



Adriaan Bronkhorst  
The Drug Peace Insitute  
Utrect, Holland

February 2, 2018

Dear Adriaan Bronkhorst:



It is a pleasure to write this nomination letter to the Drugs Pacifists Committee in strong support of The Centro Indígena Huichol A.C., and its founder Susana Valadez for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. I have known Ms. Valadez since 1977 when I first traveled to the Huichol (Wixárika) Sierra community of San Andrés Cohamiata in the Mexican state of Jalisco. As a young college student majoring in Anthropology and Latin American Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I knew no one in this rugged, isolated community yet felt compelled to visit. Fortunately for me, Susana compassionately took me in and hosted me most of the two weeks I was in the Sierra.

At that point in time, Ms. Valadez had a nonprofit organization that was registered in the United States in memory of Norwegian anthropologist Carl Lumholtz. Even at this early stage in her formative development, Ms. Valadez knew for certain that she would commit her life to helping the Huichol people protect their centuries-old cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, their land and sacred places, as well as their health and physical survival. Through the programs and projects generated at the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival, Susana Valadez has been actively providing aid to thousands of Huichols for more than 40 years. The Huichol Center is truly a major crossroads for Huichol Indians and is a multifunctional meeting place close to the Huichol Sierra homelands. It provides educational opportunities for Huichols young and old, and enables Huichols to generate income from their artwork and other kinds of work. Renowned Huichol yarn painter Cilau Valadez, following in his famous father's footsteps, Mariano Valadez, continues to carry on the yarn painting tradition and the Center sponsors a yarn painters' guild in which he guides up and coming Huichol yarn artists in this visual story-telling art form. Another important service the Center provides is a safe and healthy environment that merges ancient foodways with sustainable state of the art non-GMO food sources and agriculture.. The Center also serves Huichol people with access to traditional and Western medicine, helps support legal

assistance, protection of Huichol lands, and the preservation and sharing of Huichol traditional values, beliefs, and practices.

Additionally, Susana has played a major role in my own career as she has for numerous doctoral students in anthropology and several in botany; she introduced me to important Huichol women who are master weavers and artisans, and who served as my main consultants for my Ph.D. research at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Susana's generosity hosting me at her Center and introducing me to such knowledgeable and accepting keepers of Huichol culture enabled me to become deeply integrated into the Sierra community of San Andrés Cohamiata where I continue to have enduring friendships and special kinship ties. Upon receiving my Ph.D. at UCLA, I fulfilled a distinguished academic career in anthropology as a tenured professor at The University of Texas-Pan American (now the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley) 1991-1999, and as a tenured professor, co-director of the Museum of Anthropology, and now professor emerita at California State University, Chico 1999-2015. I have also published numerous academic articles and two scholarly books on my research on Huichol Indian culture with the University of New Mexico Press – one as solo author, *Huichol Women, Weavers and Shamans* (2002/2015), and the other as co-editor and contributor to *People of the Peyote: Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival* (1996).


Under the direction of Susana Valadez, the Huichol Center strongly acknowledges that Huichol cultural preservation and survival means that it is essential to protect the sacred peyote cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*) which is a major all-encompassing element in daily and religious life in Huichol culture. Known for its abilities to enable seekers who consume it to communicate directly with the Huichol gods, this spineless desert succulent features predominately in ancient Huichol rituals, myths, art, and pilgrimages that are still carried out today in the sacred peyote desert (Wirikuta) in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí. Many health benefits are attributed to peyote and consuming this powerful cactus within the context of Huichol values, actions, and beliefs, allows individuals to better understand themselves, strengthen family and community ties, and provide deeper insights for participants into Huichol cultural perspectives and greater certainty of their place and purpose within a global world. Huichol people see their role as keeping the world in balance, ensuring the candle of life burns brightly for the entire world, and for this they have been aptly called by one documentary film as "The Last Peyote Guardians" and they are also the protectors of their beloved peyote desert.

The Huichol Center has helped facilitate the continuation of these enduring peyote traditions. The Center is an important gathering place for Huichol pilgrims to rest, eat, and carry out ceremonies before and after their trips to Wirikuta. When Huichol men go off to ritually hunt deer as part of their religious obligations, women and children often stay at the Huichol Center

which serves as a welcoming, safe and secure place for them while the men are away. In 2011, when the health of the peyote desert was threatened by plans by the Canadian Mining Company Silver Majestic to open mining operations that would seriously endanger the environment in this entire area, the Huichol Center provided food and aid to Huichols and others who came to protest these proposed hazardous actions. Following suit, Huichol yarn painter Cilau Valadez, representing the Huichol Center, traveled to the Canadian headquarters of Silver Majestic to personally voice his and many others' opposition to the planned mining concession in Wirikuta.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the threats to peyote, its native habitat, and Huichols' rights to continue to practice their peyote traditions are never ending. Susana Valadez and the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival have, and will continue to be, an extremely important advocate for Huichol people, their rights, the protection of their homelands and sacred lands outside the Sierra, and the preservation of their cultural heritage. I highly recommend Susana Valadez and the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy B. Schaefer".

Stacy B. Schaefer, Ph.D.  
Professor Emerita, Department of Anthropology  
California State University, Chico