to supporting [Tuapurie's Bachillerato Comunitario Tamaatsi Páritsika](#) the first and only preparatory school in this community.

Photo and Audio Archive

The American Museum of Natural History has recently made available online digital copies of 7,000 photographs in their archives, among them the [Carl Lumholtz photographs](#) taken of the Wixárika (Huichol) Indians between 1895 and 1898.

This of course brings to mind our own ongoing project to organize the photo archives of Juan Negrín. At the end of September 2013, our treasurer Dr. Anthony Somkin, retired from his medical practice and is now working with Yvonne Negrín one day a week on the photo archives. An enormous amount of progress has been made and we now have some 14,400 plus color transparencies in acid free archival binders. Of those we need to relocate approximately 1,700 slides so they are placed with the roll of film from which they were

removed. We still have dozens of boxes of slides that need to be put in archival sleeves inside closed archival binders. The next step will be to create searchable Excel sheets for all the rolls of film and tag the most important slides for scanning in high resolution. This has been an enormous job and we thank Anthony for his participation these past few months which has enabled us to move forward at a quicker pace. We also thank Hans Michael Jantzen for his expert scanning of more than 800 transparencies. This project will build a digital archive, organized by content of the most important images in this collection. Over the course of the past three years we have printed many beautiful portraits and returned them to families in the sierras and will continue to do so. So far it has cost approximately \$1,400 to purchase acid free binders and archival sheets for Kodachrome slides, printer ink, and archival quality photo paper for this project. The majority of these materials have been paid for by our founders and treasurer, with the rest coming out of our general operating fund. Donations are needed to cover the cost of printing more photographs and purchasing and making albums for families in the sierras.



Renewing the roof of the ceremonial center temple
Photo ©Juan Negrín 1986-2014

During the course of 2012 and 2013, dozens of audiocassettes of conversations between Juan Negrín and the Wixárika artists, represented in the gallery section of our website, have been converted to digital format for archival purposes and in order for some of the material to be uploaded to our website and shared with the broader public. This work was made possible by a small grant from The Center for the Arts, Religion, and Education, part of UC Berkeley's Theological Union. This year we will be seeking a grant to cover the cost of cleaning and digitizing audiocassettes of music and sacred chants in a professional studio. Unlike the taped conversations, maintaining the highest audio quality is especially important for these valuable and irreplaceable recordings.

The Defense of Sacred Sites under Threat

Wirikuta: The battle to save Wirikuta from being mined is not over, but for the moment all concessions in the Sierra of Catorce and in the lowlands of Wirikuta have been temporarily suspended by the government. This by no means is the end of the battle, although it has legally stopped any exploration or exploitation from taking place until the issue is settled. For more information read Cultural Survival's article: [Good News- Mexico: Mining Concessions Suspended in Wirikuta](#). People from around the world have joined together to support the Wixaritari in their struggle to preserve the flora, fauna, and ecological balance of this semi-desert which has been their sacred pilgrimage route since time immemorial. If you have not yet signed the Cultural Survival Petition to the President of Mexico and his Ministers of

Foreign Relations, Environment, and Economy, please take a moment to [sign it now](#). Your letters are very important to this ongoing campaign.

There has also been an outpouring of support for the peasants who live in Wirikuta. You may recall hearing about the Wirikuta Fest that was held in the Foro Sol in Mexico City in May of 2012, to raise funds for alternative projects for the people who inhabit Wirikuta. Our journalist friend, Tracy Barnett, wrote a very thorough update on what has been accomplished with the money that was raised at this concert. Please take the time to read her article: [Behind the Scenes: What Wirikuta Fest fans bought with their tickets](#).

Tatei Haramara: The sacred pilgrimage site of Tatei Haramara (Our Mother Ocean) is located in the municipality of San Blas on the Pacific Coast of Nayarit. It was another sacred location guaranteed protection under the Pact of Hauxa Manaka which was signed by President Felipe Calderón and the Governors of 5 states (Jalisco, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and Durango) on November 15, 2008. Not long thereafter the Wixárika people learned that the land had been sold and a major tourist development had been approved for the area. Originally they had been given an area of 32 acres which was later reduced to 19.7 acres according to official documents. The Wixaritari fought back and were eventually offered title to a mere 8.64 acres. To learn more about Tatei Haramara and the importance of this pilgrimage spot we suggest reading [What Draws the Native Huichol to the Pacific Ocean?](#) This dispute is ongoing and we will continue to post news on our website.

San Pedro River: The San Pedro Mezquital River is the last free running river in Mexico and traverses the Sierra Madre Occidental. It originates in the State of Durango where it is called La Saucedá and once it enters the State of Nayarit it becomes the San Pedro Mezquital. The Federal Commission of Electricity plans to build yet another hydro-electric dam in Nayarit, this time building a dam on the Rio San Pedro Mezquital. This project has met with fierce opposition from the Cora, Wixárika, Tepehuano and Mexicanero indigenous people who have sacred locations that would be lost forever. According to AIDA an estimated 12,000 families depend on the river for fishing, agriculture and their local economies. The Los Cruces dam would decrease fishing activity and increase greenhouse gases from the decomposition of vegetation. The proposed Las Cruces Dam is also a serious threat to the coastal environment because the river supplies most of the freshwater for the largest Biosphere Reserve wetland area in the Gulf of California: Marismas Nacionales. For more information we refer you to the AIDA (Environmental Law for the Americas) website and their article [Las Cruces dam project puts the San Pedro Mezquital River at risk](#). We also ask that you sign the [petition](#) to the Mexican Secretary of the Environment asking that the project not be approved.

Tamaatsi Páritsika Community High School

We would like to stress, once again, the importance of supporting the Bachillerato Comunitario Tamaatsi Páritsika. Founded by Wixaritari, this is an independent school which has a unique curriculum and vision including our Eco-Forestry Program. Some of the other work the Wixárika Research Center will be involved in will be moving the old weaving workshop to the new campus, purchasing bee hives and hiring a teacher to give a course in

beekeeping and teaching courses in permaculture. With sufficient donations, together we can make a big difference in helping the school succeed. It is important to mention that the school has struggled financially and has often been behind on paying its teachers and director. Recently our close friend and colleague, Patricia Díaz Romo, was able to expand her foundation in Mexico so that it can now support educational projects in the sierras. In the past her work was mostly centered on pesticides and the poisoning of Wixárika, and other indigenous people, who traveled to the coast of Nayarit to work seasonally in the tobacco fields. Her film [Huichols and Pesticides](#) was narrated by Peter Coyote and is very much worth watching. Patricia recently released a sequel [Huichols & Pesticides Report](#). We encourage you to watch both films.

With the ability of Patricia's foundation (Fundación Alejandro Diaz) to fund educational projects in the sierras we are now able to channel donations through her non-profit organization in support of the schools monthly overhead and development. By working together, both Mexican and U. S. citizens can make tax deductible donations in support of Tuapurie's Bachillerato Comunitario Tamaatsi Páritsika.

Finally, by educating the community's youth in carpentry, the weaving of cloth for traditional clothing, reviving beekeeping and teaching other skills, we are helping create jobs in the sierras and stem the seasonal migration to the tobacco fields and other agricultural jobs where they are poorly paid and exposed to dangerous chemicals. The Wixaritari have been known since time immemorial as free thinking and moving people of Mexico, who travel all over North and Mesoamerica, knowing how to trade their special goods and insight, founded on long journeys in the four cardinal directions. Without interfering with their communal structure, we have been backing their struggle for educational and economic autonomy at their behest. They control their patrimony and they continue traveling as dignified people, instead of beggars.

Donations to our projects and to our general fund are needed and can be made securely online by [credit card](#) or by mailing a check to the Wixárika Research Center at 863 Leo Way, Oakland, CA 94611-1964. Every donation, no matter how small, is a big help. Please consider making a donation today, share our newsletter amply with friends and ask them to sign the two important petitions.

For those of you receiving a printed version of our newsletter, visit our website at www.wixarika.org and click on the link to our Newsletter (in the upper right hand corner of our home page) so you can follow the above links and read more. We also invite you to 'like' our foundation [page on Facebook](#) and follow our news feed. We are posting news several times a week and it's an easy way to keep up with Wixárika related current events.

Pampariús (Thank you)!

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