



## Yachuyaj Wo report Sept-Oct 2019



Although we have 5 families still producing tomatoes I have to say we are closing our Winter harvest.

Below a summary of what has been done with our tomato production initiative with Wichi aboriginal families in North West Argentina.

Quality of crops		Reason
Excellent	22	
Good	15	
Not so good	1	
Failure	2	Pigs and spraying with herbicide.
Burnt by frosts	6	
<b>Total family gardens</b>	<b>40</b>	



We can truly say that this year we have learned much from our 2018 failures. Especially in two big areas where last year we did not know how to manage:

- a) **Production of seedlings:** We were able to understand that this work is not for everybody. You need “green fingers”, as my mother would say... That means that you have to be obsessive with details. Specially humidity in the extreme Chaco climate where you have to be controlling by the hour if the little plants need water also observing the light, fertility, fungus attack etc. We did a good job and produced half of all seedling this year.
- b) **Pest control:** Last year we lost many plantations because we didn't control the aphids and other insects that suck the sap from the plant. These little individuals not only take the sap but also inject the tobacco virus (remember peppers, tomatoes and tobacco are first cousins). We changed the system where every owner sprayed his own crop and it worked. Before we used to spray the plants with a central spraying team that obviously arrived late. This year we bought sprayers for the gardeners and as soon as they saw the white fly or others they would spray and that way virus was not a problem this year. Once again, the strict control (foreign to the Wichi slack culture) was the key to success.



**What we have learned this year has been the importance to cover the crop preventing frosts.** Here Vicente at left and all in his group from Hickmann community got hit by the frost. As you see all new growth was lost.



**Mutual agreement with INTA:** We were able to sign a 2 year agreement with INTA (National Institute of Agricultural Technology). I am shouting to whoever wants to hear that the biggest problem there is with the Wichi is the lack of quality education. On all levels. Schools sitting on the biggest pool of excellent ground water in N. W. Argentina do not have a garden where they teach their students. The signing of this agreement came because we had contacts in Buenos Aires that understood that they can't get to the Wichi and we can't get to the agricultural "know how". Win win

process.

In this video you can see INTA personnel at work:

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2229432517182489/?type=3>

Lack of communication is another area where institutions trip over. The Wichi never contradict or ask questions, it's bad manners. So you carry on talking in Spanish and think the people have understood. Now if you ask them to explain nobody can do it. The solution to this is to always work with an Indian translator, our team can do this for INTA and they can give us the know how.

**Access to water:** I also mentioned that 10 of the 40 crops achieved have been irrigated thanks to wells recently drilled by the Foundation. We made 5 wells, 3 of which were used to produce this winter harvest. It's a strategic area where we'll continue to be involved. At the moment we have just finished digging a 29m well (all by hand) in Wichi community Mission San Ignacio. We also have to do another in Las Llanas where there is a conflict with "criollos" over land. I appeared in the local





newspaper due to my arguing with the local judicial burocrat that doesn't let us drill.

**Salta Food Plan:** The local government, due to the advance of inflation (and glued to it poverty), has started a plan where the give-away of food will be multiplied. There will be U\$D370.000 in the form of food packages for Indian families. Obviously this is tied to politics as we are on the last lap of choosing our governor and president. It's very sad to see that although we can prove that the Wichi can produce their own food there is no creativity in strategic thinking and food is given away accentuating dependency and political maneuvering. The political leadership has no hope that Wichi people can produce their own food, all has to be handed out with no counterpart work. Here below is how one of our Wichi painters sees the food plan. The buying of votes.



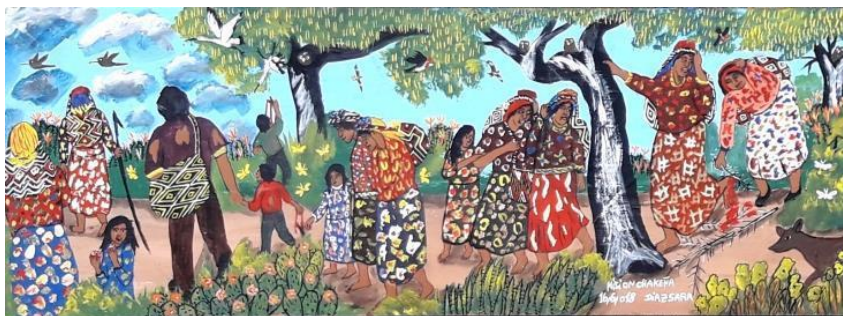
Here I send a message to the local ministry which obviously they never answered:

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2366516620140744/?type=3>

What we are yes trying to do is to get the local electricity company to subsidize our more than 30 water pumps that help to generate good food. We have seen in the last couple of months that families have lost their electricity supply due to not being able to pay the bill. This is consequence of the 100% devaluation the country has suffered in the last year. We want to have a seat where decisions are taken.



**Wichi Paintings:** We carry on supporting Wichi painters and their work that generates income, documents their culture for future generations and takes care of the forest as no trees have to be felled to make a living.



## Crafts.

Thanks to Phil and Rosemary Tadman we carry on producing crafts for the UK. We have just sent a 50kg shipment and will send some more in weeks to come. It's important to keep this trade going as it is self-sufficient. We intend to get involved with politicians so as to protect the palo santo wood as a cultural heritage of the Wichi so that only they can sell it, through their crafts.

## Drilling of wells.



We carry on drilling Wells. Either by hand as you see in photos above or with our machine drill. We have done 6 wells this year, 3 by hand and 3 with our machine.

Above is the San Ignacio well we have just finished. This is 100% done by the beneficiaries and our Wichi teachers. Participating in the drilling gives them ownership and also lowers costs. We have one to do in Las Llanas but as I said before the bureaucrats don't let us drill.



## Politics.

This is election year and we want to influence decisions where they are taken. Yesterday the primary elections showed that the local populist running for governor came in second to a more reasonable man and this is good news as I have good relations with one of his team. I will be writing a plan of action so that they know we exist and expect they call us in when they assume power. I know that the populist man running for governor does not like what I propose and I will be stepping on some toes, but I have decided that I have to say what I feel as 40 years of experience has to be heard.

One area that I hope to start the alarms flying is quality education. Here (right) you can see the date on the wall of the school of Mision Chaqueña. More than 80 years but there are no Wichi doctors, engineers, architects, etc. By the fruits you shall know them... There are no agriculturists either, not even gardens in the schools, that teach students to generate good food. Nothing good to say about education that is so so important to get people out of poverty. Obviously it's a long term investment that these





politicians do not want to invest in. Much better to have non educated voters so you can guide them by their nose... We have to get more involved in this.

**Institutional support.** Thanks to a generous donor we will have a website shortly where we will be able to show who we are and what we do. We will also be able to upload videos and receive donations with only a click on the screen. This, we think, will give us a more sustainable future as it will help fund raising.

**Country in a mess.** According to the national statistics institute (INDEC) 41% of people in Salta Province are poor.

[https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/eph\\_pobreza\\_01\\_19422F5FC20A.pdf](https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/eph_pobreza_01_19422F5FC20A.pdf)

This figure jumped up after the August primary election where it was clear that the populist party (Frente de Todos) led by ex president Cristina Kirshner would come again to power. Everybody rushed to buy dollars (the classic refuge in times of crisis) so with more demand the price went up from 40 to 60\$ pesos. This 50% devaluation in a week disrupted prices and we now have a September inflation of nearly 6%! Obviously these are averages and for the Wichi Indian that spends more on food than anything else the percentage is even higher. So, the situation is this:

1. **Populist government coming in.**
2. **We are not in their good books due to being critical of classic handouts so possibly we will not have support from the government, even if it's clear that the Wichi with 3 times higher infant mortality than the average Argentine is the first on the list that needs help.**
2. **It is clear that our job (access to water and food production) is needed even more now.**
3. **We must rely on private donors and our old donor friends of the past.**

### **Funding.**

My personal stipend has come this year by the generous support of the Church of Ireland (Bishop Relief's Fund). This has helped us through this year. We don't know if they will support us again so we are hunting around for the 2020 year support.

We have to thank all that have put their confidence in us in this 2019. We intend to carry on with enthusiasm as there is still much to do in all the areas that I have mentioned before.

I would like to thank all our friends and Christian family for their interest and concrete support to what we are doing. MANY MANY THANKS AND BLESSING TO YOU ALL!!



Some images that give us hope:









Here below some videos of our results. The first is my criticism of the difficult situation of the Wichi:

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2153177201474688/?type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2226194957506245/?type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2216583611800713/?type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/2226662964126111/?type=3>

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