

La Pachamama - Artful Resistance

(Argentina) One form of resistance and organization in the Calchaquí valley is based on the production of crafts. The Supply Cooperative for Regional Artesans, "La Pachamama," has as its objective the recognition of the technical and economic value of artesanry.

Our craft cooperative was formed in 1986. At that time we didn't know anything about what it meant to form a cooperative, we simply felt it necessary to join together. In reality, we already were working together. Our shop had existed for more than 15 years, and people used to come together here in order to display their products. When we began talking about forming a cooperative, the objective was to turn artesanry into a means of making a living. There are many artesans who cannot work because the necessary materials don't exist.

We try to preserve what is autochthonous to our region. All of the artesans are local, from neighboring areas. Our artesanry consists primarily of weavings, but we also work with baskets made of "simbol" and "poleo" (local plants), and wood and leather, and there are also several potters. We use traditional techniques and natural dyes. All kinds of weavings are made: tapestries, ponchos, blankets, "puyos" (ponchos woven with thick wool), carpets, pullovers, stockings and shawls.



Woman wearing a Calchaquí shawl.

This legacy of our ancestors is something that we don't want to lose. They didn't know of synthetic dyes. They wove with the materials they had at hand, and this is what we want to preserve. Natural dyes are very consistent and cheaper too.

Locally, we are developing a plan to supply the materials needed for the creation of our crafts. We have bought raw materials, wool, and looms. We have 42 members. We have grown considerably. The main problem right now is commercialization, because we still don't have a market. At the present time we are only selling locally. What we would like to be able to do is, for example, to go to expositions, to go to other areas in order to sell our things.

(Josefa Balderrama, President; Rumaldo Olivari, Secretary)

If you would like to support "La Pachamama" Cooperative by purchasing artesanry, inviting its members to an exposition, offering training or consulting in marketing techniques you can contact:

Cooperativa Pachamama
Ruta 307 Km 118, Amaicha del Valle
4137 Tucumán, Argentina



Calchaquí carpet from Cooperativa Pachamama.

SAIIC Photo

Two children in El Paso, Argentina.

SAIIC Photo



EL PASO ISSUES PLEA FOR ASSISTANCE

(Argentina) The survival of the Calchaquí community of El Paso is seriously threatened by a lack of water. Community members have requested financial help in order to construct a well which would supply various communities of the area. The cost is \$25,000. If you have information about possible financial sources, please contact:

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4141 Catamarca, Argentina