



Spring 2010 Newsletter

The crisis Mexico is living as a result of the continued escalation of violence between rival drug cartels and the state's armed forces has increasingly affected indigenous peoples who have seen their territories invaded by these competing armed forces. Unfortunately, Wixaritari communities are no exception to this phenomenon. Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán's (Tuapurie) continued objection to the completion of the Huejuquilla-Bolaños road has facilitated this community's ability to keep their land somewhat inhospitable to outsiders, including drug traffickers. However, their neighbors in San Sebastián Teponahuatlán (Wautüa), its annex of Tuxpan (Tutsipa) and San Andrés Cohamiata (Tatei Kié) have not been so fortunate to escape the presence of illicit business attracting a portion of the population. In fact, a recent study by the Superior Agrarian Tribunal of Mexico exposed that up to 30% of Mexico's cultivatable land is now being dedicated to the mixed use of licit and illicit crops (such as marihuana and opium poppies). This is no surprise when free-market policies primarily adopted since the Salinas de Gortari presidency (1988-1994) placed small and medium farmers at a disadvantage to compete with the dumping of subsidized agricultural products from the U.S. For many rural poor, participating in the production of illicit substances is one of the few choices they have to survive on their land. Recent violent episodes in San Miguel Huaixtita, located in the community of Tatei Kié, have put communal authorities on alert.

Trouble in Wirikuta

Aside from the escalation of drug related violence, 2010 has proved to be a taxing year for Wixaritari as a result of two recent incidents involving police forces. On February 12th, while xucuri'ükate (pilgrims in charge of taking care of the jícaras of our ancestors) from the three ceremonial centers of Tuapurie were carrying out a ceremony in Wirikuta, the desert of San Luis Potosí where they make their yearly pilgrimage to gather peyote, when four squads of municipal police interrupted the sacred circle. The police returned twice the next morning questioning the quantity of peyote that the Wixaritari had gathered to take back to their respective ceremonial centers for Hikuri Teaxa. Rapid public outcry over the incident pushed the government of the state of San Luis Potosí to publically apologize for the behavior of the police and a police escort was given to the pilgrims to Zacatecas. From there they continued their voyage to Mezquitic, Jalisco where they were again stopped and questioned by police for having rifles used to hunt deer. Juan and Diana Negrín were happy to have been able to greet the xucuri'ükate from Keuruwitüa as they arrived to the outskirts of the ceremonial center. They confirmed that they had never before faced such police harassment and hoped that the government would make sincere efforts to safeguard and respect their pilgrimages and sacred sites as detailed by national and international laws. [Read press release.](#)

Wixaritari Shot at Outside of Huejuquilla

On March 18th, members of Tatei Kié traveling in an officially marked community vehicle were shot and wounded by a police squad from Huejuquilla el Alto. The Wixaritari stated that they had left Huejuquilla and were about 4 kilometers outside of town when a vehicle approached from behind shining lights on them. Fearing an assault they increased their speed at which point the police began shooting at their vehicle. Two wixaritari were injured, one critically. At the time of the attack, the residents of Tatei Kié were returning to their community after picking up funds from the Regional Solidarity Fund in the town of Huejuquilla el Alto. Because of increasing theft and assault the unarmed Wixaritari decided to not stop out of fear. The police response is presently under investigation. Meanwhile 400 members from the three Wixárika communities held an assembly and 250 traveled to Municipal Presidency in Huejuquilla to protest and demand an explanation as to why police shot at their labeled vehicle which makes regular trips to Huejuquilla to handle administrative issues. They were finally received by the Municipal President, Fredy Medina Sánchez, who agreed to investigate and to pay for the medical and hospital expenses for the injured. The original press reports can be read on our website's Spanish language news section. For those of you who only read English we have posted English abstracts of the press reports that were so generously provided to us by [The Esperanza Project](#) and Tracy Barnett.

The Work of Our Colleagues

We have continued to actively engage with our longtime colleagues in Guadalajara who have dedicated their lives to support a variety of Wixárika causes. We remain close to our dear friend Patricia Díaz Romo who heads the *Huicholes y Plaguicidas* (Huicholes and Pesticides) project. Juan and Diana accompanied Patricia to Tepic in late February for the showing of her newest film, *Huicholes y Plaguicidas, 16 años después (Huicholes and Pesticides, 16 Years Later)*, to an audience of Wixaritari and other indigenous students at the Autonomous University of Nayarit. This latest film narrates the various activities that Patricia and her organization have carried out since 1994, when her first film, *Huicholes y Plaguicidas*, was released with the purpose of educating the public about the deadly use of agrochemicals in the tobacco fields of Nayarit where hundreds of Wixaritari obtain seasonal work. This second film is narrated by actress and activist Ofelia Medina who has championed Patricia's work against the use of agrochemicals. While Patricia continues to feel frustrated by the difficulties of fighting against powerful transnational corporations like Monsanto and DuPont, her preventative campaigns available in twelve of Mexico's indigenous languages and several European languages remain powerful tools to educate and safeguard the public health of indigenous migrant workers and beyond. To learn more about the *Huicholes y Plaguicidas* project please visit www.huicholesyplaguicidas.com. Patricia's [original film](#) is posted on our website for viewing.

Carlos Chávez continues his work as the director of the Association for the Support of Indigenous Peoples in Jalisco (AJAGI for its Spanish acronym), a non-profit organization that has primarily focused its efforts on supporting Wixárika communities in their legal battles to defend their territories. AJAGI counts with a number of young employees and collaborators (both Wixárika and mestizo) who work on mapping the natural resources, land conflicts, and public and private development projects that affect Wixárika land. Additionally, AJAGI is actively working on initiating new efforts toward sustainable forestry projects.

Rocío Echevarría who directs the *Casa Huichol* and AICAW (Association for the Investigation, Capacitation and Assistance of the Wixárika) has continued her labor caring for Wixaritari who travel to Guadalajara to receive medical treatment. Despite economic hardship, the clinic and boarding house now known as the *Casa Huichol* (previously the *Casa de Salud*) continues to expand through the construction of new rooms and an organic garden. While visiting the Casa Huichol, we had the privilege of meeting Rodrigo de la Mora, a PhD student from Guadalajara who compiled a CD of traditional Wixárika music from Tuapurie, Tutsipa, Tatei Kié and Wautüa played on traditional violin (xaweri) and guitar (kanari). Rodrigo provided us with a couple of copies of the CD which we have enjoyed listening to and we hope to eventually offer them for sale on our website.

Tuapurie's New Community High School

AJAGI has also been central in supporting Tuapurie's first high school, Tamatsi Paritsika (Our Elder Brother Dawn Owner of the Hunt), headed by Claudio de la Rosa, a young Wixárika from this community who received his degree



Tuapurie's High School Tamatsi Paritsika – Photo ©Diana Negrin 2010

in Education at Guadalajara's prestigious Jesuit university, ITESO. This high school project which currently has 19 students emerged from the community's need for a locally-managed school whose curriculum is based on culturally relevant material and which would provide continued education for their youth who had completed their elementary education at the government bi-lingual school. While neighboring communities have adopted the "intercultural" model of education that gives ample room to Wixárika language and culture, Tamatsi Paritsika prefers to see itself as an autonomous community-based school that will operate outside of the parameters of the Ministry of Education (SEP for its Spanish acronym) by including classes that teach sustainable forestry and Wixárika history and art. Currently, classes are taking place in the building constructed by ADESMO

(Wixárika Research Center's predecessor) that housed the weaving workshop. The community has chosen a site, El Espejo, where the new high school will be built using traditional adobe bricks, red tile and solar panels as soon as they have sufficient funding. The design and plans were provided by ITESO's Department of Architecture based on the community's guidelines and include an area for an edible garden and fruit trees. Pascual Pinedo who worked with ADESMO and was the head of Tuapurie's carpentry workshop has been hired to teach a course on environmental sustainability and another course on Wixárika culture. We at the Wixárika Research Center are excited to search for ways to support this community school which is in the process of forming their own non-profit foundation in order to directly receive funding. We'll keep you posted on their progress.

Bolaños-Huejuquilla Road

Tuapurie is the only community that remains firmly against the Bolaños-Huejuquilla road that would cut through their community in spite of intense pressure from their neighbors. We've recently heard rumors that an alternate route is now being mapped out that will take the road around the community of Tuapurie. We will send out an update when more concrete news becomes available.

Other News:

Our time in Tuapurie allowed us to become evermore inspired to restart the weaving workshop once the high school moves to its new location. Wherever we went we heard pleas for our foundation to help revive the weaving workshop and train new weavers in order for the Wixaritari to have quality cotton fabric on which to do fine embroidery. It is our belief that projects such as these not only serve the purpose of conserving the art of Wixárika embroidery but also create a local supply of high quality fabric and much needed employment.



Example of the fine embroidery made possible with high quality cloth.

Photo ©Diana Negrín 2010

An event worth noting was Guadalajara's International Film Festival where we attended the opening of José Alvarez's new documentary on the Wixárika pilgrimage to Wirikuta *Flores en el Desierto (Flowers in the Desert)*. The film was made with the cooperation and participation of the Wixaritari from the ranch of San José in the Community of San Andrés and it was they who chose the name for the film, *Tuturi Wirikutamieme*. The film maintains the original sound track in the Wixárika language with English and Spanish subtitles since the film was made with the intention of preserving knowledge for future generations of Wixaritari. It was exciting to finally meet José Alvarez whom we had been in contact with for more than a year.

Last but not least is the news of Agustín Carrillo Sandoval's graduation from college. He finally received his degree in public accounting in January and has begun an internship with a firm in Guadalajara to gain experience. He joins us in thanking all of you who generously contributed financially to making his dream of a college education possible. Agustín also continues to work part time at AJAGI which keeps him involved in the defense of his community.

Digitalization of the Tape Archive

This year we will be moving forward with the preservation of Juan Negrín's tape archives. In February we were introduced to David Gans whose expertise is tape archival and preservation. David has a studio here in Oakland which is capable of converting the cassette archive into digital format for preservation. We plan to meet again soon to discuss what we will need in the way of funding to carry out this project and will post our proposal on the website once completed.

Our Foundation's Website

Over the past couple of months we have worked to better organize the home pages, and in particular, the news archives on the Spanish version of the website. The most recent news will always be posted in the left hand column of the home page and all news articles are now archived and organized by year. The news [archives](#) for the current year contain all articles including the most recent ones posted on the home page. For the time being we have to do the best we can with the original format of the website. We have learned so much since the website was first built and launched that there is a lot we would like to redesign but the cost of doing so is beyond our reach. Nonetheless we have added links to the left hand side bar so that all of the sections of the website are one click away. We hope this makes for easier navigation.

During the coming months we will be expanding the [documents](#) archive. All of the documents presently posted are fairly recent and from the communities general assemblies, signed and sealed by their elected authorities. Since many of the issues being dealt with today have a long history, we will be scanning and posting documents from the past which will no doubt be of interest to the Wixaritari and to students of their history.

For those of you who have not discovered it, the Wixárika logo at the top left hand corner of our web page will always take you home with a click. On the upper right hand corner of the page is the image of a traditional embroidered six point star – click on it and it brings up a surprise page that changes from time to time. You can always navigate to the different sections of the website through the drop down menu at the top of our pages or by clicking on the links at the very bottom of the pages. Last of all we have decided to change

the home page photographs quarterly to keep a fresh look. Check out the [new look!](#)

Translations

Our website is fully bilingual (English and Spanish), however our news section on the Spanish side of the website remains significantly more extensive due to the lack of relevant English language news articles. While many of our readers are bilingual, we would like to make more news items accessible to our English-only audience. If you or someone you know would like to donate time translating some of the more notable Spanish news items, please contact [Yvonne Negrín](#).

Facebook

We invite you to join our group [Huichol Cultural Survival](#) on Facebook where we also post important news. If you are a Facebook user it is an easy way to keep up to date with our most recent news postings.

T-Shirts

We still have some [t-shirts](#) available in sizes small through extra large. Cost is \$25.00 + \$4.50 shipping.

Donations

Sometime ago we added a link so donations can be securely made online by credit card and a receipt for your tax deduction printed out. If you prefer to donate by check, you can mail your donation to the address at the bottom of this page and we will send you a receipt for your tax purposes. We are currently in need of funding to cover our overhead for the next quarter. There are many costs involved in doing our work in Mexico, maintaining the website, and running an active foundation. Examples of some of those costs are web hosting, equipment maintenance and upgrades, one full time employee, our CPA who handles our complicated tax filings, field trips and ongoing archival work, not to mention rent, utilities and telephone. We have chosen not to charge a membership fee to access our website because we want it to be accessible to everyone and especially to the growing number of Wixaritari and other students who look to us for up to date information on current events and accurate information about Wixárika culture and history. For that reason the voluntary support of those who can afford a donation is vital. We hope you will be generous and [donate](#) what you can in support of our continued work to provide current news and to give the Wixárika people a place to voice their opinions and concerns. Donations are tax deductible.

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