

## The Sewing Group

The cooperative in Carasque includes 11 people crocheting, and 25 people sewing, embroidering, and making arpilleras. They run the co-op democratically, make big decisions collectively, and divide their profits among members. Sales of their work provide one of the few sources of income to the village of 325 people.

In addition to arpilleras, the cooperative also makes crocheted hats and shoulder bags, embroidered aprons, tote bags, t-shirts, and hammocks.



## PICA

PICA sells arpilleras, as well as other handmade products from Carasque. All profits are sent back to the sewing cooperative. PICA works to encourage this fair trade alternative to sweatshops.

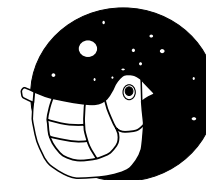
PICA is a Bangor area membership, not-for-profit organization. Our purpose is to ally communities across borders in order to promote human rights, economic justice, and community life. New volunteers are warmly welcomed to help with the arpillera project and other PICA programs, including the Bangor - Carasque Sister City Project, the Bangor Clean Clothes Campaign, the Maine Fair Trade Campaign, and Youth Adelantando.

You can purchase an arpillera from PICA. Most sell for between \$100 and \$175. To learn more about the arpilleras and other products from Carasque, or to learn about other PICA projects:

Call: 207-947-4203

Email: [info@pica.ws](mailto:info@pica.ws)

Visit on the web at [www.pica.ws](http://www.pica.ws)



# THE ARPILLERA PROJECT



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES  
BY SEWING STORIES

BANGOR, MAINE AND  
CARASQUE, EL SALVADOR



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## The Arpilleras

In the mountain village of Carasque, El Salvador, women and girls gather to sew. They work in groups of two to six, creating arpilleras, fabric scenes of their lives.

The arpillera makers always begin with the mountains and the sun. From there, the stories unfold to share times of grief and times of joy, a fallen forest and the war dead, the building of the village, and the bounty of the farm. Each group enlivens their piece with tiny, 3-dimensional figures - a woman with an apron, a man holding a machete, a fat speckled hen with wings that lift to reveal embroidered eggs.

Arpilleras draw the people of Carasque together with their town's sister city, Bangor, Maine. In 2001, the sewing cooperative began making arpilleras as a way to share the stories of their community with the people of Maine.

To get a glimpse of Carasque, take a good look at the arpilleras. See the resilience of a strong community, the people's unbroken sense of hope, and their persistence in the long struggle for justice.

## Sister City Then

Since 1991, the Bangor - based Peace through Inter-American Community Action (PICA) has conducted a sister city project between the people of the Bangor Area and those of Carasque. It is part of the U.S. - El Salvador Sister Cities Network, that links 29 pairs of sister cities.

For 12 long years, the people of Carasque struggled through the civil war. They fled their village to escape death, and returned while the war still raged, to rebuild their community with great courage. PICA began the sistering project during this time as an effort to help protect the human rights of civilians in Carasque and other repopulated villages.



## Sister City Now

Now that peace has come, sistering continues to be an extraordinary path of learning and mutual support for both of our communities.

Recently, young people in Bangor hosted a delegation of Carasque youth who had become leaders in their village. Together they explored how to develop leadership and gain voice for youth in their respective communities.

Over the years, women, teachers, healthcare workers, small farmers, and people concerned about the impact of free trade, have visited Carasque. They have come back inspired by the power of real community, and with a desire to work together to seek solutions to problems that affect us all.

