



Kimat Yachay



ONLINE EDITION  
& BLOG

BIMONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF PAWANKA FUND

# Kimat Yachay

~NUMBER 8 - FEBRUARY 2025~

A journey of storytelling,  
knowledge sharing, and advo-  
cacy for the rights and we-  
ll-being of Indigenous Peoples  
around the world.

Pawanka Fund Team

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**Celebrating Progress:  
Pawanka Fund's  
2024 Journey Toward  
Empowering Indigenous  
Communities**

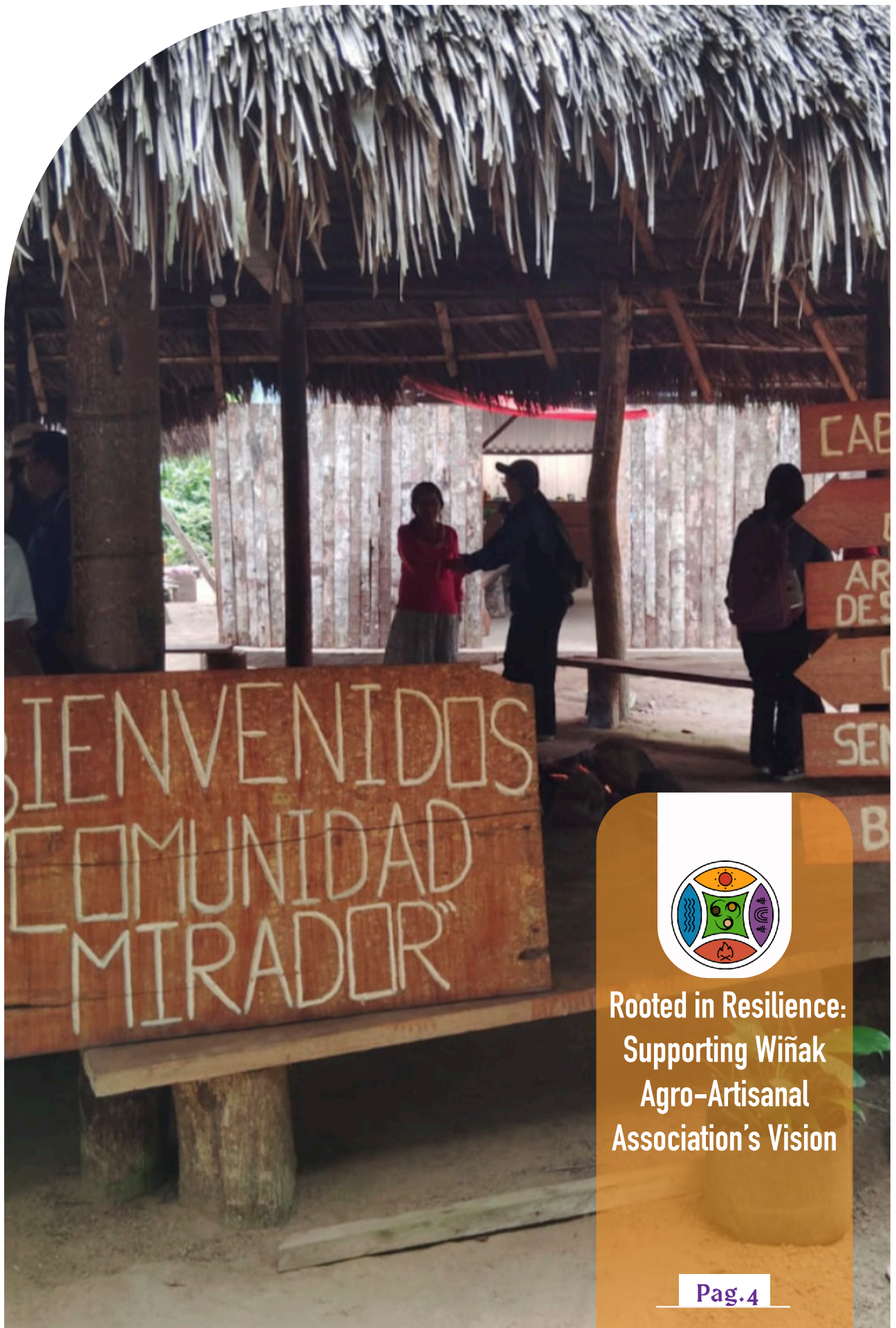
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## Celebrating Progress

# Pawanka Fund's 2024 Journey Toward Empowering Indigenous Communities

### A Message from Dr. Myrna Cunningham

Dear friends and allies,

As we turn the page to this new year of 2025, I extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you reading this latest edition of Kimat Yachay. It is with deep gratitude and joy that I reflect upon the year we leave behind—a year filled with growth, resilience, and significant milestones for Pawanka Fund and the Indigenous communities we serve and celebrate.

2024 was a year unlike any other. We set forth with the ambitious goal of supporting at least 118 initiatives, but together, we achieved much more than we imagined. With 141 initiatives approved across three funding calls, we exceeded our target by 20%, marking a historic achievement. This milestone stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to amplifying the voices and dreams of Indigenous peoples across the globe.

Our work reached 51 countries this past year, broadening Pawanka's presence to new territories, including the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Togo in Africa, as well as Kazakhstan in Eurasia. Expanding into these regions is a reflection of our growing engagement with Indigenous communities in Francophone Africa and beyond. This achievement humbles us as it reaffirms our responsibility to continue listening, learning, and supporting Indigenous knowledge systems and leadership.

The initiatives we supported in 2024 span a vibrant spectrum of themes and geographies: 44 in Latin America, 31 in Asia, 29 in Africa, 10 in North America, 9 in Eurasia, 7 in the Arctic, 7 in the Pacific, and 4 global initiatives—together weaving a tapestry of resilience and creativity. These initiatives serve as living proof of the strength that emerges when Indigenous wisdom, vision, and action are uplifted.

Among the many areas of focus this past year, "Indigenous Arts and Language" stood out prominently, with 20 initiatives dedicated to preserving and celebrating cultural heritage through artistic expression and linguistic revitalization. Equally vital were themes such as "Gender equa-



lity, interculturality, diversity, equity, and inclusion," as well as "Natural heritage conservation and guardianship of lands and territories," each accounting for 19 initiatives. These themes are more than just focus areas—they are reflections of the priorities voiced by our partners and the critical work happening in Indigenous communities.

Each year, we expand our reach to new organizations while continuing to nurture and strengthen relationships with existing partners. In 2024, we established connections with 61 new organizations and deepened our collaboration with 73 long-term partners. This balance between building new partnerships and sustaining established ones reflects our commitment to fostering meaningful, lasting relationships that drive impactful and sustainable change.

In 2024, we reached a total of 204 distinct Indigenous Peoples, marking a 15% increase compared to the previous year (181). While this is not the highest number of Indigenous Peoples reached in our history, it reflects significant growth. Among these 204 groups, 98 (48%) are new to our network, which aligns with the fact that 46% of this year's initiatives are

led by new partners.

This expansion highlights our ability to establish connections with Indigenous Peoples we had not previously engaged, effectively broadening the reach and impact of our work.

In supporting 134 partners this year, we were inspired by their diversity and dedication. Among them were 24 Indigenous women-led organizations, a profound reminder of the transformative power of women's leadership. Additionally, we partnered with 9 network organizations, 7 climate resilience-focused groups, 5 youth-led initiatives, and 4 communication-focused organizations—each contributing invaluable perspectives and solutions.

As we step into 2025, I invite you to carry forward the lessons and wisdom of this past year. Let us continue to walk together, guided by the ancestral knowledge that has sustained us and the shared vision for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

Thank you for being part of this journey. May this year bring renewed hope, deeper connections, and a strengthening of our collective efforts



## Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT)

# Promotion and extension of traditional plant species for food security and income generation to sustain Indigenous communities in Thailand

The ultimate goal is to promote and extend selected traditional plant species for enhancing food security and income for Indigenous families and communities. This builds on the outcome from previous project by selecting a few potential plants which have high nutritional value and will serve as pilots for household income generation activities and community

fund-implemented in three pilot areas. The project will be undertaken in partnership and collaboration with academic institutions such as Maejo University and Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Outcomes and knowledge gained from implementation will be widely shared with NIPT and CIPT members, as well as Indigenous communities.





## Rooted in Resilience

# Supporting Wiñak Agro-Artisanal Association's Vision



The Pawanka Fund was honored to be invited to the Indigenous Economy and Just Resilience Workshop, held in the community of Shandia, Napo, in the Ecuadorian Amazon from January 20 to January 24, 2025. Our Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rubén Tituaña, had the privilege of accompanying the Wiñak Agro-Artisanal Association, one of the key organizers of this important gathering. Pawanka Fund is proud to support this initiative, which embodies the spirit of Indigenous leadership and environmental stewardship. The event, held at the invitation of Juan Carlos Jintiach, an Indigenous Amazonian leader dedicated to defending the environment, provided a valuable platform for sharing knowledge and fostering resilient Indigenous economies rooted in ancestral wisdom. It was a pleasure to witness and support the impactful work of Wiñak Agro-Artisanal Association. We are pleased to share Rubén Tituaña's experiences and the daily activities he engaged in throughout this meaningful event:

### January 20

The activities of January 20 began with a ceremony at 4 a.m. of the Wayusa produced in the community by the Kickwa people of the Amazon to start this multi-day workshop. Participating in the workshop are indigenous

entrepreneurs from the Amazon region, provincial governments, local governments, indigenous organizations from various countries and NGOs focused on biodiversity, climate change and forests.

We held the opening of the workshop in the morning and then we made a field visit to a piece of land or "Chakra" where they showed us the different agricultural crops: honey, wayusa, vanilla and their main product, cacao.

In the afternoon they held a fair of different entrepreneurship, showing us their final products that they make, such as chocolate, which is made from cacao.

Wiñak, our partner that we support with a grant, was at the entrepreneurship fair.

### January 21st

We visited the Kichwa community of El Mirador, located in an area where the only means of transportation available are boats. This community has decided to diversify its sources of income through tourism, offering visitors the opportunity to experience life in the chakra. Instead of resorting to mining, they have opted for the production of various crops, such as cocoa, and to promote tourism as an economic alternative.

The community welcomes visitors to explore their chakras, where they can purchase crafts and taste dishes made with local products. The chakra system is presented as a defense against the external threats posed by mining.

During our visit, the problem of mining was also addressed in a presentation by the workshop organizers and a demonstration was made on the use of technological tools, such as drones and specialized software, for monitoring and surveillance of the chakras. These technologies allow for the documentation of agricultural production areas and areas affected by mining exploitation.

Bioeconomy is being implemented in these communities, raising awareness among indigenous peoples about its importance for environmental conservation. This strategy

**The event, held at the invitation of Juan Carlos Jintiach, an Indigenous Amazonian leader dedicated to defending the environment**



seeks to combat mining and, therefore, mitigate climate change and the negative effects that this activity generates, such as water pollution and health problems in indigenous communities. Bioeconomy is based on production and sustainable development.

## January 22nd

We visited the facilities of our partner Wiñak Agro-Artisanal Association, where they explained to us the organizational structure of Wiñak and the various activities they carry out. Wiñak is focused on a bioeconomy in which chakra plays a fundamental role in facing the impacts of mining. Through chakra, they can produce their agricultural crops, and the most relevant thing as a community business is that they have certifications that allow them to export their products, thus benefiting numerous families in the community.

They mentioned to us that, thanks to the support of the Pawanka Fund, they have been able to carry out various training workshops for their staff. They also explained to us the production process of their products and how wayusa is being exported to India, in addition to other final products such as chocolate and wayusa in different presentations.

In the afternoon, we visited a chakra belonging to a family in the community, where they showed us the distribution of their crops, such as cocoa, vanilla and wayusa, grown based on the ancestral knowledge of the Amazonian Kichwa culture. They explained to us that, within the worldview of the Amazonian Kichwa people, monoculture is not considered part of their indigenous economy. On the other hand, diversified planting within the chakra is aligned with their economic and cultural vision.

They also shared with us that they are integrating the use of technology, such as drones and mobile applications, to monitor the hectares of each family and the distribution of their crops. These tools allow them to optimize the monitoring of agricultural production and improve the management of Wiñak.

## January 23

The activities carried out included a visit to a small business called Laguna Azul, where the community is committed to a community economy by offering local cuisine and a natural environment.

As part of the meeting, participants carried out a joint reflection through work in small groups, in which representatives of local governments, NGOs and businesses participated. The objective was to propose joint actions that contribute to the development of strategies to strengthen the community economies of indigenous peoples.

The activity was organized into four working groups, each addressing a key topic:

1. What is the Indigenous Economy?
2. What indigenous-led organizations are needed to support the Indigenous Economy?
3. What technical support is required from allies and NGOs?
4. What is the role of public institutions in this process?

Through these discussions, the exchange of collective ideas was encouraged, which allowed for the generation of key inputs for the construction of a roadmap on the Community Economy with a view to COP 30.

As we reflect on the incredible experiences of the Indigenous Economy and Just Resilience Workshop in Shandia, we are filled with gratitude and inspiration. This gathering was not just a meeting of minds, but a celebration of the resilience, wisdom, and unwavering commitment of Indigenous communities to protect their land, culture, and future. Pawanka Fund stands in solidarity with these communities, whose leadership continues to shape a sustainable and just world. The work of the Wiñak Agro-Artisanal Association and the vision of leaders like Juan Carlos Jintiach remind us that true resilience comes from within—rooted in the profound connection to nature and the strength of collective action. We are honored to be part of this journey, and we carry forward the lessons learned with renewed hope and determination to support the growth of Indigenous economies and environmental stewardship across the world.

**As we reflect on the incredible experiences of the Indigenous Economy and Just Resilience Workshop in Shandia, we are filled with gratitude and inspiration**



Joan Carling, Director of Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), delivering a message alongside Indigenous women from Latin America.



Indigenous women leaders united in strength and solidarity to protect biodiversity and their ancestral lands.



Indigenous women leaders from Latin America came together to discuss the importance of environmental care.

## Kimat Yachay

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## Taiwan

# Taiwan Papora and Taokas indigenous traditional food is for everyone's wellbeing



The Papora Hazoban and Taokas Waraoan indigenous people of Taiwan have been residing on the island for thousands of years, and they possess a profound knowledge of the diverse ecosystems of their land. Over extended periods of time, through the consumption of various plants and animals and through experiential learning and selection, they have become well-versed in the hunting and dietary practices related to animal ecology. They also have a deep understanding of the seasonal changes and usage methods related to various plant ecosystems. Moreover, they have developed knowledge about traditional plant-based foods and herbal remedies, which they pass down through generations, creating a unique knowledge system specific to the central region of the island of Taiwan.

The indigenous communities consume a wide variety of traditional root vegetables and red and green leafy vegetables. They have a deep understanding of the different health benefits offered by various plants. They cultivate traditional plant foods around

**The indigenous communities consume a wide variety of traditional root vegetables and red and green leafy vegetables.**



their homes, allowing them to be harvested and used as needed. Although there are no written records detailing the pharmacological or therapeutic properties of these plants, this knowledge has been passed down through generations of tribal members, who have learned from and taught one another. These traditional foods have been widely used in the daily lives of the Papora and Taokas indigenous groups. Furthermore, these foods have evolved and adapted over time to meet contemporary tastes and preferences. New culinary methods have been developed, and these traditional foods have been introduced to a broader audience, benefiting many.

Because of their emphasis on the health benefits of these traditional foods, they have developed knowledge related to "herbalizing" plant-based foods. They incorporate these "herbalized" plant foods into their cooking, alongside other plant and animal-based ingredients, creating a wide range of delicious dishes. This popularizes traditional foods and contributes to economic opportunities, with



# The Delicious History of Taro Cakes in Taiwan’s Central Plains Indigenous Communities

The evolution of the traditional food culture surrounding taro is a fascinating journey in the history of human culinary traditions and captivating gastronomic history of the indigenous people in central Taiwan. Over the past eight decades since World War II, the history of taro cakes in Taiwan’s general populace has evolved.

Seventy to eighty years ago, taro was a staple food for the indigenous communities in central Taiwan, particularly in the Puli Basin where various indigenous groups lived. The fertile lands along streams and riverbanks were abundant in taro, especially in the Puli region. In those days, these lands were relatively less governed by the Japanese and later by the Nationalist government of Taiwan after World War II. Industrious indigenous people would often cultivate taro in these watery fields using simple tools. The harvested taro corms and stems served as a source of food, and during festivals, they would make taro cakes at home. In that primarily agrarian society, there were fresh taro and taro stems available for purchase, but ready-made taro cakes were not yet available. Families had to make taro cakes themselves, and this became a vital skill for indigenous women.

In the 1960s, as part of the shift in the global economic landscape, Taiwan, along with countries like South Korea, became hubs for a new wave of global manufacturing. Low-wage, hardworking populations attracted industries, which in turn provided previously unavailable income but also took away the time for preparing traditional foods at home. This marked the beginning of instant daily consumption food items in traditional markets, and taro cakes gradually entered this scene. Consumers could buy them, slightly fry them, and have a convenient meal option. Taro cakes became one of the alternative staple foods for residents and also gained importance in the field of eating out. Local street food vendors mainly offered rice and noodle-based snacks, but they began incorporating taro cakes into their menus. Taro cakes became a convenient and popular food option outside of home-cooked meals.

As taro cakes gained recognition among the general population in Taiwan, flexible eateries started experimenting with different preparation methods and presentations. New items featuring taro as a main ingredient became popular, driving reforms in the sale of traditional taro cakes. Many taro-based food products emerged, with the traditional “pan-fried taro cake” remaining a favorite. One significant transformation in the culinary landscape occurred when restaurants began including traditional taro cakes on their me-

nus. This marked a significant milestone in bringing this indigenous traditional food into mainstream dining culture. Taro cakes became a cherished food item at home, expanding its culinary usage silently and naturally.

As customers relished taro cakes at restaurants, proprietors realized the potential in offering various taro-based dishes. This led to increased business and the continual development and introduction of taro-based foods, some even entering the industrialized, packaged snack market. More taro-based snacks, such as taro balls and taro pastries, gradually became popular street food, enjoyed by people of all ages. This originally South Islander crop has now transformed into a crucial agricultural product in Taiwan, particularly in the Dajia region of central Taiwan, where spe-

cialized cultivation areas exist. However, the most cherished and favored way to enjoy taro remains the traditional method of steaming, frying, or baking taro cakes.

In summary, the journey of taro cakes from home-cooked meals to a beloved staple in Taiwan’s culinary culture is a testament to the adaptability and evolution of traditional foods in response to changing times and tastes. Taro cakes have not only found a special place in the hearts of Taiwan’s indigenous people but have also become an integral part of Taiwan’s diverse food landscape.

**Submitted by Papora Indigenous Development Association, a result of Pawanka Fund-supported project in 2022 on indigenous food systems and wellbeing.**

		
<b>Taro:</b> The taro fields where the Villagers grow taro near their homes.	<b>Taro Stems:</b> The vibrant green taro stems and roots are cooked together, creating a unique flavor.	<b>Taro:</b> The root of the taro plant, commonly known as "taro" in Taiwan.
		
<b>Taro-based dishes</b> are widely popular.	<b>Dishes featuring taro stems</b> are also well-liked.	<b>Taro-based dishes</b> come in a variety of forms and are appreciated at feasts.
		
<b>Homemade "taro cakes"</b> are still the most popular traditional delicacy.	<b>Pan-fried "taro cakes"</b> have become increasingly creative and diverse.	<b>"Taro rice noodles"</b> cooked with rice noodles are a famous local delicacy.



# Building the Future Together Highlighting Our Partners' Initiatives

## Pacific

**Name of the partner:** 'Āina Momona

**Name of the project:** Aloha 'Āina Fellowship Program

**Description:** The Aloha'Āina Fellowship is a long-term mentorship program based on the Island of Molokai Wherein young adults are trained in Indigenous natural resource management, cultural resource management, and Indigenous food systems. Entering its second year, this weekly program has proven successful in promoting a traditional and holistic approach to caring for the land and building capacity in young leaders to revitalize food sovereignty in Hawaii. Our goals for year two are focused on revitalizing traditional Hawaiian Food systems, particularly fishponds and taro farming, as a way to increase local food production while simultaneously enhancing natural and cultural resources on island.



## North America

**Name of the partner:** YAKANAL Indigenous Youth Cultural Exchange Program

**Name of the project:** YAKANAL: Mother Moon

**Description:** We propose to continue Mother Moon, an Indigenous-led effort to research, protect, and share traditional knowledge of the Moon to animate ancestral wisdom and practice related to women's/non-binary and community wellbeing. Through intercultural collaborations including the Maya/Zapotec/Mixtec/Pueblo young adults and elders, we hope to nourish unique attributes connected to the Moon in the context of fertility, midwifery, weaving, natural pigments, native foods, plant medicine, and cultural astronomy.



## The Arctic

**Name of the partner:** Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders' Summit

**Name of the project:** Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders' Summit

**Description:** Saami Council is hosting the 6th Arctic Leaders' Summit (ALS6) for Arctic Indigenous Leaders in November 2019. Arctic Indigenous Peoples Leaders will meet and discuss common concerns such as environmental and socio-economic impacts of the rapid environmental and climate changes in The Arctic, most of which are considered fragile ecosystems. Youth Leaders will gather for a Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders' Summit, where youth from the circumpolar region for 1,5 day will discuss the ALS6 agenda and share ideas and dreams for their future and prepare for the out come with ALS6. This project proposal is to support the Youth Summit event.



## Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia.

**Name of the partner:** Protectors of the Karakol Valley initiative group

**Name of the project:** Home of the Sun Gods

**Description:** The "Education Through Action" project took place in 2016. Its goal was to activate the collective memory of the Indigenous population of the Sacred Karakol Valley by organizing a campaign to "education through action." The project's main concept is that the Knowledge of Indigenous peoples is preserved in Sacredlands, while human activity activates the flow of that knowledge, reanimating collective memory. The project resulted in creation of a toponymic map of cultural heritage sites with Altaian place-names, the majority of which bear their own

legends containing explanations of those names. One Of these heritage sites are the Karakol Culture burial sites: a contemporary ethnocultural interpretation of the artifacts found within are very promising for the creation of a new type of ecosystem—a Sacred landscape ecosystem. This project will seek to preserve this culture by organizing a documentation process for these sites and to "museum-ify" one of the burial mounds at great risk of destruction situated within the boundaries of Karakol village.

