



December 2012 Newsletter

As we approach the close of 2012, we look back on an eventful year with much news to report. Aside from our continued efforts to help protect Wirikuta from the devastation of mining and industrial agriculture, we have also taken on the challenge of reviving the carpentry and weaving workshops in the sierras with the addition of solar energy and have increased our work on the preservation of the archives. Below is an update on our activities and our goals for 2013.

As some of you may know from following our posts on Facebook or on our Website, the administration of President Calderón (2006-2012) had hoped to declare Wirikuta a Federally Protected Biosphere by the end of November before leaving office. Unfortunately, a judge in San Luis Potosí imposed an injunction which stopped the federal government from issuing the decree. The injunction was filed by one of the small landowners in the town of Potrero and based on misinformation that has led some of the people who live in the desert to believe if Wirikuta becomes a Federally Protected Biosphere that they will have their land taken from them or at the very least be forbidden from their traditional use of the land such as the planting of their crops of corn and beans. The injunction was a disappointment to all of us who worked so hard for the past 2 ½ years to halt the mining companies ambitions and obtain a high level of protection for Wirikuta on the federal level, which would guarantee the preservation of all 191,504 hectares and encourage sustainable projects that would improve the living conditions of the people who inhabit the area. As of December 1st, the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, the newly inaugurated President of Mexico, took power bringing with him new ministers. This creates a new challenge for the Wixárika people and their legal representatives since they will be working with an entirely new administration and even a different political party. We will keep you posted on any new developments regarding Wirikuta and we will continue doing all we can to further the permanent protection of this sacred zone.

Since early last spring, Yvonne Negrín began the major project of indexing over 12,000 color transparencies with the help of Hans Michael Jantzen, who has generously donated his time and expertise to scanning the most important images. As of this writing, approximately 8,000 slides have been numbered and indexed while some 800 slides have been scanned in high resolution. The slides are being indexed using Microsoft Excel which is giving us a searchable database that can be used in the future to locate images of specific content. We would like to begin to compensate Hans Michael for his invaluable work on the photo archives but this will depend on how much we receive in general donations from the public.

In October of this year we received a \$2,500 grant from the Center for the Arts, Religion and Education, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. This grant has been provided to cover the cost of digitizing audio cassettes recorded by Juan Negrín with the 5 contemporary Wixarika artists he worked with from the early 1970's through the early 1990's. The extensive collection of tapes contains discussions between the artists and Juan regarding the symbolism and meaning of individual paintings. Some of these recordings will be uploaded to our website so that the Wixaritari, scholars, and others can access and listen to these recordings. The digitization is being done by Plinio Hernández under the supervision of Juan Negrín. This grant awards \$2,000 towards the cost of digitization and \$500 towards the purchase of an external storage system large enough to handle the audio and image files. We have settled on an external hard drive with a personal cloud storage system that will keep our files safely backed up and which will also give us remote access to our files.

Related to our efforts to conserve and index our extensive archive, we submitted a letter of inquiry to the Grammy Foundation to cover the cost of professionally digitizing our audio recordings of traditional Wixárika music, sacred chants and oral history. The Grammy Foundation has encouraged us to submit our proposal in time for their next funding cycle. The musicians and chanters who were recorded are legendary among their people and the preservation of this material is critical.

In July of 2011, we received a written request signed by the traditional and agrarian authorities of the community of Tuapurie in which we were requested to assist them with the renovation of the wood drying kiln that had been built by ADESMO¹ in the late 1980's. In September, the Wixárika Research Center received a grant from the French non-profit foundation, Au Fil des Monde, in the amount of \$1,000 euros (\$1,251 USD) to help get this work started.

In early October of this year Juan Negrín and Gerardo Ruíz traveled to Mexico for a series of meetings with engineers and forestry experts to begin the process of putting together a working group for this project. They spent more than two weeks in the sierras, attending the ceremony of Tatei Neixa and visiting with various important people within the community. The most important purpose of this trip was to introduce Gerardo to the community and attend the General Assembly, to which Juan had been invited, and to request a formal document from the community authorizing our foundation to seek funding to carry out the rebuilding of the solar kiln. Gerardo was very well received by the community and during the assembly, Juan and Gerardo presented the community with an expanded project that proposed restarting the carpentry and weaving workshops that had been so successful during the

¹ The Association for the Ecological Development of the Sierra Madre Occidental was a Mexican non-profit foundation incorporated and headed by Juan Negrín which carried out training programs and built carpentry and weaving workshops in several Wixárika communities.

1980's and 1990's. Additionally, they proposed to integrate the project with the community high school run by Claudio de la Rosa. Some of the ideas put forth include the installation of solar panels to produce electricity for the schools computers and LED lights and the installation of a solar plant to run the community saw mill if it is still operational. Our proposal was very well received and enthusiasm was unanimous. We were given a formal [document](#), signed by the traditional and agrarian authorities, requesting that we actively seek funding for the expanded project and begin work as soon as possible. We are now in the process of evaluating the old solar kiln to determine if it should be repaired or if it would be best to build a new redesigned and more efficient model. Gerardo will be heading back to Mexico for follow up meetings in mid-December and we expect to know how much it will cost to renovate or rebuild the solar kiln no later than mid-January.

In the meantime, we hope for enough additional donations from the general public to carry out the construction of the solar kiln before the start of the rainy season in June 2013. We will aim to have the proposal and budget for the expanded project ready to send out to possible sources of funding by the end of February so that we can resume our work in the sierras during the dry season of 2013-2014. Once the proposal and budget is finalized it will be uploaded to our website.

Last but certainly not least is the rebuilding of our existing website in Drupal. This project has been on hold due to the importance of other work that has consumed our time and energy and the lack of funding to cover this expense but once we are able to make this transition we will have a much richer web experience to offer our readers and the ability to upload much more content in a very organized manner.

The above pretty much wraps up our recent activities. We ask all those who are able, to make a donation towards any one of our projects in need of funding. To those of you who have already generously donated, we thank you for your generous support. No donation is too small to make a difference and every donation is greatly appreciated. Donations can be made securely online by [credit card](#) or mailed to our offices. Our address is at the bottom of this page.

We are a 501(c)3 public non-profit foundation registered in the State of California and all donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. If you have a preference for the use of your donation please make a note in the memo of your check or on our online donation form.

From all of us at the Wixárika Research Center, we wish you a Very Happy Holiday season and a healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.