



## HUICHOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEWSLETTER – FALL 2021



*Isaias Naverette Chino, a recent HSF graduate, takes a break from work on a Wixarika Research Centre (WRC) eco-forestry project, Summer 2021.*

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\*\*\*\*\* **Please share this newsletter with others** \*\*\*\*\*

### **HUICHOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (HSF)**

*The HSF is a charity that assists Huichol (Wixarika) youth to acquire university level skills and education as a way of supporting efforts by their communities and nation (located throughout the Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Durango and Zacatecas) to defend and strengthen their cultural and political autonomy.*

*Launched in 2018-2019, and now in its fourth year of operation, the HSF relies on donations from Americans and Canadians, many residing in Mexico, to support about twenty university students per year via scholarships. **You can donate here:** <https://www.wixarika.org/donate> (Remember to specify your donation is for the scholarship fund in the space for 'special instructions to the seller'.)*

*Operating under the umbrella of the Wixarika Research Center (WRC), the HSF is run by its co-founders, Diana Negrin and Brian McDougall, with valuable assistance from our parent organization: the WRC. In addition to supporting the HSF, we encourage you to learn more about and support the three organizations that have nurtured this scholarship program:*

- Wixarika Research Center: <https://wixarika.org/>
- International Friendship Club: <https://ifcvallarta.org/>
- Volcanes Community Education Project/Ninos de Roma AC: <https://volcanesproject.com/>

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## **[1] Two HSF Alumni win the 2021 Jalisco State's Youth Prize** (Diana Negrin)

In October, two of our HSF recipients received the prestigious Premio Estatal a la Juventud (State Youth Prize) for the state of Jalisco. Isaías Navarrete Chino and Bianca America Enríquez Lopez were two of the seven young people to be recognized this year for their academic and civic leadership. This recognition comes with a \$40,000 peso prize that the winners can use at their discretion.

**Isaías** (pictured above) was part of our first generation of HSF scholarship recipients and over the three years that he received our support, he continued to excel in the area of forestry management, gaining a series of different exchange opportunities that took him from New Mexico to Michoacán. While earning his degree in Forestry Engineering at the Autonomous University of Chapingo, Isaías also became involved in campus policies and helped develop an agreement with his university that will bring and retain more Indigenous students to Mexico's top university in natural resource management.

**Bianca** or '**Tanima**' (the Wixarika name she goes by) was a one-year recipient of the HSF, having applied in her final year of studying law at the private Enrique Rebsamen University in Guadalajara. Since completing her degree in 2020, she has worked for the Jalisco state commission for human rights and ran for local office with the independent Futura party during the June 2021 elections. Tanima is now working in the Jalisco state congress as a legislative aid and through the office of equity where she has been conducting workshops on reproductive rights with Wixarika and non-Wixarika women.

Both Isaías and Tanima have begun thinking about exploring graduate degrees after they spend some more time acquiring hands-on skills. We are so proud of their work and honored to be part of their respective paths!



## **[2] Eleven new scholarship recipients for 2021-22** (Brian McDougall)

During the current academic year, the HSF is supporting twenty students, eighteen of them for a full-year and two for the half year required to complete their degrees. (For the details, see the Appendix at the end of this newsletter.)



Eleven of our current 2021-22 HSF students are new to the HSF. For the first time, we admitted more women (six) than men (five), giving us a current student cohort that is almost half women (nine out of twenty). We're really delighted about that.

Our current students are spread across a wide variety of fields of study, with a concentration of six in applied scientific fields (like agribusiness, engineering and architecture), four in nursing and two in law. Three students are in business oriented programs (business administration, tourism and alternative development, accounting and administration), while the remainder are in diverse fields, including communications, psychology, education, and design.

The new HSF students come from many different towns and communities across the broader Huichol (Wixarika) nation. That ensures the benefits of the scholarship program are widely distributed. Diversity is also evident in our students' selection of universities; our twenty current students are attending eleven different schools.

The diversity and dispersal of our students, coupled with our desire to ensure they learn from each other, explains why we are devoting increased time and energy to ensuring our students interact with each other. (See the item on 'cafecitos' or virtual cafes below.) We want HSF recipients to be able to work together for the benefit of their communities and the broader Huichol (Wixarika) nation.

Over the next year, we expect eleven more students to complete their programs, adding to the eight HSF recipients who have already done so with the benefit of your support.

### **[3] Two of our new 2021-22 HSF students (Jimena Marquez)**



**Two new HSF recipients: Beatriz and Alessandra**

**Beatriz Adriana Ramirez Gamboa** studies at the Colotlán campus of the *Universidad de Guadalajara* in Jalisco. She is currently in the eighth semester of her B.A in psychology.

Beatriz's father was a Wixarika man (died in a car crash serving his community in 2001) and her widow mother is a national Mexican. Inspired by her parents, she describes herself as a *"messenger dove between two cultures, the Wixárika culture and the western culture"*. She chose to study in psychology because she believes that mental health is primordial, and she dreams of a world where people will come together in a positive way and go beyond hatred, discrimination, and resentment. She especially wants this for her own communities where she thinks there is too much discord. She believes psychology can give people the tools to re-establish a dialogue so development is not just measured economically but also humanly.

Beatriz explains that part of her motivation to pursue her studies is encompassed in the Wixarika phrase *"Iyari Waneika"* which means "the heart returns", meaning that no matter how many miles separate her from her homeland, she carries her culture in her heart and she will always find her way back to the sacred places of the Sierra.

**Alessandra Daniela González Romero** is studying communication at Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit. She has completed two years of her undergraduate degree and has two more to go.

Alessandra describes her family background as humble but proud. She is the first in her family to go to university. She is very proud of that, feels supported by her extended family owing it to them to succeed. This scholarship is vital for her as it has allowed her to purchase a computer. It has been very hard to complete all the requirements of her courses without one, and so the HSF award will be a great support in helping her complete and get her degree.

#### **[4] Cafecitos ('virtual cafes'): A new HSF initiative** (Jimena Marquez)

The virtual "Cafecito" is a new initiative by the HSF. Every four to six weeks, current students and alumni are invited to come together and participate in a virtual gathering (on Saturday for about one hour) to share their thoughts on diverse topics. They are accompanied by Diana and Jimena who facilitate the discussion.

Behind the simple principle of coming together (virtually) and sharing experiences and perspectives, is the intention of the HSF to help Wixarika students to connect with each other. This is especially important considering that most come from different localities and are spread out across Mexico studying on/at different campuses, so this might be the only way for them to meet and share among themselves. Furthermore, as Indigenous peoples, Wixarika students might at times feel isolated and marginal in their institutions, and they might also feel home sick, so connecting with other Wixarika students, like themselves, can help them create a vital support network that will assist them in completing their studies.

Coming together and talking about their current projects and future dreams instils in them a greater sense of community, purpose, and engagement. These students come to see they are

not alone and that there are others like them who have big dreams for the future of their communities. This might give them courage and further their determination to succeed in their studies. Finally, we also hope that as students advance in their studies, they will meet other students with whom they share a common vision and professional interests. This could eventually create a greater connection among Wixarika communities across the Sierra as more and more people work together for a common good.

#### **[5] The Communal Assembly of Tapurie and the HSF (Diana Negrin)**

In late October, Diana Negrín traveled to the semi-annual Tuapurie or Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán community assembly. Tuapurie is one of the three main communities that comprise the Wixarika nation and during the assembly Diana was able to present the work of the Wixarika Research Center that includes the HSF program.

Both the traditional and agrarian authorities as well as the Consejo Regional Wixarika (an intercommunity organization) unanimously approved the work being done and showed a great deal of enthusiasm for the scholarship program. During her days in Tuapurie, Diana was able to speak with many young people who shared their interests and dreams, as well as the important challenges that Wixarika university students and young professionals face. We hope to continue to provide spaces for young Wixaritari to receive support through the growing network of students who have been a part of our program.

#### **[6] Why the value of HSF awards was increased to \$7000 (Brian McDougall)**

Like many other charities, the pandemic forced the HAF to make some adjustments. In July, we raised the value of an HSF award from \$6000 pesos to \$7000. Feedback from our Spring 2021 questionnaire indicated most of our students faced added and new costs as they struggled to continue their education under pandemic conditions.

Last year, many students remained in their home communities instead of going to the cities where their universities are located. While that often meant lower living costs, it often dramatically increased their costs for internet access and travel. In addition, those students also lost income from part-time employment in the cities. On the flip side, some students who remained in the cities lost income from pandemic lockdowns.

In response, Diana and Brian decided to increase the scholarship by \$1000 pesos per year. That decreases the chance students will interrupt their studies because of pandemic related financial problems. (Our students told us their universities had a wide range of plans for how classes would be conducted in 2021-22, ranging from online to in-person or a mixture of both. That indicates the pandemic will continue to disrupt university education this year. )

Now raised to \$7000 pesos, the value of the HSF awards will not be reduced in the future. With a value of about \$350 US, the HSF awards are large enough to make a major difference for our students, while not being dissimilar in amount to other Mexican scholarships.

## **[7] Current state of the HSF's finances (Brian McDougall)**

Due to the generosity of our funders and supporters, the HSF is currently in very good financial shape. After spending \$133,000 pesos in support of twenty students for 2021-22, the Fund received its largest donation ever, worth about \$60,000 pesos from a long-time supporter of the WRC. (We know that was a one-time donation that will not be repeated.) As a consequence, the HSF currently has a much larger than expected surplus of about \$154,000 pesos.

Each year, the HSF deliberately runs a surplus. (Prior to the recent donation, that surplus would have been \$96,000 pesos.) While we would like to spend every peso we have in supporting current students, we recognize the contingent nature of our funding makes that inadvisable.

When we accept young men and women into the HSF, they can be second, third or fourth year students in what are normally four year undergraduate university programs. (Some programs run four and a half years.) Our commitment to each new recipient is that, provided they maintain their grades, we will support them for the duration of their undergraduate studies, even if that requires a three and half year financial commitment by HSF. So our financial commitments are always much larger than the amount we spend for a year's scholarship awards in late August.

While we always know how large our multi-year financial commitment is to existing HSF students is, on the revenue side, we have far less certainty. We have only one regular institutional donation (\$25,000 pesos annually) from the International Friendship Club (IFC) in Puerto Vallarta. And, we have three donors who signed on to give us regular monthly amounts. Combined, they contribute about \$9500 pesos per year. So at this point, we are more or less assured of \$34,500 pesos of revenue per year – about one quarter of our current expenditures on scholarships. (Apart from small fees associated with transferring funds, the HSF currently has no other costs. It runs on volunteer labor, benefitting from the administrative support of our parent organization, the WRC in California, and the IFC and Ninos de Roma AC in Puerto Vallarta.)

Because three-quarters of our funding comes from one-time donations, from people who may or may not donate again, we can never be certain we will have sufficient revenue to cover all our outstanding commitments to students for the next three and a half years.

Running a substantial surplus, something we would prefer not to do, is the only way we can responsibly manage the financial uncertainty we face. If we hit a year where donations diminish, we know we will still have the funds to support the students we previously made multi-year commitments to.

There is an obvious long-term solution to our annual financial guessing game: move as many repeat donors away from irregularly timed donations to regular monthly donations. If we can get to a point where two thirds of our spending is assured each year, we'll be less concerned about the need to run a substantial surplus. That would mean more support to more students each year.

If you would like to become a regular monthly donor, the process is very simple. There is a box you should tick at the start of the donation process: <https://www.wixarika.org/donate> (Remember to specify your donation is for the scholarship fund in the space for 'special instructions to the seller'.)

### **[8] New members of the HSF team (Brian McDougall)**

When Diana and Brian started the HSF in 2018, it sponsored five students with a total budget of \$25,000 pesos. Since then, the Fund's budget, and the number of students it supports, has continued to grow. With growth and success come new organizational needs, new challenges and new opportunities. Among the needs is more volunteer labor to operate the HSF and ensure it continues to grow and develop.

From the start, the HSF benefitted from the assistance of key people in supporting roles: Dan Grippo (International Friendship Club), Art Fumerton (Volcanes Community Education Project and Ninos de Roma AC), and Yvonne Negrin and Maria Cruz (Wixarika Research Center). While that critical support continues, growth of the HSF requires the involvement and support of additional help. That's why we are delighted to welcome contributions from two new and enthusiastic volunteers, people who will soon become familiar to HSF donors and supporters: **Jimena Marquez** and **Manuel Lopez Delgado**.



Jimena and Manuel

**Jimena Marquez** is a college professor at John Abbott CEGEP in Montreal and a PhD student at the University of Ottawa. A native of Mexico City, Jimena has worked in the Sierra Madre with the Huichol, as well as working with the Inuit in Northern Quebec and the Mohawks in Canada.



She is an anthropologist with a special interest in culture, religion and Indigenous education. Jimena will be writing and speaking for the HSF, assisting Diana with the cafecitos and assisting with the annual review of student applications to the HSF.

**Manuel Lopez Delgado** is in the Faculty of Humanities at the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juarez, where he teaches and conducts research on Indigenous education and administration. Manuel is a member of the Tarahumara (Raramuri) People of Chihuahua, in northern Mexico, and is one of the very few Indigenous professors in Mexico specializing in the field of education. Manuel will be speaking for the HSF, assisting us with the annual review of student applications, and providing us with policy advice.

The HSF is very lucky to be able to add Jimena and Manuel to the HSF team.

### **[9] Recent events in Wixarika territory** (Diana Negrin)

Over the past six months, with a general decrease in COVID infection rates and a successful vaccination campaign for adults in Wixarika territory, Wixaritari have begun to have more movement to and from their communities. Unfortunately, with this movement they have also become increasingly targeted by the criminal organizations that operate along the perimeters of the Western Sierra Madre highlands. Although the illicit drug economy has had a presence in this region for decades, 2020 marked an uptick in violence as rival cartels battle for control of this region which is considered strategic for its topography that connects the coast with highland regions where drug plantations and laboratories have a footing.

In September this violence reached a climax with the disappearance and murder of six Wixaritari men from Tuapurie who ranged between 16 and 30 years of age. The bodies of four of the six were found; two of the victims were currently studying in the community high school of Nueva Colonia where past and present HSF recipients studied.

We share our deep condolences with the families and community, and express our concern for the way in which organized crime is affecting this generation of youth, some of whom have been attracted by the illicit economy as one of the few viable sources of income generation. These tragic events drive home the importance that our program helps to provide a safe space for young Wixaritari to learn together and network at a time of deep political, economic and social change.

### **[10] Upcoming HSF online public meetings** (Brian McDougall)

The HSF will continue to provide our donors and supporters with opportunities to learn more about the Huichol (Wixarika) nation, our students, and the operations of the HSF.

Traditionally, the HSF offers talks and presentations during the winter months (January through March). In early 2022, we are tentatively planning to offer the following online zoom meetings:

- Late January: **Learning more about the Huichol (Wixarika) nation: an introduction** – Jimena Marquez
- Mid-February: **University education for Indigenous people in Mexico: a backgrounder on the challenges students face** – Manuel Lopez Delgado
- Early March: **Current HSF students talk about their university experience, plus your questions and answers about the operation and future of the HSF** – Diana Negrin & Brian McDougall

Times and dates for these meetings will be forthcoming by the end of December.

### **APPENDIX: Complete list of the 2021-22 HSF recipients**

	NAME	COMMUNITY	M/F	UNIVERSITY	DEGREE	GRADUATION DATE
<b><i>Students who started in 2019-2020</i></b>						
1	Dagoberto Robles Gonzalez	San Miguel Huaixtita	M	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Law	2022
2	Eusebio de la Cruz	Tuapurie	M	ITESO	Business administration	2022
3	Xochitl Chanes	Rosemoreda, Nayarit	F	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Law	2022
4	Prudencio Rivera	Potrero de la Palmita, Nayarit	M	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Education	Dec. 2021
<b><i>Students who started in 2020-2021</i></b>						
5	Gabino Valdez	Mesa del Tirador, Bolanos	M	Universidad Tecnologica de la Sierra	Nursing	2022
6	Eduardo Carillo	Otatiste	M	Universidad Tecnologica de Nayarit	Civil engineering	2022
7	Sliverio de la Rosa	Naranjito de copal	M	Universidad Tecnologico de la Sierra	Nursing	2022
8	Yuly Bautista	Guadalupe Octoan	F	Universidad Tecnologica de Enfermeria	Nursing	2023
9	Xitlali Ríos Sandoval	Paso de Alica	F	Instituto Tecnologico de Tepic	Nursing	2022
<b><i>Students who started in 2021-2022</i></b>						
10	María Guadalupe Bautista	Tuxpan de Bolanos	F	Universidad Tecnologica de la Sierra	Tourism & alternative development	2023
11	T+kima Carillo	Waut+a	F	ITESO	Nutrition & Food Sciences	2023
12	Alejandeo Cosio	Taupurie	M	Instituto Tecnologico Superior de Zacatecas Sur	Administrative engineering	2024
13	Zulema de la Cruz	El Roble, El Nayar	F	Instituto Tecnologico de Tepic	Architecture	2022

14	Esmeralda Estrada	Guadalupe Ocotan	F	Universidad de Guadalajara	Agribusiness	2024
15	Alessandra Gonzalez Romero	Guineas de Guadalupe	F	Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit	Communications and media	2023
16	Faustino Lopez Martinez	Tuxpan de Bolanos	M	Universidad de Guadalajara (CUNORTE)	Electronic engineering & computer science	2024
17	Alvaro Waritsi Lopez Lopez	Taupurie	M	ITESO	Design	2024
18	Juan Marcos parra Diaz	Huaynamota	M	Universidad de Guadalajara (CUNORTE)	Accounting & administration	2023
19	Beatriz Ramirez Gamboa	Tateikie	F	Universidad de Guadalajara	Psychology	2022
20	Christian Rey Pacheco	Tateikie	M	Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa	Agribusiness	2022