

Message from the President

Eight months ago, Panama was on a national lockdown to contain the coronavirus. Indigenous communities were under quarantine, travel throughout Panama was halted, and schools and businesses were closed. Indigenous families were having a hard time putting food on the table and like the rest of us, learning how to minimize their risk of contracting Covid 19.

By early June, Panama began to re-open. Predictably, the spread of Covid 19 rose. It spread into indigenous communities that had been spared for months. Many got sick and recuperated, some are still feeling symptoms months later and, most sadly, family members and friends have passed on. (According to the [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#) the Covid 19 mortality rate in Panama is 2%; it trends higher in remote communities.)

Eight months ago, Native Future decided we had to help, and very thankfully we could because of your generous donations. Scholarship funds were broadened to support families and students during these trying times. And we raised an additional \$8,200 for Coronavirus Response. Because of you, to date,

- 104 Ngäbe Buglé families received direct financial support to help them weather this crisis.
- 898 meals were provided to Ngäbe Buglé Covid 19 patients and family members who needed to quarantine in the Buenos Aires Catholic Mission.
- 550 Wounaan families in 4 communities received food, masks and health and hygiene supplies to help alleviate suffering and reduce the risk of infection.
- Covid 19 educational materials were developed and sent to Indigenous leaders and communities via our networks and those of Panamanian partners, like the UNDP GEF Small Grants Program.
- April - July, Wounaan leaders' cell phones were periodically topped off helping them communicate with each other and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian assistance while travel restrictions were in place.

The pandemic continues and indigenous students, families and communities have to learn to adapt to new realities. Business and school has resumed, but in new, ways, such as online. Although safer, telecommunications and technology are costly and out of reach to most indigenous families. We're helping them adapt.

As you'll read, scholarship funds are helping students get online to continue their education, Wounaan are developing ways to remotely monitor their territories to protect it from deforestation, a "tele-forester" is helping communities plant and care for their trees, and the Wounaan birders, *Oropendola Negras* and *Tangaras Azules* still plan to carry out the 2020 Christmas Bird Count in Puerto Lara and report it back to the National Audubon Society, electronically.

Thank you so very much for your caring and generosity during these trying times. Your donations not only help Wounaan, Ngäbe and Buglé families survive, but to again try to thrive, during this pandemic.