



# SHIPIBO CONIBO CENTER

Annual Report 2022-2023



Dear friends and allies,

The last year (2022-2023) has been particularly significant for the Shipibo Conibo Center (SCC). The Amazon has become one of the primary centers of global political disputes. Its strategic location and its importance for the environmental sustainability of the planet makes it a place where actors—both private and public—constantly attack Indigenous ways of life through extensive campaigns to usurp ancestral lands, severe environmental crimes, and various violations of the rights of those who inhabit the forest. It is in this complicated context where the SCC work has been crucial to support the Shipibo Conibo People in strengthening their organizations, to defend their leaders and territory, to demand for rights and the expansion of spaces to exchange their cosmology, art, culture and knowledge.

SCC has focused on five lines of action that include:

- (1) the promotion of Indigenous Autonomy initiatives;
- (2) the strengthening of our Legal Defense Program;
- (3) the training of the next generations of Indigenous Leaders and Lawyers;
- (4) the cultural production of Indigenous contemporary art in close collaboration with our represented artists;
- (5) the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledges and their evolution through our newly established sister organization rooted in the Peruvian Amazon, the Multiversity Bakish Mai.

Today, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the tremendous support we have received from you over the past year and share a summary of our accomplishments during this time.

Abou Farman and Matteo Norzi, President and Executive Director, SCC

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# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## 2022-2023

### 1. INDIGENOUS AUTONOMY



↗ Indigenous guards of Caimito in the Imiría Lagoon, Ucayali, Peruvian Amazon. August 2023.

#### 1.1 TITLING INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

The SSC works to ensure that the collective rights to the territory of Indigenous peoples are respected and protected; we support land titling processes so that various Indigenous communities achieve legal recognition and protection of their ancestral territories within state frameworks. Last year, the Center assisted with the successful titling of three communities: Villasol, Antiguo Ahuaypa de Iparia and Kaiwetsa. Titling helps ensure the sovereignty and autonomy of Indigenous communities in the Amazon.

#### 1.2 THE CREATION OF INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL AREAS

With the support of the SCC, Shipibo communities living near the Imiría Lagoon in Ucayali have begun to design their own conservation and governance model called Indigenous Ecological Areas (AEI in Spanish). Their proposal aims to implement indigenous territorial management systems in the Peruvian Amazon based on Shipibo cosmology and administered by local communities. This year, the coalition launched the web platform [ÁreaEcologicaIndigena.org](http://AreaEcologicaIndigena.org), a site that comprehensively documents the current threats in the Imiría region (deforestation, Mennonite invasions, drug trafficking, illegal fishing and



regional conservation areas that restrict Indigenous life). It also presents the proposal to consolidate an Indigenous Ecological Area in this region of Peru for the first time.

Simultaneously, we have supported the establishment of Indigenous patrols (Guardia Indigena) in nine Shipibo-Konibo communities, with legal protection and community members participating in non-violent collective protection efforts aimed at safeguarding Shipibo lagoons and forests and establishing autonomy over Indigenous territories. SCC provided legal training, outboard motors and uniforms for water and land monitoring. The Guardia have successfully halted mass illegal fishing in several lagoons, notably the Imiria lagoon, demonstrating that only local communities can effectively defend their lands and waterways. Since initiating the AEI project in Imiria, five other communities have requested to join the initiative and, with our support, have taken on the task of creating their ecological areas.

## 2. LEGAL DEFENSE PROGRAM



↗ Mennonite machinery cutting down forest in Caimito. Images taken by the Indigenous Guard during vigilance activities. September 2023.

The work of the Shipibo Center Legal Program, has intensified in recent years due to the increase in land invasions in Indigenous territories, the growing pressure from extractive industries such as oil, logging, and palm oil, and the proliferation of illegal coca leaf plantations used for drug trafficking. Last year, SCC has provided legal and strategic support to the Indigenous community of Caimito to counter both Mennonite and Cocalero land invasions and also legally assisted the cases of leaders of Coshikox and Guardia Indigena who were threatened and/or criminalized. In collaboration with the Institute of Legal Defense (IDL), the Shipibo Conibo Xetebo Council - COSHICOX, the Shipibo-Konibo Indigenous Guard, and other local organizations, the SSC has committed to provide free

legal defense to Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon who face threats and/or are victims of environmental crimes and human rights violations. We have been also involved in triggering strategic litigation to have the representative body of the Shipibo Nation recognized by the Peruvian government and other national and international actors.

The legal program defended five Shipibo leaders facing threats and criminalization and issued an important report, along with the Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL), on the criminalization of guardias and Shipibo leaders.

### 3. TRAINING OF THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF INDIGENOUS LEADERS AND LAWYERS



↗ Lizardo Caupe, Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo Council - COSHICOX, during his participation in the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples in New York. April 2023.

As a result of a joint effort between the SCC, the Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo Council - COSHICOX and the Forest Peoples Programme, we have facilitated training spaces for Indigenous leaders from 10 communities in the Ucayali region in the development of capacities for the defense of the territory, from the use of legal tools to the creation of Indigenous Guards. Communities such as 13 de enero, Panapo, Canchahuaya, Golondrina, Santa Rosa de Pirococha, Puerto Adelina, Holaya, Libertador, Canan de Tipishca and Canan de Chachiaco have already been part of this process that aim to enhance the capabilities of current and future leaders.

The interplay between Indigenous jurisdiction and State jurisdiction requires that leaders and advocates have all the necessary tools to understand and defend their rights. Our



training spaces are designed to strengthen the capacities of current leaders and a group of Shipibo-speaking legal practitioners in managing the fraught interface with the state and international non-profit actors.

#### 4. THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ART IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH OUR REPRESENTED ARTISTS



↗ Celia Vasquez Yui - The Council of the Mother Spirits of the Animals 2022.

By cultural production, the SCC work in collaboration with its represented artists intends to overstep the colonial paradigms that have separated Indigenous art from the contemporary setting.

Indigenous artists working with SCC refuse to act as a self-motivated individuals, driven by Indigenous principles of reciprocity and kinship that extends beyond the human, to animal, plants, land, and spirit, they share their income to support all these various forms of Indigenous resistance in the Amazon in a way that challenges the accumulation paradigm of art collecting that prevails in the West. Their work serves as gateways to ancient knowledge systems with the potential of inspiring a sustainable future while offering a model of how to possibly rejoin the realms of art, healing, ecology,

and politics that were long separated through colonial and neocolonial modes of extraction and representation.

In the fall of 2022 the show *Maya Maya Bainkin*, curated by the SCC and exhibited at the Centro Cultural Inca Garcilaso, in Lima, focused on the diverse explorations of *kené*, *Shipibo's* ancestral design system and featured a intergenerational group of outstanding artists: Chonon Bensho (Pucallpa, 1992); Sara Flores (Loreto, 1950); Inka Mea (Iparía, 1916-San Francisco de Yarinacocha, 2001); Celia Vásquez Yui (Pucallpa, 1960); Olinda Silvano (Ucayali, 1969). In dialogue with the works of these artists, the exhibition brought interventions of the Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo Association of Ancestral Medical Onanyabo (Asomashk), the Indigenous Guards and the "Association of Shipibo Women Affected by Forced Sterilization". The exhibition formalized for the first time in a gallery the interconnectedness of the work of Shipibo artists, activists, and healers. *Maya Maya Bainkin*, received the National Curatorial Award Llama from the Curators Association of Peru, and was reviewed by [Terremoto magazine](#).

Last year marked a significant milestone for the SCC artistic coalition, with the artists represented by the Center opening more than five major exhibitions:

- Sara Flores held two solo exhibitions at the Clearing Gallery in New York: [Kené](#) in 2022 and [Soi Biri](#) in 2023, which were also presented at the [White Cube](#) in Paris. Her paintings were part of group shows like [Para Site](#), Hong Kong and the Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, in NL. Her work has also featured in major art fairs in Miami, Bruxelles, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, London, Paris, Shanghai.
- Between August 2023 and January 2024, [Chonon Bensho](#) had her first solo exhibition at W-Gallery in Buenos Aires.
- *The Council of the Mother Spirits of the Animals* by Celia Vasquez Yui was showcased in New York at [Salon 94](#), [Clearing Gallery](#) and [The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art](#) at Cornell University, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin and [The Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac](#), in Paris. The exhibition was accompanied by a recording of a special ayahuasca ceremony performed in the Peruvian Amazon by members of Asomashk, the Union of Shipibo Healers, which won the Promise of Multispecies Justice juried exhibition of the Multispecies Salon in 2023.
- Bora-Muruy painter Brus Rubio has joined SCC, and his work has been presented in collaboration with Sapar Contemporary at the Armory Show in NY.

## 5. THE MULTIVERSITY BAKISH MAI: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR SISTER ORGANIZATION IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON



- Located in the Ucayali region, Bakish Mai is an intergenerational center for the transfer of Indigenous knowledge focused on ecology, plant medicine, art, public education and Indigenous territorial sovereignty.

The SCC has been dedicated to supporting spaces for the defense and elaboration of Indigenous knowledge. One of its most significant achievements this year was the opening of the [Bakish Mai Multiversity](#) in the San Francisco community (Shansho Cocha Lagoon).

Operating with a fully Shipibo council of advisors, this institute serves as a meeting and study center focused on ecology, plant medicine, art, public education and Indigenous territorial sovereignty. Since its creation in April 2023, the Multiversidad has hosted meetings of Shipibo Indigenous guards, workshops on Indigenous self-determination, workshops on Indigenous cosmology and a program on food sovereignty led by Shipibo women.

The Multiversidad Bakish Mai is a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting, reinventing and transmitting the knowledge linked to the cosmovision and life practices of the Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo people in the Peruvian Amazon.

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The training programs, meetings, workshops, and other knowledge exchanges developed at Bakish Mai recognize Shipibo thought as a resilient form of knowledge in political, economic, educational, philosophical, medical and artistic terms.

The concept of multiversity, rather than university, evokes the idea of a multilayered reality, characteristic of the Shipibo cosmovision and their spiritual understanding of ecology. Bakish, which in Shipibo refers to both "yesterday" and "tomorrow," alludes to ancestral values as a necessary inspiration for the Indigenous future. A collective, free, autonomous, healthy, and sustainable future; driven by values of reciprocity, guided by an ecological policy of regeneration and coexistence with nature and the beings of the jungle and water that populate it, and the creative and free development of the Amazonian-Indigenous imagination.

The Bakish Mai Multiversity is directed by an expandable council of Shipibo leaders that currently includes Carala Lopez, Lener Guimaraes, Elisa Vargas, Sara Flores, Walter Lopez, Wihtner Fago, Cecilia Brito, Daniel Maynas.

## NEXT MOVES

Support for the struggle for self-determination of the Shipibo-Konibo People remains highly urgent. Throughout next year, the SCC will continue to support the expansion of the Shipibo Indigenous Guard to other communities in Ucayali. To this end, the Center will promote other international meetings of Indigenous Guards, which will be fundamental to strengthening the bonds of collaboration and the exchange of experiences among the Indigenous authorities of the Amazon basin. At the same time, the SCC will work to expand the establishment of new Indigenous Ecological Areas and will dedicate advocacy efforts to ensure that this concept obtains a legal framework within Peruvian regulations. The Center will also continue to support human rights defenders through legal and territorial defense.

Meanwhile, in the realm of the arts, between December 2023 and January 2024, The White Cube in Paris will inaugurate a [solo exhibition](#) by Sara Flores, meanwhile, until May 2024, The Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, in Paris, will host the exhibition [Visions shamaniques, Arts de l'ayahuasca en Amazonie péruvienne](#), featuring the work of Sara Flores, Chonon, Brus Rubio and Celia Vásquez. Matteo Norzi, director of the SCC, has written an essay for the exhibition [catalogue](#).

We are privileged to be doing this work alongside Shipibo artists, activists, and healers in the Ucayali to create collaborations that do not follow conventional NGOs' frameworks. Here is to a future of Indigenous autonomy!



↗ Mujeres Semillas Program - A women-led food sovereignty program - Bakish Mai Multiversity. September 2023.







