

WIXÁRIKA RESEARCH CENTER

October 2022

Program for Biocultural Exchange in Wirikuta 2022 REPORT

This year we organized a regional gathering that we entitled "**Regreening and Weaving Alliances in the Altiplano.**" It took place from July 29 to 31, 2022, in the *ejido* or communally held lands of Las Margaritas, Municipality of Catorce. Our programming expanded the activities achieved on July 31, 2021, that laid the first stone for a multidisciplinary initiative that contributes directly to the conservation and regeneration of the sacred place of Wirikuta in the high plateaus of the Chihuahuan Desert in San Luis Potosí.



One of our lines of action is to create spaces where knowledge is shared from an intercultural and participatory lens. For this reason, it was essential to convene various Wixárika as well as small farmer families from the region of Wirikuta in San Luis Potosí. We consider these to be the two groups that historically inhabit and care for this region of high biodiversity and therefore, it is they who are the primary beneficiaries of this work.

One of the most important achievements of the meeting was our ability to bring together Wixáritari—mainly youth and women—from communities in Jalisco and Nayarit that include **Tateikié** (San Andrés Cohamiata), **Tuapurie** (Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán), **Wautia** (San Sebastián Teponohuaxtlán), **Xatsitsarie** (Guadalupe Ocotán) and **Kuruxi Manuwe** (Tuxpán de Bolaños. For many it was their first time in Wirikuta, a place of great spiritual and cultural importance.

It is important to emphasize that the meeting and workshops held in July 2022 took place within the historical context of the formulation of a Justice Plan ([Plan de Justicia](#)) for the Wixárika people. This Justice Plan has provided a working platform between Wixáritari authorities, peasant representatives from San Luis Potosí and the Mexican state with the aim of achieving the defense and management of various sacred places, including Wirikuta. We know that every activity we carry out in the sacred and ecological space of Wirikuta takes place within a delicate political, economic and social context. Without a doubt, we understand that this project arises as a proactive community-led and sustainable response to the effects of climate change, and the polluting and extractive industries that threaten the cultural and environmental well-being of the Altiplano-Wirikuta.

This year we were able to achieve our goals thanks to the generous support of the **Chacruna Institute's Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative**, **Héctor Dávila** from the **Centro de Desarrollo Comunitario Bolaños, A.C.**, and several small private donations, including one from our dear friend, **Ann Shulgin** (1931-2022). In advance, we invite and appreciate any financial support that helps us continue with this initiative.

New Alliances and the 2022 Gathering



This year the **Wixárika Research Center** invited several organizations with shared missions dedicated to promoting the ecological and cultural sustainability of Indigenous and rural peoples of Mexico. The following organizations joined us to help facilitate the workshops and activities that were held over three days:

- **Proyecto ConcentrArte** is dedicated to promoting programs for social and environmental resilience in rural and Indigenous communities in Mexico. Their team not only helped us organize an icebreaker activity to initiate the gathering, they also organized an herbalism workshop where they invited the participants to create books that identify and are inspired by the plants of Wirikuta.

- **Etnoeco, Cultura y Medioambiente, A.C.** led a discussion about the multiple uses of regional plants, such as the *lechugilla*, the *ocotillo*, the *candelilla* and the mesquite. Along with workshop participants, **Jorge Camberos** and **Xóchitl Magallón** shared their methodologies for making good use of natural assets in semi-arid zones.
- **Casa Wilmot and the Fundación Alejandro Díaz Guerra, A.C.** promoted the design of eco-techniques with a workshop led by **Juan Jaime Contreras**, a traditional master potter from Tonalá. Their prototypes for dry toilets and humidifiers for orchards demonstrate the importance of using good materials and design for the successful function of alternative technologies.
- **Cecilia Colunga Castillo** from the town of El Jordán in the Sierra de Catorce gave a talk on solidarity economies and ecotourism. Based on her years of work with a Catholic community group of the **Diocese of Matehuala** and the creation of a community savings bank in her village, Cecilia promoted the importance of community organization to support the production and distribution of local products, as well as for the promotion of sustainable tourism in the region.

Our activities also included activities that promote community participation, highlighting the importance of the role of women in the political, economic and cultural organization of Wixárika communities. **Tanima Enríquez, Ahyte Enríquez, Mariola Sánchez** and **Kiayerima López**, all originally from Wautia (San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlán) organized an inspiring conversation about female empowerment from a Wixárika worldview and the relationship this has for biocultural conservation.



One of our central axes is to promote spaces that actively value ancestral techniques for caring for the land as they become articulated with innovations and newer considerations in the field of agroecology and agroforestry.



Finally, we continue with our focus on the symbiotic relationship of the region's plants with mesquites, cacti and agaves as the protagonists. Thanks to the **Arborigen** team led by engineer **Gerardo Ruiz Smith**, this summer we continue to strengthen intercultural and regenerative work through agroforestry and agroecological techniques. Our method for achieving this practical education is through field practice.

In 2021, we planted 160 mesquites and agaves in a cornfield located next to the sacred place of Tamatsi Kauyumarie (Our Elder Brother Fawn of the Sun), also called El Bernalejo. The majority of these plants survived their first challenging year, facing off periods of extreme cold and heat.

However, the current year's drought alerted us to the need to direct our reforestation workshop to a space where the young trees could be cared for more easily by the inhabitants of the *ejido*. In this way, we were given the opportunity to reforest the Las Margaritas elementary school.

With the participation of Wixaritari, some inhabitants of the area and members of the Tatewarí collective, mesquites, agaves and nopal cacti were planted along the school perimeter. In addition, mesquites were donated so that each family in the *ejido* could plant a new tree at their home.

There was no shortage of recreational activities that united inhabitants of the *ejido* with our group of guests. We screened the film ***What Happened to the Bees?*** (2019) by Robin Canul and Adriana Otero, detailing the struggle for the protection of bees in Yucatan from the invasion of agroindustry and the use of pesticides. Throughout the days we also shared music, laughter, conversations, campfires, and food.

Our Next Steps

We believe that one of the most consistent ways to achieve the conservation and ecological regeneration of Wirikuta is through activities that consider the social, economic, and cultural well-being of the populations with the greatest history living within this geography: the Wixárika people and the small farmers. Therefore, this year's gathering deepened our commitment to strengthen our organizational alliances, continue promoting annual workshops and talks, and consolidate a new non-profit organization in Mexico that can serve as the platform to carry out ecological and cultural initiatives in the Wixárika ancestral and sacred territory. We will be delighted to share more news in the coming months on the **Alianza Intercultural para la Regeneración Ecosistémica (Intercultural Alliance for Ecosystem Regeneration)**!



In the medium and long term, we propose to develop—together with our allied organizations and the relevant authorities—a multidisciplinary space in the Municipality of Catorce, San Luis Potosí that is directed by Wixáritari and residents of the region and which integrates the following elements: **1) A center for education and biocultural exchange** that trains young residents of San Luis Potosí and Wixáritari in agroforestry; **2) Agroforestry orchard, nursery and ethnobotanical garden** for the propagation of cacti, fruits, medicines, and vegetables; **3) Workshops for the processing of local products and educational training workshops** on ecological, economic, and social issues. This multifunctional space seeks to serve as an incubator to process and add value to regional agroforestry resources. Further, this work is geared to foment the **biocultural awareness of visitors**, including garbage and waste management within areas of high cultural and biological value such as the Natural and Cultural Reserve of Wirikuta.

PROJECTED BUDGET 2023

Item	Monthly Amount	Yearly Amount
Salary for Project Manager (Isaías Navarrete)	\$300 USD	\$3,600
Salaries for Project Coordination and fundraising (Diana Negrín & Gerardo Ruiz)	\$200 USD for two people	$\$2,400 \times 2 = \$4,800$
Community Liaisons (Carlos Carrillo & Mariola Sánchez)	<i>Not Applicable</i>	$\$1,000 \times 2 = \$2,000$
	<i>Subtotal for salaries</i>	<i>\$10,400 USD</i>
2023 Gathering (materials, travel costs, lodging and food for 40-80 people; honoraria for workshop leaders)	<i>Not Applicable</i>	\$7,000
Administrative costs (transaction fees, accounting, travel costs and miscellaneous communications costs)	<i>Not Applicable</i>	\$800
	Total	\$18,200

For more information on the first two phases of our project, please read our project narrative [here](#) or contact Diana Negrín at negrindasilva@gmail.com. We appreciate your interest and support to keep the candles lit for the wellbeing of land and life.

PAMPARIYUTSI-GRACIAS-THANK YOU!

