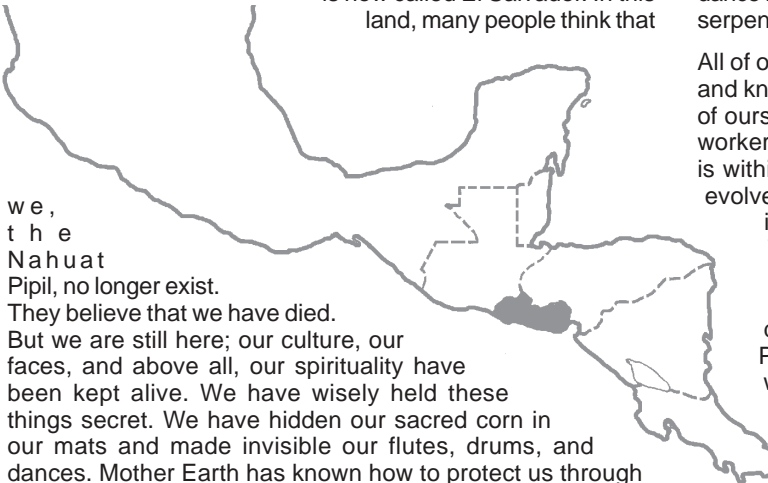


# The teachings of the Nahuat Pipil (El Salvador)

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We would like to share the ways we have been taught to live with love and respect on Mother Earth. These teachings are within our historic memory and are handed over to us from heart to heart. We speak especially of our home, of our family, of the Nahuat Pipil. We live on this land whose sacred name is Ketzalcatitán, Land given to Lord Ketzalcat, which is now called El Salvador. In this land, many people think that



we,  
the  
Nahuat  
Pipil, no longer exist.

They believe that we have died. But we are still here; our culture, our faces, and above all, our spirituality have been kept alive. We have wisely held these things secret. We have hidden our sacred corn in our mats and made invisible our flutes, drums, and dances. Mother Earth has known how to protect us through her grandkeepers, the Living Faces of Codices. The Sacred Grandmothers have had the courage to carry day to day on her body the wardrobe of Mother Earth.

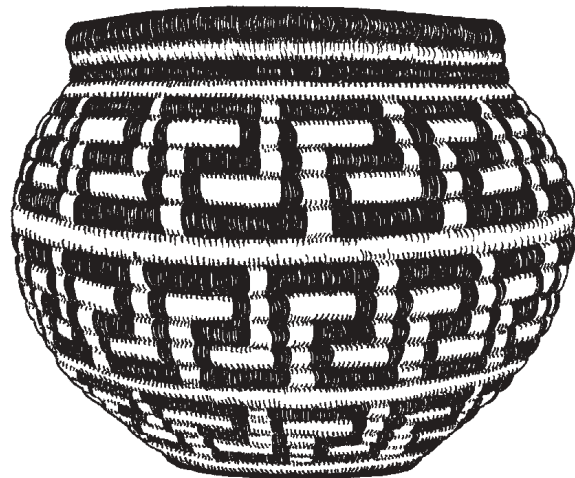
According to our living culture, which does not belong in a museum, we consider that the Mother Earth is our mother and our home. We do not see her as merely a piece of land but as that which surrounds us. Her ceiling is the sky and the universe. She is a part of our body. We are the land, walking and planting her with the harvests of life. Every tree is a part of a family, of a community, plants with a spiritual hierarchy. For us the mountains have ancient trees, wise guardians. For this reason, when we move from one mountain to the next, we ask permission from the Great Guardians to enter another area. The trees speak to us, guide us, and teach us. Each blade of grass and every tree is an open book that shows us wisdom and gifts us with nourishment and medicine.

Our great computers are the sacred stones. They hold the register of the universe's language. They are alive, they speak to us, and they help us to be healthy and to live. They allow us to discover the language. We make our homes with them. As well they are the gigantic screens from which we are able to perceive the history of our People. Every line in them, their radiance, their colour, and their forms have their own language. In them are our "Naguales," the spirit of our ancestors and the energies that protect and guide us. On Mother Earth, we have our great schools and universities. It is in her mountains, rivers, lakes, and oceans where she gives her classes. Living on her, we find our great professors: the animal brothers who sing us their songs. In their movements they explain time and if there will be droughts or intense winters. They show us signs that guide us through life. They are also our respected books of knowledge. When they sacrifice themselves to give us nourishment and medicine, there is a ritual in which we

both communicate. In addition to nourishment, when they sacrifice themselves to keep us healthy, part of their experience becomes that of our own. They gift us with their energy and their wisdom. For this reason, they are always present in our art and symbols of our energies. Our "Naguales" are present in the sacredness of time according to our calendars, in our dance forms, and when we become deer women, jaguar women, serpents, falcons, hummingbirds, squirrels, and monkeys.

All of our spirituality, culture, and science is based on respect and knowing that we are part of Mother Earth. We never think of ourselves as queens of creation, but as a part of creation, workers for life. We revolve around the great spiral of life that is within our genetic codes. For us, this is how the universe evolves and moves and spirals. This is how we live and this is how we learn in the great school of Mother Nature.

We see the sky as a grand blackboard with big letters that we decipher in order to live in harmony with time. The spirits of our Grandmothers and Grandfathers dwell in the stars. The clouds gather the energy of the People and take them to the heights of the skies where we can read future events. This is our science. This is our medicine that does not come from a laboratory test tube but from the natural world, our university. This is our philosophy. Our art lies in the way we educate ourselves to live and realize from day to day our spirituality and our mission as healers and workers for life. This is how we understand to love and respect our surroundings. We live with the responsibility that every emotion, thought, and action should be meditated on knowing how it will affect the future seven generations. "To those yet unborn" we are responsible for the string of life that today is called sustainability. For us, it is a chain of wisdom that is within, to decipher day in and day out, the knowledge within our blood and historical memory. This is the great serpent that moves our genetic code and helps us navigate and evolve. We are those who are born from the earthen pot, from the wombs of our mothers, and the heavens have designated us to serve our lives as healers.



Wounaan Basket (Art by Christi Belcourt).