

Busuréliame

(Inner Awakening)

A Cultural Education Project for the Raramuri youth of the Sierra Tarahumara



With support from:



Busuréliame Cultural Education Program

Busuréliame is the Rarámuri expression for learning and means literally “inner awakening”.

True Messages has joined with Tierra Nativa NGP (which has sponsored the program since 2017) to provide support and resources for the Busureliame project under the leadership Tarahumara visionary, leader, teacher, poet and recording artist, Makawi

Makawi has created, and with his team and teachers continues to develop, a cultural education program to guide Tarahumara children towards a deeper functional understanding of their language and culture in cooperation with the grade schools of the Sierra Tarahumara and the Municipal of Urique Chihuahua

“Education of our children in our language and customs is our most fundamental right and responsibility, but our children are not learning well. In order to learn well, our children must awaken. Their families must awaken. Their communities must awaken. The *chabochi* education system has failed us.” Makawi

“Teaching the connectivity with Nature is awakening. Listening to the lessons of our grandfathers and grandmothers is awakening. Showing respect for Nature and each other is awakening. Listening to the chants of the *owiruame* (shamans) is awakening. Listening to the birds, the wind, the waterfall is awakening. Thinking while connected with nature is *busuréliame*.” Makawi

We are extremely excited about the potential impacts this project with accomplish. The initial results have been incredible. Each year, the 60 Tarahumara children in the initial program are deepening their understanding of their own language and customs, but are also improving their progress in the school curricula. After the first year, registration in junior high increased 30%. Busuréliame is enabling the children to walk with one foot grounded in their culture with the other better capable of navigating the unavoidable world of the *chabochi* (non-indigenous people).



The Challenges addressed

Education of the Tarahumara children is in crisis. The average fourth grader is still unable to read and write. By junior high, an age where most must attend boarding schools outside their communities, the Tarahumara are at least two years behind their mestizo peers, a gap that most are unable to withstand. In some communities, fewer than ten percent attend junior high, and most of them drop out the first semester. For those few who continue into high school and advanced education, deeply rooted cultural problems persist.



The Tarahumara are losing the battle for educating their children in both traditional and academic ways. The “bi-lingual” schools in the Sierra have a poor record of achievement, and do not have true bilingual capacity.

Children often depend on the school for food due to the extreme poverty, frequent drought, and parental negligence due to alcoholism. Children of migratory or alcoholic parents are losing out on both traditional learning and academic performance.

Mothers and grandmothers, often hold the family together by making and selling crafts, cooking, caring for infants, maintaining the house. Some do domestic or kitchen work for extremely low wages. Men face an overwhelming burden as well, between subsistence agriculture, gathering firewood, migrating for work, all complicated by high levels of alcoholism. There is little chance for teaching and learning traditional ways.

School itself works against traditional activities like herding goats, and seeking herbs and edible plants that bring children in harmony with Nature. School separates children from nature but also from their own culture. A loss of identity ensues and creates dysfunction in both academic and traditional learning and behavior.

Too many eleven-year-olds lack basic academic skills and lack knowledge and experience with their own culture. They join older brothers and begin to experiment with drugs and alcohol, and soon join a migrating labor force in order to eat regularly and earn status as an adult. They have no hope of ever being anything but extremely poor, at best, finding temporary, low paying labor. Some do better and find more dignified means of subsistence, yet all too often separating them further from their cultural roots.

Many children drift for years in the netherland of the “ninis”, children who fail in school and do not work. For those who drop out of school, the hardships of survival erode at their identity in both worlds – the Raramuri culture, and the Chabochi culture where they never really feel accepted. They are more vulnerable to abuse, rape, teenage alcoholism and drug abuse, recruitment into drug cultivation, migration into torturous child labor, conditions that are repeated for their own children, as each generation drifts further from the stability of their cultural base.

Yet Raramuri cultural identity, language, dress, and customs persist. Ceremonial life and traditional knowledge, even vocabulary have become superficial versions of the practices of the grandfathers.

Busureliame helps strengthen and weave the threads of culture from an early age.

The Vision

In 1994, a young Tarahumara, Martin Chavez returned home from the mountains. A man from the north, Red Bird, had come to see him, but had left. That night, Red Bird came to Martin in a dream, and said: “You are to become the voice of your people. You must help them to preserve the Raramuri culture so they may continue to provide harmony for the world we live in.” “I am just a young man. How am I to do this?” asked Martin. “You must find your path... You are to be called ‘Makawi’” (Dove).



Initially disappointed in his name, “Dove” seemed weaker than Soaring Eagle, Makawi picked up a guitar a few days later and began to play, write and sing. He also began to teach his people through song and lessons, via radio, recordings, concerts, and community visits, on his own, occasionally helped by government projects or nonprofit groups. Working with linguist Dr, Enrique Servin, Makawi has helped develop a written Tarahumara language, and produced four books in his language as well as recorded half a dozen cds of original music in Tarahumara language and traditional instruments.

The *busuréliame* vision is the culmination of Makawi’s 25 years of sharing and teaching, a dove with the powers to inspire others and build harmony, that he never imagined:

Busureliame is our right. There must be teachers of *busureliame* in every school from kinder through preparatory, even university to guide our children, our youth.

Busureliame is our responsibility. Parents and grandparents must also awaken. The Governors and other traditional authorities must awaken. We all must follow our ancestral wisdom.” Makawi

LESSONS FOR AWAKENING FROM THE RARAMURI PATH



Busuréliame Core Curricula

Reading and writing Raramuri	Traditional Music, Dance, and Ceremony	Capturing Cultural Themes through art and poetry.	Sport: Rarajipari (ball race); Ariweta (girl's hoop race)
Honoring self and respect for others: friends, family, community	Welcoming the Sun Ceremony	Lessons from the Ancestors and Mythology Raramuri	History of the Raramuri, the Community
Training Community Busuréliame Teachers			
Reading and Writing Raramuri	Teaching Skills	Curricula Planning, Student Evaluation	Cooperation with academic teachers, families and community

Seasonal Curricula and Activities

Special topics are introduced each month, often depending on the traditional calendar which is based upon agricultural and ceremonial cycles.

January-Semana Santa	May	July	November
Yumari, Prayer for Rain	Planting Ceremony, Blessing the Seeds	Corn Flowering Ceremony	Day of the Dead and Harvest Ceremonies

For the past two years, the children have organized the Corn Flowering Ceremony and the Harvest Ceremony for the community of Mogotavo and five neighboring communities. All of the ceremonies include traditional music and dance. Yumari is their most profound ritual, practiced at all the ceremonies and special healing ceremonies throughout the year. Elder Yumari singers are invited to lead the ceremonies. Tonari, a goat stew, is a sacred offering that is prepared at the major ceremonies, served to the whole community. The fifth and sixth graders take charge of acquiring goats, gathering firewood, and preparing the altar.

Other Seasonal Curricula and Activities include:

- Traditional Medicine: Plant Medicine, Collecting Seeds and Lessons from the Owiruame (shaman).
- Nature and Harmony: Listening to the Sounds of Nature; the Spirit Power of Animals.
- Capturing Cultural Experience Through Writing, Poetry (haikus), and Art.
- Listening to the words of the elders (who visit the class).
- Sharing Knowledge from Experience and Teachings at Home.
- Agricultural and Gathering Traditions.
- The Value of Sacred Places.

Busuréliame Program Goals and Objectives

The *Busuréliame* Program goal is to provide full time cultural education and accompaniment in Raramuri to every school attended by Raramuri from primary to university to strengthen their cultural identity and knowledge, and experience, while strengthening *busuréliame* within families and the traditional community.



2020 Objectives (*timelines amended with Covid 19 Impact)

1. Provide ten five day workshops in each of two primary schools: Bajichi and Rejogochi,
2. Support two children led ceremonies in each community (Harvest and Flowering ceremonies).
3. Continue training Candelaria Lechucha Batista (year 2) and begin training and practice of two new Busureliame teachers.
4. Produce the first generation of Busureliame texts written by Makawi in 2019.
5. Outreach to governors : Busureliame, our own education is a fundamental right of our Pueblo. How is Busureliame practiced in your community: how did we educate our children in the past? ... present? What do we propose for the future? What must we do?

6. Outreach to government: Busureliame education is our right: follow up on the letter sent by 25 Tarahumara governors in 2019 to the national directors of: INPI, INALI, and the Secretary of Education Directorate of Indigenous education in order to gain resources to continue and expand the program.
7. Increase busuréliame outreach to public, national and international funders.

Expected Results 2021 (*timeline moved due to Covid 19)

120 children in 2 communities will receive 10 weeks of busuréliame training and 20 weeks of followup lessons with teachers in training. 3 busuréliame teachers in training (2 advanced, 1 beginning)

- Co-sponsor four children's ceremonies in two communities in cooperation with the traditional pueblo.
- Increase entry rates and retention in Junior High for participating communities.
- Publish the first Busuréliame textbook for distribution in participating schools and other interested schools.
- Obtain governmental and additional private support for Busuréliame education and training.
- Co-sponsor two regional gatherings and ceremonies of fifty governors dedicated to strengthen knowledge of and support for the Busureliame Program from traditional governors.

Busuréliame Program 2021-2024 Goals

- Construct a Busuréliame training center, "*Universidad Busuréliame*", in the Sierra, controlled by the indigenous governors, on land purchased or donated to the cause under control of the indigenous governors, with scholarships to enable busuréliame teachers chosen by their pueblos, and qualified, to dedicate full time to applied education and student teaching.
- Add at least one additional school to the Busuréliame Program each year.
- Initiate full time busuréliame education (in concordance with traditional academics) in schools as requested by communities.
- Increased governmental support to pay for Busureliame teachers approved by the community.
- Increased indigenous solidarity to develop busureliame in all primary, secondary, and preparatory schools, as well as University accompaniment, under control of the indigenous pueblos.
- Add at least two schools and two additional community teachers each year.
- Initiation of full time Busureliame Training in participating schools – 4 weeks a month/8 months a year.

Methodology and Past Results

Busureliame is heart to heart, experiential education as developed by Makawi since his vision nearly a quarter century ago. Makawi's general teaching methodology is to open the "book" of knowledge with

short oral lessons on a theme, then open it up for the children to share the traditional knowledge they learn from their parents and grandparents.

Makawi knows all of the children by first name. He calls upon them and includes everyone, including children who never participate openly in normal classwork and would not naturally volunteer their feelings. Makawi has even enabled children, otherwise painfully shy, to speak out in community workshops and meetings.

In between the classroom work and interactive field lessons are song and dance. There is nothing quite like sixty children in the cafeteria, over half dancing freeform to Makawi's Raramuri ballads, or all dancing *pascal* in snakelike lines up and down the cafeteria rows.

The results of the 2017-19 Busuréliame program can best be summarized by the experiences and stories of Makawi, Candelaria Lechuga Batista (community teacher in training), and the children themselves.

The Team

Profile of Student Busuréliame Teacher, Irma Chavez

*To be updated and added



Profile of Student Busuréliame Teacher, Candelaria Lechuga Batista

Candelaria Lechuga Batista, 29, is a mother of three. In addition to learning to teach busuréliame, she is learning the traditional arts of healing from her mother.

She is beginning to master the written Tarahumara language after 18 months of practice with Makawi, and is also continually improving her classroom techniques, gained self confidence, losing fear in front of the classroom, learned to lead the children so they obey. She has contributed much to the values in the dances and ceremonies, teaching how to fast and prepare for rituals. She also teaches how to cure with medicinal plants, and the art of traditional sewing.



From Candelaria

“In our language are words of wisdom to guide good behavior and respect for others.”

Ga’la kilii akébo bilé ra’íchale, ga’lá gipuso ‘á machibóa natéami ra’íchale.

Ramué ralómali ké ga’la gipusa, ké machibó natéame ra’íchele, a’li ke chigó cha’pibo ‘natali, busuréale, rehcharúwala a’li neráliame

Listen with much attention to the words and learn our valuable words.

Us, the Raramuri, if we do not listen with attention, we do not learn the words of wisdom. We will not think well, in order to awaken with good behavior and respect.

The Spirit of the Chameleon

Rejolóki, Láchumi, wikókali anéliame taa rochá wa’lú rohpéame a’li so’iwéame repokála, échi ko uki bayéame jú yábi cho ‘oóname jú a’li wabé cho natéame jú yé rochá rejolóki anéliame.

Ralómali ko wabé natéame nerá nápi rigá wa’lú ‘oóname jú échi taá rochá, a’li be aníle yé rochá nápi si’néame ajággame suwigá perélíma yé wichimóba, aregá aníle kí’yabé rawé yé rochá, a’lígsi su’wába nápi ikí ajágme jú suwísimi yé gawichí ‘éename a’li ramué yábi cho.

Yé járowala ko ‘á chirigá gayénali échi rejolóki nawésali gíte

In the Raramuri language, there are three ways to say “chameleon” in various dialects.

The chameleon, with his spirit, calls the clouds so that it rains and brings water to the springs and arroyos. The chameleon is a great traditional doctor who can cure many illnesses. For that the being named

“chameleon” is very important in the world of the Raramuri. For the raramuri, the chameleon is a great being of wisdom of life with whom many people consult.

At the beginning of Life in this World, this being proposed that there would be death, so that all the inhabitants of nature would have death.

Today, life is as it is because in the world of the Raramuri we know because it was indicated by the chameleon.

Awakening

Elvira (6 year old, first grader) - The Lessons of my Grandmother.

Ojí ko ké ojí anebó, pé apalochi jú ramué ralomali nirá ko, ojí anelia ka,,wé yóame jú, yábi ko tami ihkíma, a'li ko ga,lá natéame a'li né ga'lá neráliame ju échi apalóchi
....

The bear is not called the bear, it is called grandfather. For the raramuri, the bear always has been grandfather. If somebody calls the bear a bear, he could get mad and attack. For that, one must value and respect the name of grandfather bear to not hurt his feelings of being in this life.

The puma as well, cannot be called "puma". You can call him little kitty, so he doesn't get mad when you call him "puma". Our grandfathers and parents gave us these words so that with much respect we call the puma "little kitty."

Vultures are very tricky. If one day he invites you for a ride, do not believe him because he can cheat you and take you to places where there is no path. It is better to follow the path that the grandfathers made before white men came to the land of the Tarahumara.

Esteban, Fifth Grade – Omáwali (Ceremony)

"Omáwali is to dance with the Father God (Onorúame) who gives the force to the Mother Earth that gives us everything. That is why in each season of the year, it is really important to dance Yumari or Rutubúli."

"Omáwali is the most important thing we do. We learn the value of everything the Owiruame (shamans) do to guide the ceremony.

Belinda Palma Caraveio, 6th Grade – The Importance of Agave

"There are many uses for agave. The leaves of agave can be used as soap to wash clothes. We make baskets from the leaves. Agave heart produces sugar to sweeten teas. The hearts are roasted and eaten by my family. We use another agave to make the fish in the river sleep. Then we catch them and feed the family."

Natividad, Third Grade – The Importance of Running

Rarajípari (ball race) for boys and the *ariweta* (hoop race) for girls. This is the most important game that we have. The races are part of a ceremony for thankfulness. This is very important for the Raramuri pueblo.

Ernesto Batista, 6th Grade – The Spirits of the Springs

"My grandmother told me that beneath the spring, there are beings that keep the water alive. Each time we have a ceremony, we must share tesguino with the spirits of the water, so that they are happy and the spring does not go dry."

****About Ernesto:** Ernesto is an orphan, whose mother died 4 years ago, abandoned at a young age by his father. He is being raised by his Grandmother. Maria Luisa Batista His grandfather, Luis Gutierrez was an



Owiruame, a healer and ceremonial leader of great knowledge and practice, but also suffered from alcoholism which eventually destroyed his health and caused an early death at 54.

In third and fourth grade, Ernesto ran away constantly, ditching school. His grandmother took him to an aunt in Chihuahua where his cousins were living and attending school, but he only lasted a week. His cousins are doing well in a boarding school, with weekends with their mother, who lives in Chihuahua, working domestic service for \$12-\$15 US dollars for a 6 hour day, or 250-300 pesos. [Note: in the Sierra, she worked 14 hour days in a hotel for approximately \$8.]

In Bajichi, he continued to resist attending school. Then Makawi and Candelaria began the Busureliame program. The family was going to send him to Chihuahua again to study, but Makawi and Candelaria intervened.

He turned around. Now, Ernesto has become one of the best Sixth Grade students and is planning to go to Junior High.

Children's Yumari Ceremonies - Makawi

Since June, 2018, the children of the Rebellion Tarahumara, led by 5th and 6th graders, have organized ceremonies twice a year to honor the planting and flowering of corn and the harvest. The Yumari ritual song and dance, to pray for rain and other blessings, is central to these ceremonies. The children say that with all their spiritual power that with their dance, they thank God the Mother, God the Father for Life and that He guide us on this Earth by the teachings of the grandfathers and the cultural identity of the Raramuri Pueblo.



The children prepared and cleaned the ceremonial sight. They felt so proud that they were going to have a ceremony for the wellbeing of their school community and their spirit. On this mountain of the

grandfathers cleaned for the ceremony for many years. Today the children are going to retake these values of the cultural identity to continue doing so [preparing for the ceremony], because this is the sacred place for meditation and prayer with sacred songs for the life of the community and in general the Sierra.

Our grandfathers and grandmothers taught us this and today the responsibility is ours, to retake this cultural wisdom so the children awaken with appreciation for the wisdom of the ancient pueblo.

About Yumari

The first and second graders were curious and asked, "What is the Yúmari? Why is this dance important? They wanted to know more about why they do these sacred songs. The boys who are really interested in these songs and movements are very few.

The Yumare dance is the most ancient in our pueblo. It is how we thank and ask our Onorúame y Eyerúame, Father and Mother God, for the good of the Pueblo, our community. We thank them for all the good through the Yúmari dance. We dance with a spiritual connection with all the beings and the Earth who provides for life in this world.



Preparing for the Ceremony



Students of the Bajichi Rebellion Tarahumara school happily practice for the day of the ceremony. The dance is part of their cultural identity. It came to them from the grandfathers. It is part of our roots, a spiritual connection with water, earth, animals of day and night, the plants and trees which are guides for life and the source of knowledge.



Nativity, Belinda, Jaime, Pedro and Ernesto accompanies Makawi to bring the pine branches required to build the altar. These special branches are made from juniper which is medicinal. They built the altar in

front of a large cross where the ceremony was held to call the Esprit of God to care for us and guide us day and night.

The altar is where the Raramuri bring the Spirit to Earth with the Yúmari and Pascola dances. These dances are to call for water and to cleanse our spirit. When we are sick and when we start the ceremony, the juniper branches help to call the Soul of Onoruame to accompany us and to bless all that we offer in this sacred site, the food prepared for the ceremony, the seeds to be planted. This work is done within the ceremonial circle.











