

# WIXARIKA

## Winter 2018 Newsletter

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As this year draws to an end we want to thank all of you who supported our projects this past year and made possible the work we accomplished with our special visitors, Matsiwa De la Cruz and Aukwe García Mijarez. More than at any other time, our mission at the Wixárika Research Center is to continue to build a rich archive of Wixárika history, culture and territory alongside our continued support of select initiatives that strengthen Wixárika autonomy. In this light, and given the enormity of threats that continue to affect Wixárika land and culture, we are happy to share some of our most important developments of the year.

Last March and April with the help of Matsiwa, we documented close to 2,000 Kodachrome slides taken by Juan Negrín in the community of Tuapurie between 1973 and 1986. It is in this community's Ceremonial Center of Las Latas (Kieruwitua) where Juan took the bulk of his photographs of ceremonies and everyday life on his friends' ranches. Matsiwa and Yvonne's registration of photographs included identification of people, places and the activities detailed in the photographs. We then printed 150 photographs to send back with Matsiwa. Most were portraits and, in the case of the deceased, the photographs were given to their children and grandchildren.



Yvonne and Matsiwa reviewing slides.  
Photo © Vanessa Sequeros

These photographs were taken at a time when almost no Wixaritari had cameras and when taking photographs by outsiders was mostly forbidden. As a result, the photographs we sent back are in most cases the only images some of these families have of their parents or grandparents. Some were portraits of children and represent the only pictures people have that were taken during their childhood. It gave us great pleasure to do this work and return these cherished memories to the community.

The other project we completed with Matsiwa was to digitize the cassette tapes made in 1980, when the Council of Elders requested that Juan tape record their kawitu, or oral history so it would be preserved for the community. These elders participated in a nightlong session where each one recounted a different theme relating to their origins. We purchased four digital FM radios with SD chips and downloaded the oral histories along with an all-night chant by a legendary chanter and the music of a renowned violinist long deceased. The radios were gifted to the families of the elders who participated and we were told that all of their family members as well as others gathered together to listen to these historic recordings. It was an honor to fulfill the wishes of those elders who had the forethought to record their knowledge, which they feared was in danger of being lost.

In mid-October we had the great honor to host Aukwe García Mijarez, the director of communications for the Regional Wixárika Council for a six week stay in Oakland. The Regional Wixárika Council was founded in 2010 to protect Wixárika territory and sacred sites and is an organ that represents the traditional and civil authorities of all of the Wixárika communities. Aukwe's stay included the review and registration of approximately 200 multi-page documents and news clippings related to the land and resources of the Wixárika communities. She created an Excel report listing each individual document with information including the subject, content, date, source, and if the documents had been scanned. These materials span the 1970s through the 2000s, detailing the most pressing political and ecological matters that the Wixárika have faced during this period. We look forward to including many of these historical materials in our new online archive, detailed below. Aukwe also participated in an event co-organized by the Wixárika Research Center, Cine+Mas Latino and the de Young Museum of San Francisco. The event featured a screening of the *Shaman's Dream (El sueño del mara'akame)* by Federico Cecchetti (Mexico, 2016) and was preceded by a showing of 75 projected images of photographs taken by Juan Negrín. After the film, Aukwe and our president of the board of directors, Diana Negrín, held a post-screening discussion with the audience.

Another exciting part of Aukwe's exchange was our ability to connect her with the Intertribal community in the Bay Area. Thanks to our friend Pennie Opal Plant from the local Gathering Tribes Gallery in Berkeley, Aukwe received invitations to several gatherings, most notably the annual indigenous peoples Sunrise Ceremony held every Thanksgiving on Alcatraz Island. During her stay she gave a lecture for a class in the Ethnic Studies Department at UC Berkeley and was able to participate in the last meeting of our board of directors. At this meeting she talked to us about the importance of the documents she had been reviewing because they begin at a time just prior to the first roads being built into Wixárika territory. It was the time when outsiders began in earnest exploiting their forests and, as she said, "the whole history of what happened during that time is in these documents". There are many more documents to be reviewed and digitized and we would love to invite Aukwe back to continue working on the archives, provided she can find time away from her job in Mexico. In the meantime, we are excited to announce that she has agreed to formally join our Board of Directors.

Early this year our foundation was contacted by the International Friendship Club, a Mexican non-profit founded and directed by Canadian and American retired immigrants living in Mexico. As part of their commitment to supporting grassroots causes in their new country of residence, the IFC contacted us because of their interest in supporting Wixárika university students from the state of Jalisco or who are studying in this same state. Having supported individual students over the years, we were delighted to help lead the coordination of this new fund which we hope can become a regular part of our yearly activities if the pilot runs well. We are currently in the final negotiations with the ITESO, Guadalajara's Jesuit University that has a successful track record of working with Wixárika communities and university students. The pilot will provide five undergraduate students with a \$5000 peso (\$250 USD) supplement that can help cover transportation, food and school materials and we hope to have the green light to send the call for applications out this month.

In August we began the work of developing our new website. Our current website was built in 2001 with what is now old technology. Because of this, our site lacks the ability to handle the volume of archives we aim to share in the future. In the coming months, we will have a much more complete and dynamic site with a better news section, historical documents, and a search engine to help people find the information they are looking for. The work done by Aukwe was in preparation for uploading archives collected by Juan Negrín to the new website so they can be shared with the Wixárika people, scholars, and others. We expect to go live with the new website sometime in April of 2018 and will send out a notification and link at that time.

Aukwe, who is the head of communications for the Wixárika Regional Council, has been writing an update on the status of their efforts to save wirikuta from mining and a proposed toxic waste dump. Once we receive her report we will forward it to our subscribers.

Donations of any amount in support of our work are welcome. Currently we are asking for donations to help us with costs associated with building the new online database and website. Here is a link to make a donation by credit card:

[http://wixarika.mediapark.net/en/en\\_donations.html](http://wixarika.mediapark.net/en/en_donations.html)

We also ask you to remember our foundation if you shop on Amazon. Amazon Smile will donate 0.5% of your purchase to our foundation. Here is a direct link you can save in your browser: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0475089>

Our best wishes to all for a healthy and prosperous 2018!

*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.*