



I am optimistic about 2022. According to Reuter's COVID-19 tracker, which analyzes University of Oxford's Our World in Data, Panama is vaccinating 10% of their population every six weeks. By September 23, 2021, 59.9% of Panamanians had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Our Indigenous partners report their rural communities are getting vaccinated, too, despite some vaccine hesitancy. Hopefully by the end of 2021, at least 75% of Panamanians will have received this life-saving protection from SARS-CoV-2 virus. Meanwhile, Panama's strict masking and quarantine protocols seem to be keeping caseloads low.

We continue to support Indigenous partners virtually and with new technologies. As you will read, Wounaan are using satellite data to rapidly respond to deforestation and stop the destruction of their lands. Wounaan bird guides are learning English using Google Meet and WhatsApp, and with the launch of the new project, Digital Transformation of Indigenous-Led Ecotourism and Conservation, we'll be helping Wounaan ecotourism providers connect online to the global market. Wounaan are connecting virtually with tree seedling health experts. This year, another 6,000 seedlings were planted by Wounaan to replenish their forests.

Still, there is a lot to do. Six Wounaan communities remain untitled. Approximately 350,000 acres of their forested territories are at risk of deforestation and Wounaan biocultural resources are at risk of disappearing.

Barring more elusive variants, I am optimistic we'll be able to safely travel to Panama and make even greater progress. Thank you for continuing to support Indigenous communities in Panama.

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**Marsha Kellogg**  
President, Native Future



The Wouaan “tele-forester” orienting community-based technicians to which seeds are ready for collection. The WhatsApp group is made up of 21 Wounaan and 4 communities. Thank you US Forest Service International Programs for continuing to support this important work!




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## Peter Hetz joins Native Future Board

Native Future is happy to welcome Peter Hetz to the Board of Directors. Peter's work has been focused on natural resource management, conservation, and land issues in Africa, Eastern Europe/Balkans, and China/Southeast Asia. Peter explains, “I knew international work was to be my life's interest after my folks put me on a plane solo at the age of 10, to visit an Aunt and Uncle I'd never met.” He spent the summer herding goats with Berber boys in Morocco and playing with scorpions and tarantulas in the high, arid Atlas Mountains. Peter has been a long-time supporter of Native Future and its mission to secure Wounaan land rights. In 2010, he and his family visited the Wounaan communities of Rio Hondo and Platanares with Native Future President, Marsha Kellogg. Peter, now 68, has worked internationally for 45 years. “It's great to join the Board, and I hope to help Native Future flourish in support of its Mission,” said Peter.



# TERRITORIAL ALERTS MAP HELPS WOUNAAN HALT ILLEGAL LOGGING IN ARUZA

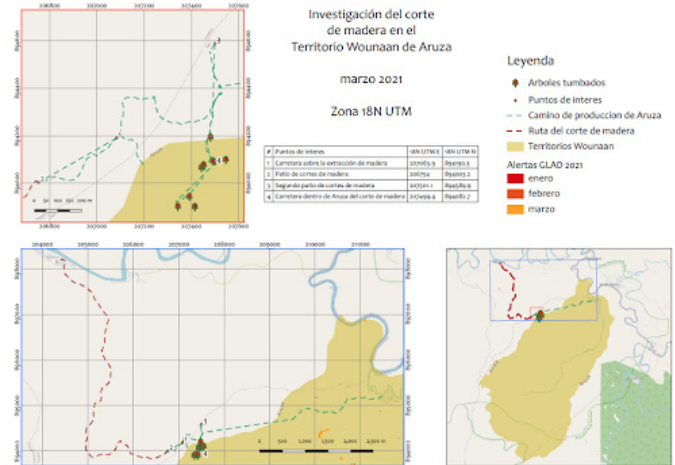
In early March 2021, upon updating the newly developed territorial alerts map, Native Future's volunteer GIS Technician, Clay Mosolino, noticed deforestation occurring inside the Wounaan territory of Aruza. He quickly notified the Territorial Monitoring Coordinator of the Foundation for the Development of the Wounaan People (FUNDEPW) who first heard several rumors of deforestation going on in Aruza and wanted Clay to verify. The Coordinator then mobilized community monitors to go verify the alerts. The alerts shown on the map totaling an estimated 14.5 hectares - led the team of Wounaan technicians to loggers and logging activities on the far side of their territory, an area they would not have known was threatened without the remote monitoring. The technicians ground-truthed the alerts, which corresponded almost exactly to the GPS points on the map.

On the ground, the Coordinator and the community monitors collected photographic evidence of the illegal extraction of trees inside their territory and submitted an environmental complaint (denuncia) on March 24 to the Panamanian authorities. Their complaint cites illegal logging, solid waste littering, contamination of their rivers, and the expressed threat of the logger to burn the land to clear it further. Rapid communication by the Territorial Monitoring Coordinator with the Ministry of Environment's Environmental Intelligence Office resulted in a near immediate response by the Ministry of Environment who sent a team out to investigate the next week.

Aruza was the first case of a successful application of the territorial alerts map by Wounaan community-based monitors that resulted in the submission of an environmental complaint and rapid response by Panama's environmental authorities. Since then, Wounaan authorities have submitted 8 denuncias to the Ministry of Environment, adding up to 147 hectares of deforestation in the communities of Rio Hondo, Platanares, Maje and Aruza and more than \$44,000 worth of damage. Wounaan lawyers and leaders are stewarding the complaints through their legal process and leading site visits with the Ministry of Environment and other Panamanian governmental institutions to inspect the deforestation.

In January, 2021, Native Future, the Wounaan National Congress, and FUNDEPW launched the territorial alerts map to monitor Wounaan territories. The map uses GLAD (Global Land Analysis and Discovery) alerts from the University of Maryland that are updated weekly. These alerts register change in forest canopy cover analyzed from Landsat 7 and Landsat 8 satellite imagery. Although GLAD alerts alone are not an accurate method of determining the extent and degree of forest change in an area, they are a critically important tool to the work of Indigenous monitors and lawyers who are working to halt it before it expands.

Thank you to the International Conservation Fund of Canada for supporting this important work!



The maps show the tracks of forest monitors (green) who walked approximately 3 miles from their community to investigate the reports of timber harvesting inside the northwest border of Aruza. Forest monitors tracked the route of the loggers (red) and identified the stands of trees that had been harvested.



Ministry of Environment officials and Wounaan technicians inspect the trees cut from the territory of Aruza.



Deforestation in Aruza caused by illegal logging.

Photos by D Negria.

# EDUCATION MATTERS NOW, MORE THAN EVER

The video was startling: a fiery speech by a national religious leader condemning government efforts to vaccinate everyone against COVID. The video was sent to me by local leaders of the Basilio Perez Scholarship program in El Jacinto, Panama. They responded to my query: "We're praying about it."

Kispo Mendez and his wife Justa (pictured) raised nine children in El Jacinto in the Comarca Ngäbe-Buglé. Justa never learned to read or write; Kispo finished 6th grade. Kispo became a community leader, a talented builder of frames for adobe homes, worked in food/farming cooperatives, and helped build aqueducts that bring spring water to the village. With too little land to support their family, they struggled to send their children to school. Their sons went to high school in the city, where they worked day jobs to study at night.

Native Future has helped educate Kispo and Justa's children over the past 20 years. Among them are a car mechanic, a pharmacy student, and two airline workers, one of whom is about to receive the first college degree in the family. The youngest, Ivan, just completed his first semester of college studying applied sciences and

technology. The girls, now mothers, are encouraging their daughters to work toward a career.

The delicate subject of the anti-vax video led to my suggestion: "Please listen to your local doctors and nurses." Kispo and Justa are fully vaccinated. They listened to their children, who are also vaccinated, survivors of the virus, and live in the city where COVID-19 has been more severe. All Panamanian clinics offer free vaccines.

Educating young people can have an impact on their decision making beyond the classroom; thank you for supporting the education of Indigenous youth.

There are 14 students from El Jacinto currently receiving Native Future scholarships: 11 in the university receiving \$300 per semester, and 3 in high school (nearby communities) receiving \$100 per semester. Native Future looks forward to continuing its support of Indigenous students in their decision to further their education.

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**Sara Archbald**  
Education Coordinator



Kispo Mendez and his wife Justa in 2020



Justa with visiting grandchildren

## Where is the Education Program Headed?

Currently there are five Indigenous nonprofits in Panama whose members and offspring benefit from your scholarship donations: four Ngäbe-Buglé and one Wounaan. More than 50 students are studying in High School or College, THANKS TO YOU! While maintaining these efforts, Native Future hopes to strengthen and grow the program to include other local programs, communities, or modalities.

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# WOUNAAN BIRD GUIDES LEARN ENGLISH - VIRTUALLY!

In June, Native Future launched English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for Wounaan bird guides. Three members of the Puerto Lara bird group, the Oropendolas Negras (Black oropendolas), Jairo Cheucarama, Ernesto Piraza, and Rolando Cheucarama, and a member of the all-women's bird group, the Tangaras Azules (Blue-gray tanagers), Fabelicia Ismare, began meeting online with ESL Instructor, Devonna McCarthy. Virtual English classes were a first for all of us, except Devonna, who has been teaching English online for 1.5 years. It took a couple tries to get everyone connected and using Google Meet on their phones, and phone data had to be topped off periodically to keep them connected, but with improved Wi-fi connections in Puerto Lara, Jairo was convinced, "virtual English classes are a magnificent idea!"

With support from Wounaan Bird Count volunteers Janice Jorgensen, Patrick Yoon, and Robert Mesta, Devonna developed a series of 12 classes that taught the students how to describe the birds they see in their community, and corresponding basic vocabulary and grammar. They met on Google Meet twice a week and shared course materials and homework through the messaging platform WhatsApp. By the end of the six-week pilot period, all students were eager to continue. A new series of classes began Sunday, September 12th, and this time the students are paired with a volunteer to practice talking during the week. (Thank you Charles Cummings, Joanne Mills, Robert Mesta, and Sherry Barrett!)

English classes are one of the activities of the recently launched project, Digital Transformation of Indigenous-Led Ecotourism and Conservation, which will prepare Wounaan ecotourism providers to meet a post-Covid-19 market. And, because of our partnerships with others, your donations to the Wounaan Bird Count are matched 2:1; for every dollar you donate, we receive 2 more! Thank you for your support!

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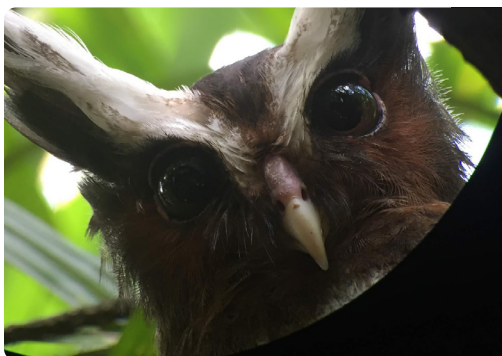
Marsha Kellogg



Students in a virtual English class led by Devonna McCarthy and supported by Native Future volunteer, Janice Jorgensen.



Project team, left-right, **Jairo Cheucarama**, Bird Guide Trainer; **Diogracio Puchicama**, Wounaan National Chief; **Dalila Opu**, Treasurer, Caja Rural; **Chenier Carpio**, Component 2 Coordinator; **Itzel Chamarra**, FUNDEPW Secretary; **Keruby Membora**, Component 1 Coordinator; **Mel Brown**, Business Manager, Global Brigades, and **Aris Delgado**, Project Director.



Puerto Lara's next Christmas Bird Count is **January 5, 2022.**

Keep an eye on our blog and virtual newsletter for updates.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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