



Kimat Yachay

~BIMONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF PAWANKA FUND~



ONLINE EDITION & BLOG

# Kimat Yachay

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Indigenous women lead initiatives that prioritize culturally relevant healthcare services, recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Pawanka Fund Team

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**In-Person Meeting in Nicaragua: Strengthening Bonds and Knowledge**

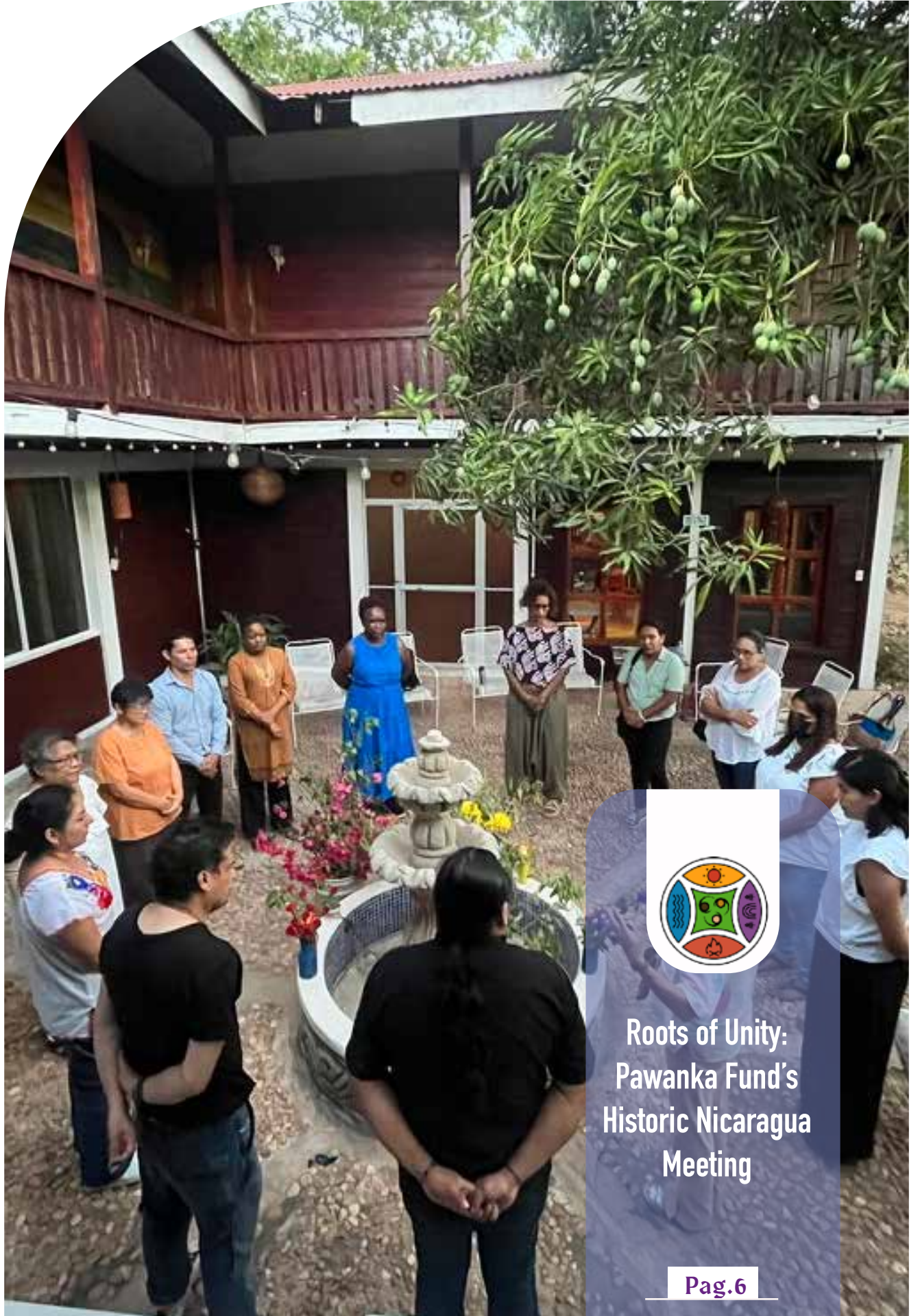
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**Roots of Unity:  
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# In-Person Meeting in Nicaragua: Strengthening Bonds and Knowledge



With great excitement and a profound sense of purpose, the Pawanka Fund held a historic in-person meeting in Bilwi, Nicaragua, from May 20th to 26th. This event marked a milestone as it was the first time in ten years that team members met face-to-face. The energy and enthusiasm were palpable as we prepared for a week filled with cultural exchanges, deep learning, and the reaffirmation of our commitments to indigenous communities worldwide.

This gathering not only allowed us to reconnect after a decade of virtual interactions but also provided an opportunity to immerse ourselves in the rich culture of Nicaragua and learn firsthand about the experiences and challenges faced by local communities. With representatives from Kenya, Ecuador, Mexico, the Philippines, Colombia, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, the meeting was a true melting pot of cultures, knowledge, and traditions, all guided by the spirit of solidarity and mutual respect.

## Day 1: Connection and Learning

The first day began with visits to the Judith Kain House Museum, a space dedicated to preserving and promoting local culture. We then visited the Government House and the Ministry of Health, where we were warmly received. This day allowed us to explore Pawanka's history and origins, and gain a better understanding of the context in which we work. It was an invaluable opportunity for team members from different countries to meet and share their initial impressions.



## Day 2: Synergy and Shared Experiences

On the second day, we convened to discuss Pawanka's focus areas and the specific roles of each team member. This session was crucial for aligning our goals and strategies. In the afternoon, we had the honor of sharing experiences with the Mayangna Nation, one of the indigenous communities we support. The discussions were deep and enriching, highlighting the importance of collaboration and mutual support between our cultures.



## Day 3: Cultural Enrichment and Training

The third day took us to the Integrated Culture Center, a vibrant space where local students delighted us with a performance of the traditional "Palo de Mayo" dance. This cultural experience allowed us to connect on a deeper level with Nicaragua's traditions. Afterwards, we participated in training sessions on new platforms and tools designed to improve our internal processes and facilitate communication. The day ended with a visit to the beautiful Nicaraguan sea, where we enjoyed a time of reflection and camaraderie.



## Day 4: Education and Institutional Strengthening

The fourth day was dedicated to sharing experiences with members of the Secretariat of Education. During this session, we discussed the challenges and achievements of the education system in Bilwi, including the revitalization of the Miskito language and ongoing support for intercultural education. In the afternoon, we attended a training session on strengthening the institutional capacity of indigenous organizations, where strategies and tools to improve our efficiency and effectiveness were presented.



## Day 5: The Art of Storytelling

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## Day 6: Meeting with the Karatá Community

On the final day, we visited the vibrant Karatá community, who received us with great warmth and generosity. They shared their daily experiences, educational model, economy, organization, and the challenges they face. We learned about the colorful Palo de Mayo tradition and bid heartfelt farewells to colleagues returning to their home countries. It was a truly rewarding and enriching experience.



**Bridging Generations:  
Karatá Youth Share  
Wisdom and Culture**

## Thailand

# Conserving and Promoting Local Plant Species for Indigenous Peoples' Food Security, Health and Wellbeing

Learning exchange and dialogues about local plant species among indigenous groups in Thailand yielded new insights and appreciation for their resources and practices. For instance, the Phe Kha or Damocles tree or Indian Trumpet Flower which is common in communities is used differently by indigenous groups. Some use its bark and root for medicine, while some eat only its fruits. The Kanchong or hemp for Hmong people has potential for generating income when processed into different products such as paper, clothing, biodegradable plastics, biofuel, food, and animal feed.

The participants, mainly knowledge bearers, women and youth, strengthened mutual learning and benefit-sharing as indigenous groups. They shared knowledge and experiences on traditional seed preservation among different IP groups and the challenges posed by food security and transmission of knowledge to the younger generation. They also learned about the importance of preserving and maintaining local plant varieties and health benefits that still exist despite changes in society and some communities beginning to disappear. While some plant species have been lost in certain communities, they can still be found in others. However, Kaw traditional knowledge holder Sanit Khonthrong from Nan province laments that "Some local medicinal plants still exist, but we cannot access and use them as these are in the national park area. We tried to bring these plants and grow them in our home garden, but it didn't work. It's not their natural habitat."

Inter-generational transfer of knowledge must be nurtured just as in the sharing of seeds to benefit the many. IU Mien leader Naikuan Saewang from Maechan district, Chiang Rai believes that "...we raise awareness of the young people to understand the value and be proud of their rich traditional knowledge which is passed down from many generations. We also have to think about how



to add value to these plants, such as fruit processing to make refreshments, lotion, etc. This will encourage and motivate young people to conserve and inherit this knowledge as they will benefit from it also."

During the workshops and training, traditional seeds were shared and exchanged among participants. Among the Lisu people, "... seeds are not stored in a seed bank. We maintain them in an area, plant them, and pass on to others. The plants we grow are shared with other communities or other families in the village. We go to anyone who has and ask from them, and if one doesn't have, we share it with them. This is the best way to collect seeds and sustainably keep them. We have plants that can be grown all year round. We don't need to buy from others. We keep our own seeds, grow them, and pass them on to others. It's mutual sharing," said Chachawan Leeya, a Lisu leader from Chiang Rai.

To this, another Lisu leader, Mr. Supot Leecha added that "Seeds are important for community members' way of life and livelihood. It's not just for an indigenous group, but for all humankind. Seeds are our history. They represent love, care and relationship between human and human, human and nature. These have contributed to biodiversity and balance of nature."

The community of Baan Kokhas still keeps traditional seeds. H'tin leader Rintada Suta from Nan province said these are important when they observe Kinslok ceremony and Theephi traditional performance. "We have to bring vegetables as sacrifice to our ancestors and feed visitors who join our event. Women play a key role in maintaining these traditional seed varieties," she stressed.

Still on vegetables, Karen leader Sitthiphon Boonchuchert shared that "Karen people love eating seasonal vegetables," and doing so prevents them from "eating chemically con-



taminated foods, as healthy foods make our body well balanced."

The change from subsistence agriculture to cash crop or commercial agriculture has caused a decrease in traditional plant species due to extensive use of chemicals and fertilizers. Some communities are aware of this and are turning back to organic farming. Yua Thanomkitrungrueng, a Hmong leader from Maesa Mai, Chiang Mai would sum up the worldview of an indigenous farmer when he shared: "I believe that my gardening is sustainable. I leave the trees to grow naturally. There's no need to weed or do anything else. I sometimes sow seeds and plant some seedlings e.g., wild trees, fruit trees and bamboos. I need not plow the soil. Some people think I'm a crazy man. Normally, you plow the farm, put fertilizer and use chemicals, but I don't use anything. I leave it to nature. I have never bought fertilizer and water as the big trees provide shade to smaller ones and fallen leaves rot and become natural fertilizer."

Sadly, some government policies and laws undermine traditional indigenous livelihood practices such as rotational farming and gathering of non-timber forest products. Also, some healing knowledge on specific herbal medicines and treatment techniques are kept as 'family secret' that can only be transmitted within clan or family members.

The project "Conservation and Promotion of Local Plant Species to Enhance Food Security, Health, and Wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand" was implemented by the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT) in Chiang Rai in August 2019 with the support of PAWANKA Fund. 🗨️

## Kimat Yachay

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# Preserving Sami Food Culture

In response to the urgent need to safeguard local food cultures and traditions, Slow Food Sápmi, with support from the Pawanka Fund, worked on a project to preserve the traditional food culture of the Sami people, characterized by the utilization of reindeer meat, fish, wild herbs, and berries. This initiative stems from a gap in research regarding the relationship between traditional Sami food and health within the Swedish context. This underscores the importance of preserving Sami traditional knowledge and food culture.

Slow Food Sápmi, established in 2009 is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the traditional Sami food culture across Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia. Guided by the principles of "good, clean, and fair" food, Slow Food Sápmi collaborates with indigenous communities globally through the Indigenous Terra Madre for the preservation of biodiversity and food sovereignty.

With a focus on improving the communication surrounding Sami food, their objective was to develop educational resources rooted in tradition and culture. This project involved a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between food, nature, and community. Working alongside local experts, Slow Food Sápmi has crafted four comprehensive manuals as well as a digital lecture tailored to empower Sami producers, chefs, and restaurants in showcasing the richness of Sami cuisines. Each manual delves into various facets of Sami cuisine, covering topics from traditional ingredients to culturally relevant marketing strategies aligned with Sami values. Despite encountering challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Slow Food Sápmi has demonstrated adaptability by integrating innovative technologies, such as video recordings and online platforms, to extend the reach of their educational resources and respond effectively to evolving circumstances.

Collaborating closely with a dedicated reference group enriched their understanding and provided invaluable insights for future initiatives. Additionally, they established partnerships with academic institutions, organizations, and local producers, strengthening the project's impact.

Beyond achieving its intended outcomes, the initiative has made significant contributions to advancing the realization of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, advocating for



the protection of Sami food sovereignty and cultural heritage. The project also promoted gender equality by empowering women as entrepreneurs and custodians of traditional knowledge. Moreover, by facilitating the transmission of traditional knowledge from elders to younger generations, Slow Food Sápmi ensures that age-old practices continue to thrive in the modern world.

Slow Food Sápmi's commitment to preserving Sami food culture and protecting Mother Earth has not only strengthened institutional capacities but has also laid a foundation for future endeavors aimed at safeguarding Sami culinary traditions. Emerging as stewards of their land and heritage, they inspire others to join them in their quest for a more sustainable and equitable world.



**“Slow Food Sápmi has demonstrated adaptability by integrating innovative technologies such as video recordings and online platforms, to extend the reach of their educational resources and respond effectively to evolving circumstances.”**



# The Quenuayoc Agricultural Calendar as a Climate Adaptation Tool

The Quenuayoc agricultural calendar, showcasing the community's various agricultural activities, rituals, and cuisine, highlights the integration of indigenous knowledge into agricultural practices and the importance of synchronizing activities with the calendar.

This calendar is an output of the project "Learning by Doing: Indigenous Knowledge and Practices as Adaptation Measures to Climate Change," implemented by the Consejo Indígena Andino del Perú (CIAP) and supported by the Pawanka Fund, aimed at preserving the indigenous knowledge of the Quechua peoples of Ancash, Peru.

The Quechua farmers of Quenuayoc, like many other communities, are facing environmental challenges. However, they have realized the benefits of integrating indigenous knowledge into their climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. By doing so, they have improved their traditional agriculture techniques and livelihoods with a more holistic approach that is specific to their community's needs.

This demonstrates how indigenous-led initiatives can bring about resilience in revitalizing traditional agricultural practices while promoting sustainability for both farming communities and global sustainability efforts. Indigenous peoples as stewards of the land share invaluable wisdom with each other through collaborative experiences that support building stronger resilient communities together.



Quenuayoc Agricultural Calendar

# Indigenous Leaders Unite in Mongolia for The Wayfinders Circle Meeting

We are excited to share that our Guiding Committee and our esteemed director, Myrna Cunningham, participated in The Wayfinders Circle's face-to-face meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from June 29th to July 5th.

The Wayfinders Circle, a global network of indigenous leaders and organizations, came together to cultivate deeper understanding, share cultural and spiritual practices, and discuss the future direction of the network. This gathering was an incredible opportunity for indigenous leaders to connect, collaborate, and strengthen the bonds that unite us in our shared mission to protect and promote indigenous rights and knowledge.

We are thrilled to share some photos from this inspiring event, capturing the spirit of unity, collaboration, and cultural exchange that marked this significant gathering.



Arga Bilig chair and coordinator are the host in Mongolia together with Ejders council of the World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners (WUISP).



Pawanka Fund, Nia Tero, and Wayfinder Gabbra Peoples collaborating to empower indigenous communities through sustainable initiatives and cultural preservation.



Isabel from Rapa Nui emphasizing the significance of a value system in the protection of Mother Earth. Her powerful message reinforces our shared duty to care for and preserve our planet.



Arga Bilig chair and coordinator are the host in Mongolia together with Ejders council of the World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners (WUISP).



Feri from AMAN/Sungai Utik . Intergenerational transmission of knowledge through indigenous schools has been significant in the community to ensure on land/practical learning for children and community members of climate.



Sumichan(Chi) of Hin Lad Nai/KNCE contributing on discussion on what Wayfinders would like to learn and share from each other.