



NATIVE FUTURE WOUNAAN LAND RIGHTS PROGRAM 2015—2018

Wounaan Land Rights are at the heart of Native Future’s mission. Since 2004, Native Future has been helping Wounaan of Panama to gain control over their traditional lands. Since its inception, the goal of Native Future’s Land Rights Program has been the collective title of Wounaan communities Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé.

Over the past decade, Native Future’s support of these three east Panama indigenous communities has helped increase global awareness of the land tenure challenges Wounaan face and increase Wounaan capacity to address them. Today, Native Future Higher Education scholar Leonides Quiroz, the first Wounaan lawyer, leads efforts to collectively title Wounaan lands. Leonides’s testimony in 2008 to the Inter American Commission on Human Rights contributed to international pressure that led to the passage of Panama Law 72 which allows the collective title of indigenous land. Since then, Wounaan have submitted applications to collectively title eleven Wounaan communities and in 2012 titles of two communities – Puerto Lara and Caña Blanca – were approved.



The agricultural frontier advancing on Rio Hondo

Despite these gains, the titles of Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé and six other communities remain elusive. Almost 50,000 hectares of tropical forest are at risk of deforestation. Wounaan are engaged in a daily struggle to protect their forests from illegal logging, from claims to their territory by neighboring communities, and from colonization by poor migrating farmers looking for a place to carve out a living. Cumulatively, these pressures not only break down Wounaan forests but also the fabric of their communities as they negotiate the choices in front of them. Relationships inside and outside Wounaan communities are increasingly strained as they struggle to protect their natural heritage sometimes resulting in arrest and injury, and even in death. Until Wounaan indigenous rights are respected, conflicts will continue. Native Future will help Wounaan secure their rights and forests.

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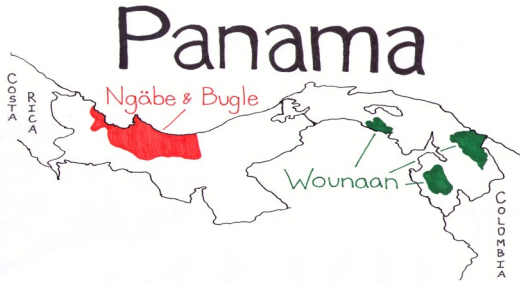
Objectives: The Wounaan Land Rights Program will help Wounaan secure their land rights and protect their forests via three strategic areas:

Wounaan Land Rights Defense will support Wounaan legal assistance needs and increase Wounaan capacity to defend their rights.

Wounaan Territorial Integrity will improve their ability to monitor, control and carry out activities that protect and restore their forests.

Wounaan Self-Governance will develop Wounaan leadership and communication, in turn strengthening their governance.

Wounaan of Panamá are an indigenous peoples numbering approximately 7,000 and living in 18 small villages scattered throughout the eastern rainforests of the Majé and Darién regions. Their traditional lands comprise some of the most intact ecosystems in Panama and the Americas. Moreover, Wounaan depend on these forests, streams and mangroves for both their livelihood and their culture.



The remnants of forest that define Wounaan territories are increasingly targeted by loggers looking for prized and protected tropical hardwoods such as the *cocobolo* tree (rosewood in English, or *Dalbergia retusa*). *Cocobolo* occupies an important space in Wounaan cosmology and ritual. It is also an important source of building material for Wounaan houses, and is the raw material from which Wounaan carve beautiful representations of local wildlife and nature which are sold in markets in Panama city and provide income to Wounaan families. Deforestation also damages the plants from which the world class Wounaan baskets – hosig di – are crafted.

In their forest villages and the suburbs of Panama City, Wounaan women sit in their houses chatting with family and friends. In between, and sometimes while simultaneously cooking, cleaning, and caring for infants and small children, they weave. They are perhaps the supreme weavers today, crafting tight, intricate, multi-colored baskets (hosig di) the likes of which have rarely, if ever, been seen. Their materials and motifs are taken directly from an astonishingly diverse rainforest world. The palms, the animals, the Wounaan way of life and the art of weaving perfected by Wounaan is all at risk of disappearing along with their forests.

Indigenous peoples are Panama's poorest of the poor. The 2007 World Bank Poverty Assessment of Panama reports 90% of indigenous living in indigenous areas are "extremely poor". And although Panama's illiteracy rate is 5.5%, in Embera-Wounaan territory 22.9% are illiterate. Similar disparities in health are found in indigenous territories. The destruction of their forest, their means of subsistence, has profound impacts on Wounaan lives.

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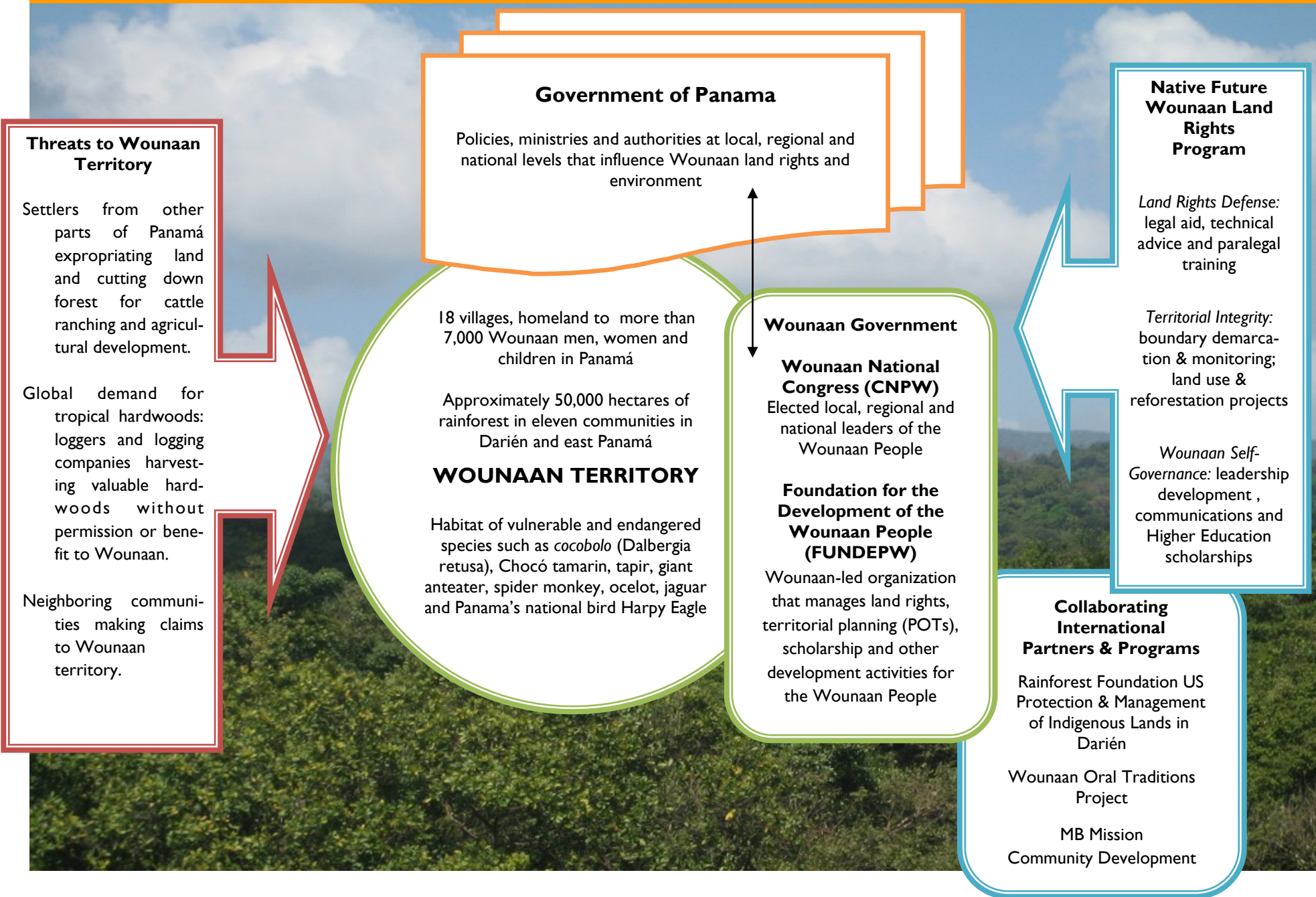


Native Future is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that recognizes the inextricable link between marginalized indigenous peoples and the threatened ecosystems in which they live. Native peoples throughout the Americas are rapidly losing the lands they depend on for both their livelihood and their culture. Native Future works with three Panamanian indigenous groups: Wounaan through the **Land Rights Program**, and Wounaan, Ngäbe and Buglé via the **Native Education Project** and **Universidad Al Campo**.



A small, non-profit organization, Native Future's commitment is rooted in Peace Corps service, conservation and indigenous rights. Since 2004, Native Future has provided technical, educational and financial support to Wounaan-led Foundation for the Development of the Wounaan People (FUNDEPW). Our support strengthens Wounaan leadership and capacity to defend their land rights, communicate their issues, and protect their forests and culture.

For more information about Native Future and the Wounaan Land Rights Program please visit www.nativefuture.org. Or contact, Land Rights Program Coordinator, **Marsha Kellogg**, nflandrightrights@gmail.com.



January – April is the dry season in Panama. It is also the logging season, when logging equipment can enter the forests and extract timber unimpeded by soggy clay soils. For the past three dry seasons, the rapacious and illegal harvest of tropical hardwoods from the forests of Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé has been overwhelming. In 2012, approximately 600 rosewood trees were cut and the logging was so damaging to the land and soils that Platanares River ran brown for months with erosion, muddying the waters upon which the Wounaan depend for bathing and fishing. The dry season also tends to be the best time to carve out pasture in tropical forest because the vegetation burns easiest then.

Inevitably, the first four months of each year are the most challenging for the Wounaan. They are often faced with taking direct action to defend their lands and forests from invasion. They take direct action because local government authorities have not been responding to their requests for assistance, nor recognize their rights, even when agreements with national authorities do. The direct impacts on Wounaan cannot be overstated. Despite attempts to peacefully protect their forests from invasion, Wounaan are met with violent resistance to their rights. Communities of Wounaan – men, women, children, grandparents – have been held hostage in their villages by irate loggers. They fear retribution walking through their forests, or even driving through neighboring communities. Defending their land has resulted in bodily harm and even death. Wounaan leaders have been arrested for their actions and face up to 15 years in prison if their cases are not overturned.



Est. Costs Wounaan Land Rights Defense - Support legal assistance needs and strengthen Wounaan capacity to defend their rights.	
Legal Defense Fund - offset the costs of legal fees accrued in the process of protecting Wounaan lands.	\$10,250 /year
Technical Advisory Council - bring together national and international experts and Wounaan leadership to develop strategies that protect Wounaan rights.	\$3,400/ year
Paralegales Program - training and networking that strengthens Wounaan knowledge, skills and ability to legally advocate for and protect their rights.	\$25,000 /year

Left: Wounaan legal counsel, Leonides Quiroz, testifies at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Below: Wounaan erect barriers across the Panamerican Highway, demanding “Yes to Collective Titles, No More Deceit”

Paradoxically, Panamanian authorities have chosen not to prosecute crimes committed against the Wounaan, such as the stand-off that resulted in the deaths of Platanares Chief, Aquilio Opua, and a non-indigenous logger in 2012. Two years later, no further criminal investigation into this double homicide has been carried out. The Wounaan consistently file complaints and reports of violations of their rights and environmental laws to local and national authorities but have seen little result. Native Future wants to increase Wounaan knowledge and ability to address this, developing an enduring capacity to defend themselves in the face of a discriminatory legal system.



Legal Defense Fund: The objective of the Wounaan Legal Defense Fund is to build a foundation of financial and human resources that can be brought to bear in the defense of Wounaan land rights, and of the individuals defending them. It will also apply financial resources to the often overlooked yet vital actions of the lawyers who continually submit formal complaints of violations of Wounaan land rights and environmental laws to local, national and international authorities. These actions build the official, historical record of abuses that can then be taken to higher authorities, and when necessary the Inter American Commission on Human Rights. The fund will be administered by the FUNDEPW, managed by case-specific committees of Wounaan national and local leaders, third-party advisors and participating legal counsel.

The Technical Advisory Council (TAC) will bring together Panamanian and international expertise with the Wounaan leadership to help design and coordinate strategies that advance Wounaan land rights. Technical Advisory Council members are selected and invited to participate based on their experience in strategic areas, such as indigenous and human rights law, Panamanian environmental and criminal law, political strategy development, and strategic communications. Each TAC member will provide technical expertise and advice, keep meetings confidential, and support the communication of Wounaan messaging to a wider audience. A dedicated TAC Manager will support the work of the Advisory Council by collecting and writing reports and coordinating meetings, among other activities. Partnering Wounaan allies, like the Rainforest Foundation (RFUS) and local and international scholars are invited to participate in and support the TAC.

Paralegales Program: Each of the 18 Wounaan communities will be invited to select a community member to attend a series of trainings in indigenous, land and environmental law topics, including policies and legislation, regulatory and judicial principles and process, and institutional frameworks. The trainings will be designed to increase their capacity to file claims, document rights violations, and assert their legal rights when addressing local and national authorities, colonists or loggers, and when negotiating legal harvests or other uses of their forests. *Paralegales* will also receive training in non-violent action and conflict resolution to help them de-escalate conflict. The program will support the development of a paralegal network to help them continue to develop the knowledge and skills important to the rights-based issues affecting their communities, into the future.

Expected Results	
Legal Defense Fund	Dedicated legal support for at least two Wounaan land rights defense-related cases, per year.
Technical Advisory Council	At least 3 Panamanian and international experts allied with Wounaan to advance their land rights.
Paralegales Program	Thirty-six Wounaan from 18 communities with the knowledge and skills to communicate and defend their rights.

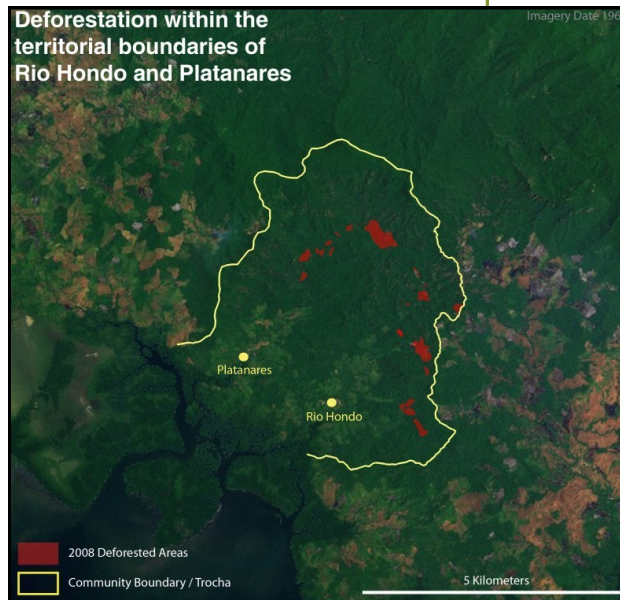


Twenty years ago, ECOLEX, a private, non-profit organization based in Ecuador, designed and developed the Paralegales Program for forest-based Ecuadorian communities. Since then, more than 80 local indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian leaders have been trained in legal principles and processes, policies, legislation and institutional frameworks related to the environment, agriculture and their territories. These community-based paralegals are resources to their communities and the exercise of their human and environmental rights. The Wounaan Land Rights *Paralegales* Program will be designed and implemented with guidance from ECOLEX, and carried out in partnership with Panama based indigenous and non-profit organizations. This partnership intends to lay the foundation for a *Paralegales* network in Panama, starting with the Wounaan and then scaling out to build a cadre of community-based indigenous paralegals.

Although it is expected that securing collective ownership of Wounaan lands will increase their capacity to defend it, Wounaan forests will continue to be in danger of invasion by environmentally damaging uses. According to the Panama National Authority (ANAM) 2009 report (Informe del Estado del Ambiente), Panama has seen a decrease in deforestation rates from -1.12% (1992- 2000) to -0.41% (2000-2008). However, Darién province, where the majority of Wounaan communities are located, suffers among the highest rates—13.89% from 1992-2000. By 2008, Darién forest cover had decreased to 69%. Deforestation is generated by road construction, migration, agriculture and livestock production, logging, and mining. Deforestation creates islands of forests out of indigenous territories and increases internal and external pressure and conflict over their use. Illicit activities, such as drug trafficking and illegal logging, also drives deforestation and threatens Wounaan security.

The forested territories of Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé are surrounded by a deforested landscape, and these communities regularly face social and violent conflict trying to stem its encroachment into their forests. They regularly clear and patrol the *trocha*—the boundary line around their property—to signal where their territory begins. Still, logging roads are cut into their forests and to their communities facilitating further invasion, if not controlled. On the other hand, roads improve Wounaan access to important services, such as healthcare facilities and schools.

The integrity of indigenous forests is dependent on compliance with consensually formulated land use rules, and on Wounaan capacity to control unauthorized use. Since 2013, and with support from the Rainforest Foundation (RFUS) Wounaan have been engaged in developing land use plans (*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*, or POT). POTs are resulting in community agreement on land use and policies, critical steps to defining community norms that protect their forests and land. In partnership with RFUS, Native Future will help Wounaan communities to control pressures on their forests from inside and outside their boundaries.



Est. Costs Wounaan Territorial Integrity – Improve Wounaan capacity to monitor, control and carry out activities that protect and conserve their forests.

POT Implementation - matching-funds for community-based activities that protect and restore their forest environments.	\$8,500/ year
Boundary demarcation, monitoring and control - training and equipment that increases Wounaan control of their lands and communities.	\$4,250/ year

- 40 kilometers (25 miles)** - the length of the boundary line of the Rio Hondo and Platanares territory
- 11,655 hectares (25,641 acres)** - Rio Hondo & Platanares territory
- 10,246 hectares (22,541 acres)** - primary and secondary forest in Rio Hondo & Platanares territory
- 400 hectares (880 acres)** - mangrove forest.
- 1,000 hectares (2,200 acres)** - deforested

POT Implementation will develop a fund, managed by the CNPW and administered by the FUNDEPW, that will provide matching seed monies to implement projects and activities identified in the Wounaan land use plans. Principally, this fund will support efforts to restore, protect and conserve their forests, including reforestation such as of the rosewood tree or ecological restoration activities that meet environmental health and socio-economic objectives, such as the restoration and protection of hydrological resources for drinking water or artisanal fisheries, or the regeneration of economically important non-timber forest products like the chungá palm. The fund can also support agroforestry and agroecological projects that improve Wounaan capacity to feed their families and sustainably earn a living from their land. Funding may be also applied to help the Wounaan sustainably harvest and manage their timber resources or develop tourism capabilities. Native Future’s support will dovetail with the POT process currently in progress with the RFUS, and future matching funds will be sought through this partnership. During the implementation of the fund, and to support its continuation after 2018, Native Future will facilitate the design and planning of self-generated funding with the CNPW and FUNDEPW to move it toward long-lasting sustainability.

Boundary demarcation, monitoring and control steps can be taken almost immediately to increase Wounaan control over access to their lands and communities, as well as over their personal security. These include boundary demarcation and signage, and establishment of control points. Lessons can be learned from the Embera Wounaan Comarca (see text box). To create a cadre of specialized Wounaan “Forest Guardians” (*guardabosques*) RFUS is bringing specialized training to increase community capacity to monitor and document their boundaries. Native Future will support on-going initiatives bringing new and simple technologies to bear such as smartphones and aerial photography of forest cover change especially in hard to reach areas or even camera traps along boundary lines. Violations and agreements can be published on crowd-sourced sites such as the World Resources Institute Global Forest Watch. Community-based strategies will be developed based on the territorial challenges they face and community preferences. These activities will build capacity, along with the *Paralegales* Program, to manage conflict helping Wounaan de-escalate potentially violent confrontations, as well as improve collaboration with the local police force, environmental authorities, and neighboring landowners that buffer Wounaan territories.



Expected Results	
POT Implementation	At least two community-based land use management projects implemented per year. Develop a self-sustaining POT Implementation Fund.
Boundary demarcation, monitoring and control	The boundaries of Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé are clearly marked and monitored on the ground. A decrease in the number of unauthorized uses of Rio Hondo, Platanares and Majé forests.

“We’ve organized our community so we can better control who enters our territory. We check strangers and ensure they don’t have guns. People need prior permission from us to enter our territory. When our people go hunting and notice foreigners in the area and footprints on the ground, they inform community leaders.”

-Candido Mezua, President of the Embera Wounaan General Congress (in *Central America forest tribes fight cocaine trafficking “tsunami”*, Thomas Reuters Foundation.)

In 1998, the Wounaan gained legal recognition in Panama as an indigenous group and formed their own governance structure with its national, regional and local leadership: the Wounaan National Congress (CNPW) including the National Cacique, President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, and local and regional congresses with similar executive leadership. The Foundation for the Development of the Wounaan People (FUNDEPW) was also legally established to provide administrative support to CNPW governance mandates and development activities.

Every two years, the CNPW and FUNDEPW carry out a national congress where issues are discussed, reports are given, and their culture and identity celebrated with upwards of 2,000 Wounaan from around Panama. Every four years, they organize and carry out national elections, when new national leaders are chosen democratically by participating Wounaan. On a daily basis, the CNPW leadership work hand-in-hand with the FUNDEPW to carry out their mandates – principally to organize for their land rights and other socio-economic needs, such as water, health and education, with their Panama government counterparts such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Government and Justice. Since 1998, the capacity of both organizations has steadily increased. In the service of their people, they manage projects and budgets with Native Future, other international partners and the government of Panama.



CNPW President & National Cacique meeting with Panama’s Minister of Government, 2014.

Still, Wounaan leaders are relatively new to their roles and responsibilities. Their capacity to fulfill their governance objectives continue to be challenged by coordination, communication and skills of elected leaders to serve their people. Wounaan leaders are working within still evolving governance structures. The internal frameworks – policies, norms, and procedures – are still mostly informal. Learning from what works (see text box), Native Future will help strengthen Wounaan self- governance by supporting their communication, developing leaderships skills, and preparing a new generation of Wounaan leaders and professionals, including Wounaan women.

Est. Costs Wounaan Self Governance - Fortifying Wounaan leadership and Improving communications.

Wounaan Leadership Retreats - logistics and training to strengthen Wounaan leadership within the context of their culture and the responsibilities their leaders face.	\$6,720/ year
Strategic Communications - technical assistance to develop and carry out strategic communications activities that support Wounaan land rights.	\$17,000/ year 1; 10,550/ year 2-4
Wounaan Higher Education Fund - preparing the next generation of Wounaan leaders and technical experts.	\$5,000/ year

In July 2014, Wounaan partners - Native Future, RFUS, the University of Georgia and MB Mission - met with national, local and regional Wounaan leaders and identified the best practices that contributed to successes they had experienced to date.

- The organization of the Wounaan people; their governance structures and infrastructure.
- Mutual support among communities; self-initiative.
- Coordination with and participation of traditional authorities and their communities.
- Strengthening (increasing the knowledge and capacity) of traditional authorities and their communities.
- The development of Wounaan human resources and professionals.
- The participation of women and youth.
- Political organizing and coordination with government actors, and legal representation at national and international levels.
- Internal and external communication.

Leadership Retreats: In the process of defending their land rights, Wounaan leaders have been thrust into systems and dynamics foreign to their more traditional ways of knowing and doing. Wounaan leaders are often required to bridge gaps between two cultures – the hegemonic Panamanian order and the disenfranchised Wounaan community - to bring about the change and development their people seek. They are required to represent themselves to and build relationships with national and sometimes international actors to effectively advocate for their rights. To be effective leaders they often have to learn new languages and technologies, not only Spanish and even English, but the technical language of environmental and criminal law, international human rights, water and sanitation, and non-profit management. To help Wounaan leaders meet the challenges of their day, Native Future proposes to support annual leadership retreats with the objective of exploring and strengthening leadership within the context of Wounaan culture and the responsibilities they face. The retreats will be coordinated by the CNPW and provide the Wounaan an opportunity to develop internal policies and agreements, formalizing their self-governance aspirations. Retreats will also feature topical presentations and trainings that will help Wounaan leaders make decisions with their constituents and communicate with the outside world, such as how to use the internet, participatory group facilitation methods and indigenous rights. Outcomes will be further developed and sustained in monthly core leadership meetings.

Strategic communications: Since 2011, the CNPW and FUNDEPW have been carrying out communications activities ad hoc. Although relatively successful - when carried out - the inconsistency of communication has been over and again identified, by the Wounaan, as a critical weakness. They recognize the importance of a consistent communications program and dedicated expertise on staff, especially as they strive for legal and socio-political recognition of their land rights. In 2012 and 2013 Native Future volunteers led workshops with the Wounaan to analyze communications needs and develop a program plan. The plan outlines activities such as public relations and educational campaigns that generate support for Wounaan land rights, that build alliances with other indigenous groups, and report progress to their allies. Since 2013, Native Future has been helping the FUNDEPW launch the communications program. Basic equipment has been purchased and a Wounaan Journalism student has been selected to intern at the FUNDEPW. Native Future will support the FUNDEPW to contract dedicated professional expertise for a year, who will mentor the intern and help the CNPW/FUNDEPW continue to develop and carry out strategic communications activities.

Expected Results	
Leadership Retreats	At least one retreat per year attended by the 70 national, regional and local leaders.
Strategic Communications	FUNDEPW with the technical expertise to carry out monthly communication campaigns.
Higher Education Fund	At least ten Wounaan students attending university or technical college, annually, and two serving as interns.



Higher Education Scholars Elicina Membache and Liseth Chamarra at a government function.

Wounaan Higher Education Fund Since its inception, Native Future has provided educational scholarships to Wounaan students to help them become leaders and technical resources to their communities. In 2011, the first Higher Education Scholar, Leonides Quiroz, successfully defended his thesis and became the first Wounaan lawyer. He still serves as legal counsel to his people. Since 2011, the Wounaan Higher Education Fund has supported 15 students a year to attend high school and university. Many of them live in Darién or east Panama regions and attend university branches or technical colleges there. A few of them, like Liseth Chamarra reside in Panama City and are also serving in leadership positions. Liseth is the Treasurer of the CNPW and is studying business administration. Building on this trend, the CNPW and FUNDEPW have established an internship program in which Wounaan university students will commit to working part-time at the FUNDEPW. Elicina and Liseth are the first of many Wounaan Higher Education Scholars applying their college education to the service of their people.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Since 2004, Native Future has worked directly with the **FUNDEPW**, the **Wounaan-led Foundation for the Development of the Wounaan People**, the administrative non-governmental organization of the **National Congress of the Wounaan People (CNPW)**. Native Future’s partnership with the FUNDEPW was instrumental to their organizational development, helping it move from an organization on paper to a staff of three (President, Treasurer, Secretary) by 2008. Today, the FUNDEPW manages projects and funds with the CNPW funded by government and non-governmental partners and continues to receive organizational development support from RFUS. Their support is increasing the skills and abilities of the FUNDEPW and CNPW Treasurers and modernizing their accounting system.

The CNPW and the FUNDEPW will implement and manage the majority of the proposed activities, including periodic evaluations and audits. The *Paralegales* Program will be administered and managed with a selected non-profit organization in Panama and draw on existing indigenous and legal expertise in human rights, legal process and environmental law.



Planning meeting of the FUNDEPW and CNPW.

Native Future’s approach will reinforce best practices the Wounaan identified in a July 2014 workshop, especially **coordination with and participation of traditional authorities and their communities**. Legal Defense, POT Implementation, and Wounaan Higher Education Funds will be managed by committees of local and regional traditional leaders and representatives, their national leaders, FUNDEPW staff and selected Wounaan professionals. Native Future will support management committees to meet at least biannually. In addition, activity managers will be responsible for coordinating with the CNPW/FUNDEPW & Native Future to periodically report progress and results. Via a learning-by-doing process, Native Future support will continue to strengthen the organization and collaboration of the FUNDEPW and CNPW helping them to become effective, self-sustaining institutions for their people.

Est. Costs Project Management – coordination at all levels of Wounaan organization

CNPW/FUNDEPW Project Management: a dedicated team of Wounaan managers and administrators tasked with carrying out activities with communities and traditional leaders.	\$15,000/year
Native Future Management: Dedicated project manager to guide project implementation. Monitoring and evaluation, and more sustained financing mechanisms. Mid-project & final evaluations and audits.	\$41,000/year

Native Future Management

Since our founding, Native Future has run off the seemingly endless passion and energy of our all volunteer staff. While that effort has produced important positive results the last few years have also revealed its limitations. A more sustained collaboration with the Wounaan is truly required to bring about the change we all seek. For example, when Wounaan leaders ask for legal help to defend their people in court or professional help to strengthen leadership and their organizations we are able to recruit and contract the expertise they need and monitor for the desired results. The 2015—2018 Wounaan Land Rights Program reflects a sustained commitment of both human and financial resources. Our approach is to dedicate the Native Future personnel needed to build and manage the capital of the Wounaan Land Rights Program as well as support its implementation. An expected result is greater on-the-ground assistance and a balanced portfolio of contributions from individuals, businesses, foundations and partners committed to Wounaan land rights goals over the next four years.



COLLABORATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Native Future’s approach, since the beginning, has been to work to build Wounaan capacity, and long-term partnerships at national and international levels. We are happy to be one of four international allies supporting Wounaan land rights and cultural survival goals, and to be collaborating with these partners—the Rainforest Foundation US, MB Mission and the Wounaan Oral Traditions Project—to meet Wounaan-defined objectives.

Since 2012, Native Future has convened bi-annual conference calls with international Wounaan partners to share experiences and improve coordination. The Wounaan Land Rights Program 2015–2018 is greatly informed by these meetings. In July, 2014, international partners and Wounaan leadership—from community and national levels—sat down together for three days to talk strategy and priorities. In the process, Native Future identified niche needs and opportunities that will more effectively move the Wounaan toward their goals, and in collaboration with their allies.



Wounaan Leaders and Allies at July 2014 meeting

In doing so, we also identified certain resources that could be leveraged and applied more strategically. The **Technical Advisory Council** is one example of partners collaborating to advance Wounaan’s fight for land rights. Partner resources will bring strategic technical expertise to the Wounaan, such as international Indigenous Rights experts, strategic communications specialist, and political strategists. Native Future’s **POT Implementation** and **Boundary Demarcation, Monitoring and Control** can add value to RFUS-supported land use planning and MB Mission community-based potable water development. The Wounaan Land Rights Program also strengthens Wounaan capacity to coordinate, communicate and govern from the community level up, mutually supporting on-going initiatives.

ON-GOING INITIATIVES

	Areas of Support
Protection & Management of Indigenous Lands in Darién (RFUS)	Land titling, mapping, <i>guardabosques</i> training, land use plans (POTs), organizational development
Wounaan Oral Traditions Project (multiple scholars)	Wounaan language research and documentation, ethno-ecological research
Community Development (MB Mission)	Water and sanitation, peace and conflict transformation training, spiritual development

Toward Sustainability

Sustainability is achieved when socio-cultural, environmental and economic conditions have been reached that, in the wisdom of the Confederacy of Iroquois Nations of northeastern United States, take into account the needs of “the seventh generation yet to come”. Foundational to sustainability is Wounaan self-determination or their power to influence and manage these conditions. The Wounaan Land Rights Program helps establish the basis of sustainability by strengthening Wounaan capacity (e.g. leadership retreats, paralegals program, and Higher Education) and their natural wealth (e.g. boundary demarcation and control, POT implementation). Over the next four years, we will explore and develop with Wounaan ways they can more sustainably self-generate the economic base they need to continue to support their governance, cultural survival and the sustainable management of their forests, lessening their dependence on international aid.



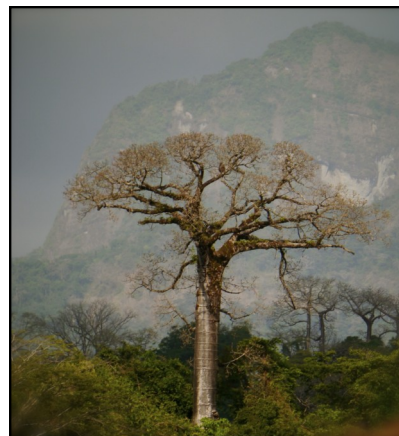
THE WOUNAAN FUTURE

The Wounaan struggle to consolidate their rights to the lands they have lived on for centuries is a small but important part of a larger dream. Their traditional culture has grown from a deep relationship with their lands and waters. Their dance, their song, their craft, their language all evolved with the forests in which they derive their identity. Their future as a Wounaan people cannot be separated from their place. Yet, there is no longer a Wounaan community disconnected from the world in which we all live. Their larger dream remains cultural survival in a modern world: a future where they can seek their livelihoods and build their communities and families in their forests and on their rivers, yet ever more closely intertwined with their nation and the world in which we all live. Their forests are no longer where they retreat to escape modernity, but from where they can welcome the outside world in, on their own terms.

In 2008, Native Future launched the Wounaan Land Tenure Project and wrote a plan in which we envisioned, *a world, ten years from now, in which Río Hondo, Platanares, and Majé-Chimán have legal title to their traditional lands, and that title [their rights] is respected and enforced by Panama. We imagine these communities continuing to manage their lands in a sustainable, productive and conservation-oriented manner, just as they have done for generations.* This vision hasn't changed for Native Future nor for Wounaan.

In July, 2014, Native Future sat down with Wounaan leaders, men and women, and asked them about their priorities. Like us, they want their children educated, clean water to drink, and better access to healthcare. Yet, alongside their basic needs, the protection of their lands, the “rescue” of their culture and their mutual support are top priorities. These are the three pillars of Wounaan survival – **land, culture, self-determination.**

Over the last 15 years, the Wounaan Congress has brought together 18 decentralized communities that never had a common governance structure into a single body that has defined its identity and begun to speak with a single voice. They are slowly gaining recognition and respect nationally and internationally, moving ever closer toward an equitable and empowered engagement with an outside world. In helping them consolidate and secure their territorial rights, strengthen their self-governance, and prepare the next generation of Wounaan leaders, Native Future helps them more confidently meet the challenges they face, act with greater agency in the larger Panama Republic and economic world order and protect their forests, as they have for generations.



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Learn more about the
Wounaan and our work
www.nativefuture.org

