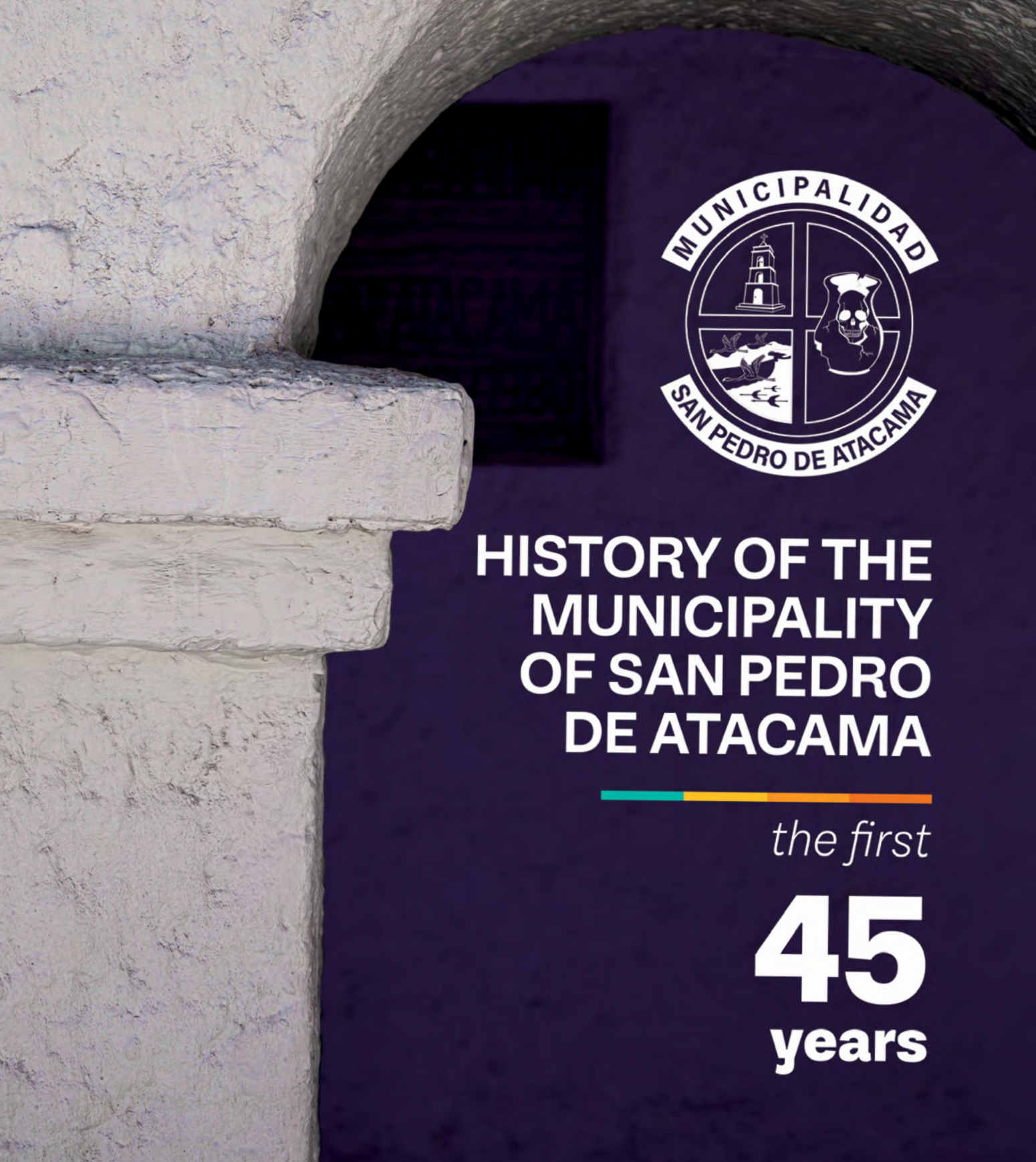

MUNICIPALIDAD
SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

HISTORY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

the first

45

years

History of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama

the first 45 years

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· San Pedro de Atacama, september 2026 ·





Socaire

Acknowledgements to the community

Special thanks are due to all those who generously shared their testimonies, memories, experiences and personal stories to help shape this history of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama. Their voices have made it possible to reconstruct not only the institution's major milestones, but also the recollections, lessons and everyday experiences that form part of its collective memory. They bear witness to the commitment of those who, over the years, have contributed in different ways to the development of the municipality and its communities.

Current and former municipal employees:

Fanny Aguirre; Felisa Aguirre; Manuel Alfaro; Roxana Aranda Caru; Elizabeth Astudillo; Ana María Barón; Mirta Barreda; Sandra Berna; Ester Buston; Mirta Solis Cenzano; Jaime Coria; Sandra Cruz Reales; César Díaz; Manuel Escalante; Sergio Gavia; Patricia González; Natalia Henríquez; Rubén Heredia; Patricia Lanas; Gloria Liendro; Evelyn Martínez; Juan Carlos Pereira; Marcela Pereira; Paola Piñones; Dagoberto Ramírez; Marcela Ramos; Walter Reales; Rubén Reyes; Cecilia Rojo Diaz; Moisés Salva; Hans Schmauck; Judith Soza; Niza Tapia; Camilo Varas; Salvador Vera y Justo Zuleta.

Leaders of community organisations:

Ada Aramayo Conzue (former councillor and community leader); Margarita Chocobar Cruz (former councillor); Marcelino Choque (Río Grande); Eduarda Colque (Machuca); Lucas Condori (Río Grande); Elys Ibañez Arao (San Pedro de Atacama); Juan Mamani (Población Punta de Diamante); Sara Plaza (Peine); Anjel Puca (Toconao); Eva Siares Flores (teacher).

Introduction
A Message from the Mayor

This book aims to chronicle the journey of our municipality—from the perspective of its institutions and its territory, and, most importantly, through the people who have given life and meaning to this history.

Mayors, council members, and staff have cultivated a relationship with our residents and with our territory as a whole, navigating both good times and difficult ones—periods of calm as well as times of intense pressure that have brought about increasingly complex challenges.

This has led the institution to develop new, specialized branches to enhance its reach—such as the Culture Foundation, the Sports Corporation, and the Jurique Foundation—as well as to acquire new properties, machinery, and equipment. Together with our dedicated staff, these resources are designed to meet the demands of the present day.

In my view, establishing a distinct municipal institutional framework for this territory stands as the most significant and consequential milestone in shaping a vision, an identity, and a strategy for its development.

Given that this territory has undergone profound changes over the last 40 years, it is hard to imagine how this progress could have been achieved without a dedicated institutional structure focused exclusively on managing this vast area known as Atacama la Grande (Greater Atacama, inextricably linked to the Atacama Salt Flats).

The recollections of this institution's early days, as presented in this book, reflect the major transformations that have taken place up to the present. They highlight the commitment of the men and women who invite us to work alongside them, sharing their deep sense of responsibility.

Today, our social landscape has evolved: the population has grown and become more diverse. Yet, what must never change is our love for and commitment to this great territory—a land that fills us with pride and amazes the world with the vastness of its desert, the majesty of its skies and peaks, its unique flora and fauna, and the microbial life found within its salt flats—some of which dates back to the very dawn of life on our planet.

Given all this, it is easy to understand the sense of gratitude—passed down from generation to generation—that we feel toward God, our Patta Hoiri, and our Puri. [indigenous deities]

The Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama is relatively young, having existed for only 46 years at the time of this book's publication. As

mayor, I feel truly fortunate to have been—and continue to be—a part of this history.

The establishment of the municipality has been a cornerstone in the development of our territory, ensuring that its growth is built upon the foundations of our local identity. This has been made possible by the contributions, commitment, and deep-seated passion of those who were involved from the very beginning—a spirit they have passed on to our current teams, who, regardless of their origins, dedicate their knowledge and skills to the service of our commune.

While our commune may be small in terms of population compared to a large city, it is vast in its geographical reach, with its various settlements standing alongside each other as guardians of this land.

I cannot conclude without expressing my gratitude to those who have shared their personal experiences and knowledge to help shape this small repository of our municipal history. I am especially grateful to all our people, who have always given the best of themselves for their families, their communities, and our territory—thereby helping to build and strengthen the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama, and becoming an integral part of it. I also wish to thank those who served as authorities before us, as well as our staff members, who have ensured that this legacy is passed on with the same unwavering commitment—most notably those who have dedicated their entire lives to this institution.

Justo Zuleta Santander
Mayor




· Toconao, september 2026 ·



Chapter 1

A Historical Valley

before the municipality



The municipality that we know today has been an institution that has presided over the local communities for over 45 years. However, this capacity for governance precedes modern organizations, since from the Atacama ayllus, to the Inca empire, to the colonial township and finally the current Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama, different forms of organization and government have been present.

The long and rich history of these lands did not begin with a decree, but goes deep into the roots of a culture more than 11 thousand years old: the Atacameños or Lickanantay. The ancient inhabitants forged their identity in an arid environment, descending from the high puna (mountain plateau) towards the valleys and oases to settle definitively in this area. Life was organized around the ayllus, territorial and



Atacama Desert, 1793, map by Andrés Baleato in General Map of the Kingdom of Chile in South America, at www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl

social units where grazing and agriculture—especially the cultivation of corn and alfalfa—dictated the rhythm of the community.

The arrival of the Inca empire to the territory of San Pedro de Atacama profoundly transformed the organization of the region, integrating the ancient Atacama culture into a vast political and economic network known as the Tawantinsuyo. To manage this new order, the territorial and political organization became even more sophisticated with the creation of administrative centers, such as Catarpe, which became the most relevant governing and religious focus of the sector. In turn, the Qhapaq Ñan or Inca Trail was the backbone that allowed for the integration of the current territory of San Pedro into the empire.

"The Inca Trail went inward from the current location of Copiapó towards the plains of Juncal to continue to the Aguada de Puquíos and turn northeast and on to the Salar de Atacama, passing through the towns of Tilomonte and Peine from where it connected with Toconao and San Pedro de Atacama. This was also the hardest section that crossed the terrain to the fertile Atacameños oases" (Téllez and Silva, 1989, p. 47).

After the arrival of the Spanish, the occupation took place in 1540 at the hands of Pedro de Valdivia, who sent Francisco de Aguirre to fight in the Pukará de Quitor, a brutal battle in which the Europeans emerged victorious over the natives. From that date on, colonial domination imposed its control systems, such as the establishment of 'Indian' towns, the encomienda (labor) system and evangelization, which completely altered indigenous life.

During the colonial era Atacama la Alta, the old name for San Pedro de Atacama, was an enclave of Spanish rule. This territory was communications link between Chile and Peru, and the imposition of the Spanish Crown was felt early on, from the mid-16th century, when the Magistrate of Atacama was established under the jurisdiction of the Royal Court of Charcas of the Viceroyalty of Peru. "In the 17th century, Atacama was a district, depending, as already noted, on the Audiencia and Archbishopric of Charcas. The magistrate resided in San Pedro"(Zapater, 1977, p. 51).

In this way, this territory was understood as a regional power center where public notaries occasionally settled, and even "(Pedro de) Valdivia had a house built in Atacama" (Téllez and Silva, 1989, p. 63). Despite its apparent strategic importance, it was still considered a "town of Indians," as the residents were mainly indigenous people.

As regards territorial organization, the ayllus persisted as the main social and community structure. As such, "The Spaniards, since the 16th century, superimposed the municipal regime on this indigenous institution, so that each 'ayllu' corresponded to a mayor. San Pedro had, in 1854, five 'ayllus' with their respective mayors. They had as a marker of authority 'a cane with a silver button'" (Zapater, 1977, p. 53). According to Zapater himself, this system was established through ordinances of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo, whose method of electing mayors in 'Indian' towns was officialised.

After the independence movement, San Pedro de Atacama came under Bolivian sovereignty in 1825 as part of the province of Potosí, and later of the Litoral province, with its capital in the port of Cobija. During this period it was consolidated as a strategic point for the Argentine cattle trade, which crossed the mountain range to supply the mining and nitrate centers of the region. "From an administrative point of view, under the Bolivian government, San Pedro was the capital of the province of Atacama, which would be equivalent to a department in Chile; Chiuchiu was a canton and Calama a vice-canton"(Zapater, 1977, p. 53).

However, the War of the Pacific in 1879 changed the town's history. After significant battles like that of Topater, the Chilean State militarily seized control of the area, abolishing any indigenous protectorares and promising to integrate all inhabitants as citizens of a new nation. In 1888, with the creation of the province of Antofagasta, San Pedro was formally incorporated into the legal structure of Chile, although its administrative autonomy was still far from being realized.



Bell tower of the Church of San Lucas, Toconao.



Church of San Lucas, Toconao.

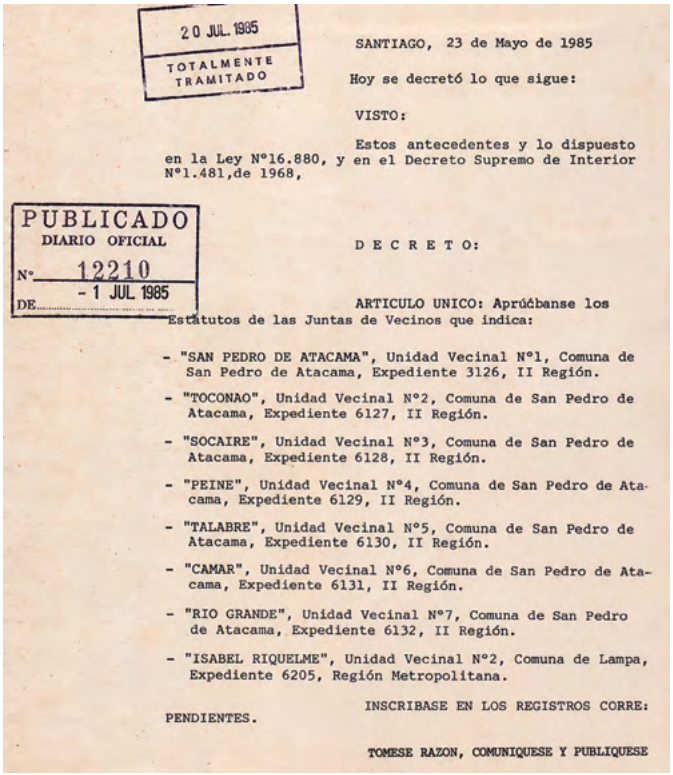
The need for self-administration

The 20th century, in San Pedro de Atacama, represented a stage of profound transformations, marked by a long period of central administrative dependence, the subsequent search for autonomy, growing community organization in the face of geographical isolation, and the industrial boom of the region.

During the first half of the century, the Chilean state intervened in stages in the towns in the interior of Antofagasta, prioritizing mining centers over rural towns. After the War of the Pacific, San Pedro became part of the commune of Caracoles in 1893. However, with the decline of Caracoles, it was dissolved as a municipality in 1917, and San Pedro became directly dependent on the Municipality of Antofagasta. With the creation of the Department of El Loa, in 1924, San Pedro de Atacama was incorporated into the commune of Calama. For more than five decades, the town functioned as a subregion of Calama, often suffering from a lack of budget, poor oversight, and public services in deplorable conditions.

Before the creation of the independent commune, local management fell to delegates appointed by Calama or to development boards with limited powers. For much of the 20th century, public positions were occupied by 'neighbors'—landlords and merchants, often of foreign origin— while the indigenous population had a less visible political participation in the capital of the region. Other

Decree No. 690 of May 23, 1985



20 JUL. 1985
TOTALMENTE TRAMITADO

SANTIAGO, 23 de Mayo de 1985

Hoy se decretó lo que sigue:

VISTO:

Estos antecedentes y lo dispuesto en la Ley N°16.880, y en el Decreto Supremo de Interior N°1.481,de 1968,

PUBLICADO
DIARIO OFICIAL
N° 12210
DE - 1 JUL 1985

D E C R E T O:

ARTICULO UNICO: Aprúébanse los Estatutos de las Juntas de Vecinos que indica:

- "SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA", Unidad Vecinal N°1, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 3126, II Región.
- "TOCONAO", Unidad Vecinal N°2, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6127, II Región.
- "SOCAIRE", Unidad Vecinal N°3, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6128, II Región.
- "PEINE", Unidad Vecinal N°4, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6129, II Región.
- "TALABRE", Unidad Vecinal N°5, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6130, II Región.
- "CAMAR", Unidad Vecinal N°6, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6131, II Región.
- "RIO GRANDE", Unidad Vecinal N°7, Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, Expediente 6132, II Región.
- "ISABEL RIQUELME", Unidad Vecinal N°2, Comuna de Lampa, Expediente 6205, Región Metropolitana.

INSCRIBASE EN LOS REGISTROS CORRESPONDIENTES.

TOMESE RAZON, COMUNIQUESE Y PUBLIQUESE

key positions of administration belonged to the surveillance boards, which were in charge of managing irrigation water. In the 1970s and 1980s, neighborhood reorganization was strengthened so as to better serve the State. A key milestone was Decree No. 690 of May 23, 1985, which approved the establishment of the seven neighborhood associations of the area: San Pedro de Atacama (Neighborhood Unit No. 1), Toconao, Socaire, Peine, Talabre, Camar and Río Grande. These communities took on the management of drinking water systems, electricity and infrastructure. Lucas Condori Condori, former leader of Río Grande, remembers: "The neighborhood association when we started was good, everything was well organized. Everything together, everyone has their role, those of us who were on the boards of those times worked well together."

During the period of the civil-military dictatorship in Chile, the political-administrative division of the country was consolidated in October 1979 through Decree Law No. 2868, giving rise to the commune of San Pedro de Atacama within the province of El Loa. Subsequently, in October 1980, Decree with Force of Law No. 1-2868 officially established the creation of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama and laid the foundations for its administration. Its final establishment took place on December 1 of that same year with the appointment of Hans Schmauck Alarcón as its first mayor. This milestone was significant, since it implied having a municipality at the service of the local community.

In this way, a stage of independent municipal life began, headed by its first appointed mayor. The process was not without difficulties, especially due to institutional precariousness and the scarcity of resources with which community management had to work with. Schmauck Alarcón himself later recalled the magnitude of that responsibility: "Being the first mayor of San Pedro was a tremendous challenge for me."



· *Talabre, september 2026* ·

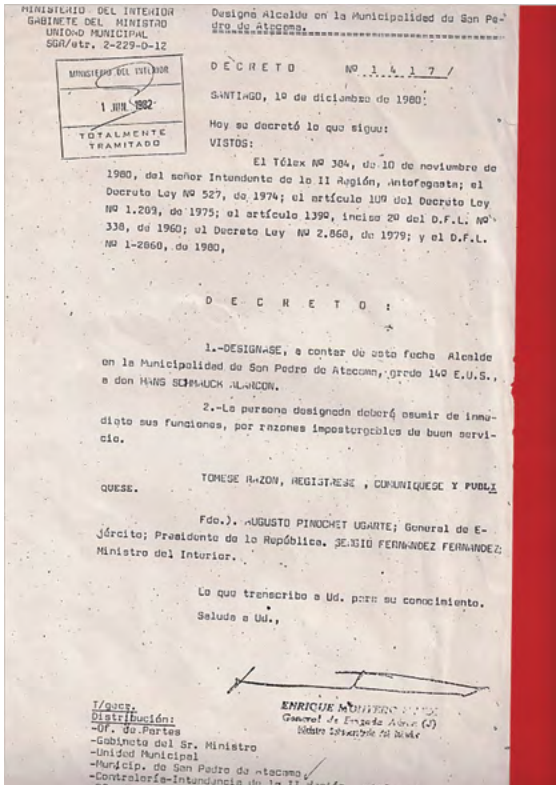


Chapter 2

Laying the Foundations of an Institution

years of grassroots effort (1980–1992)

Decree appointing Mayor Schmauck, 1980



MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR
GABINETE DEL MINISTRO
UNIDAD MUNICIPAL
SGR/otr. 2-229-D-12

MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR
1 JUN 1982
TOTALMENTE TRAMITADO

Designa Alcalde en la Municipalidad de San Pedro de Atacama.

D E C R E T O Nº 1 4 1 7 /

SANTIAGO, 1º de diciembre de 1980.

Hoy se decretó lo que sigue:

VISTOS:

El Télex Nº 304, de 10 de noviembre de 1980, del señor Intendente de la II Región, Antofagasta; el Decreto Ley Nº 527, de 1974; el artículo 109 del Decreto Ley Nº 1.289, de 1975; el artículo 1390, inciso 2º del D.F.L. Nº 338, de 1960; el Decreto Ley Nº 2.868, de 1979; y el D.F.L. Nº 1-2860, de 1980,

D E C R E T O :

1.-DESIGNASE, a contar de esta fecha Alcalde en la Municipalidad de San Pedro de Atacama, grado 14º E.U.S., a don HANS SCHMAUCK ALARCON.

2.-La persona designada deberá asumir de inmediato sus funciones, por razones impostergables de buen servicio.

TOMESE RAZON, REGISTRESE, COMUNIQUESE Y PUBLIQUESE.

Fdo.). AUGUSTO PINOCHET UGARTE; General de Ejército; Presidente de la República. SERGIO FERNANDEZ FERNANDEZ; Ministro del Interior.

Lo que transcribo a Ud. para su conocimiento.

Saluda a Ud.,

ENRIQUE [illegible]
General de Brigada Aérea (J)
Subsecretario del Interior

T/Secr.
Distribución:
-Of. de Partes
-Gabinete del Sr. Ministro
-Unidad Municipal
-Municip. de San Pedro de Atacama
-Contraloría-Intendencia [illegible]

The foundational phase of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama was a period marked by material scarcity—a challenge offset by a profound spirit of service. This spirit enabled the integration of the ayllu (traditional indigenous communities), villages, and the general population into a self-governing local administration for the first time in their history.

The inception of the Municipality was marked on November 25, 1980, with an event that officially established the municipality—a date that has since served as its anniversary. However, its actual operational launch took place on December 1 of that same year, following the signing of Decree Law No. 1417, which appointed Hans Schmauck Alarcón as its first mayor.

The ceremony was held at the neighborhood association hall and brought together representatives from Socaire, Camar, Peine, Talabre, Río Grande, Toconao, and San Pedro de Atacama itself. Schmauck, a native of Arica, arrived with the mission of identifying the needs of a territory that had previously been entirely dependent on Calama.

In its early stages, the municipal team consisted of seven permanent staff members: the mayor, the municipal secretary, a social worker, the head of finance, a treasurer, a procurement officer, an administrative assistant for the finance department, and a municipal driver[1].

Toward the end of the decade, leadership passed to other appointed mayors: Eric Baschler Beca (1987–1989)—a retired Army lieutenant colonel remembered for his rigor and ability to foster good relations—and Rubén Heredia Jiménez

1.- The initial staff consisted of Mayor Hans Schamuck Alarcón, Municipal Secretary Raúl Maggi Yáñez, Social Worker Rubén Heredia Jiménez, Head of Finance Niza Tapia, Administrative-Treasurer Felisa Aguirre, Purchasing Officer Manuel Alfaro Castillo, and Driver Camilo Varas Cruz. Other workers were hired through the Minimum Employment Program (PEM).

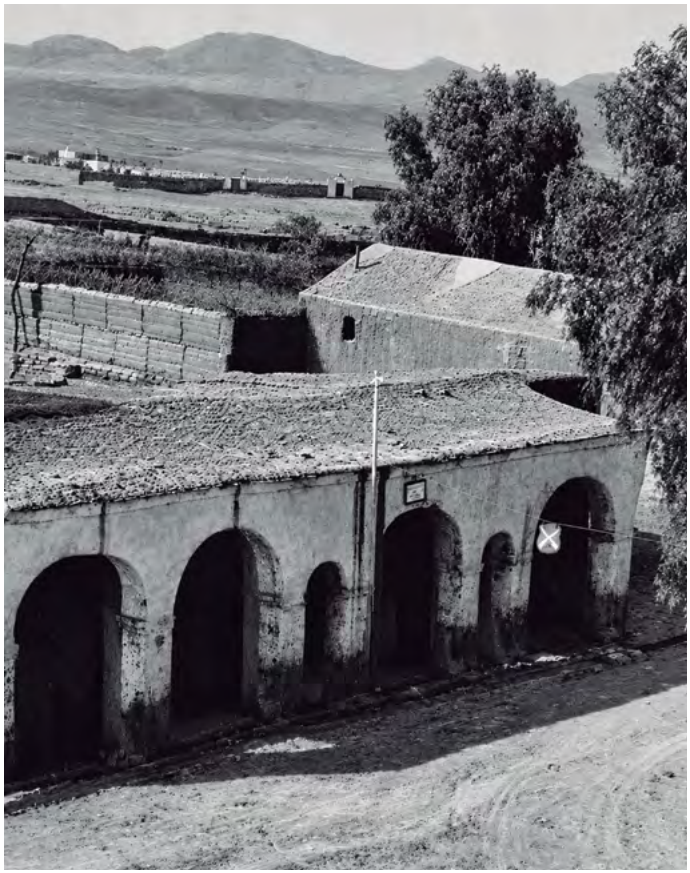


Public ceremony with Mayor Hans Schmauck Alarcón

(1989–1991), who had previously served as a social worker and the right-hand man to the first mayor. In its early years, the municipality did not have its own building. Its functions were initially carried out at the headquarters of the San Pedro de Atacama Neighborhood Association (Junta de Vecinos)—specifically, Neighborhood Unit No. 1—located on Caracoles Street. Some offices were also set up within the local library, which necessitated the temporary relocation of the librarian to make room for these initial workspaces. Resources were minimal: the municipality had only a Mercedes-Benz dump truck and a jeep to cover the commune's vast 25,000-square-kilometer territory. Construction of the permanent municipal building—situated on the former site of a Carabineros (police) outpost and its barracks—began soon after. The design followed an Andean-colonial architectural style, evoking the town's historical role as a colonial administrative district ('corregimiento') and a 19th-century municipal council ('cabildo'). The building was inaugurated around 1983[2].

2.- See further information in Chapter 6: The Municipal Building: Memory, adobe, and the heart of the oasis.

Former Carabineros police station (Source: Eva Siares Flores)



As recalled by Schmauck Alarcón, the mayor at the time, the construction of the municipal building allowed for the expansion of the municipal team, which included "the municipal secretary, the mayor's support staff, the heads of education and health, and a procurement officer."

During its initial phase, the municipality focused its efforts on the territory's organizational structure and the resolution of issues related to basic services. In this regard, working with the local villages was crucial. Felisa Aguirre, a former staff member, recalls: "There was a great deal of work with the Indigenous communities and the villages in the interior sectors. The mayor would travel to these remote villages three or four times a week. For instance, I remember a time when a massive rainstorm swept away the village of Talabre. There was a significant relief effort; the mayor was very much a 'hands-on' leader—he was constantly out in the field, deeply engaged with the local people." Key milestones included the relocation of the village of Talabre in 1983; it had previously been situated at the foot of the Láscar volcano, where the cold climate made agriculture difficult. The mayor at the time, Hans Schmauck Alarcón, recalls: "That was our major undertaking—relocating the village of Talabre. Today, it sits on a plateau overlooking the entire salt flat. Naturally, this brought changes to their lifestle, as well as to the way livestock is raised." The new site of the town is known to the locals as Campo Azul.

The implementation of electricity generating motors in some towns was also significant. During this decade, San Pedro de Atacama had only three hours of electricty a day, generated by an old engine and paid for by members of the neighborhood association. The management of the municipality allowed the installation of new engines and the supply of oil, lubricants, filters and everything necessary for their maintenance.



Gustavo Le Paige Street

Another relevant event was the arrival of water to Peine, a work promoted and executed by the neighbors themselves, as Mirta Barreda Morales recalls: "The old leaders brought water to Peine from above, from Socaire, they brought it working by hand, with pipes, nothing with machines or anything, just people from here in town (...) There were many people involved in bringing in directives to channel the water down. All these people got down to work, they stayed out there for days, laying pipes, until they reached the town." Hans Schmauck Alarcón also points out that "The president of the neighborhood association said: 'Mayor, get me people from the POJH (employment scheme).' We hired the entire town and they started cutting the stones, carving them, and they the water soon came after them."

Much of the public works of this time were executed through the PEM (Minimum Employment Program) and POJH (Occupation Program for Heads of Households) employment programs. Manuel Escalante Pistan adds: "What was done mostly in that period were projects with employment programs. We took good advantage of the labor subsidy; since people worked with stones a lot, we did projects for them to manufacture stone blocks. These blocks were later used to improve schools and build community headquarters." Social worker Rubén Heredia Jiménez was in charge of developing social programs, such as child health monitoring, supplementary meals school meals programmes and the PEM and POJH employment schemes.

That decade also brought with it relevant changes in the areas of health and education. Around 1979, the civil-military dictatorship carried out a restructuring of the country's health system, forming a decentralized National Health Services System, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. From then on, the primary care clinics passed into the hands of the municipalities, which was referred to as the "municipalization" of the clinics (Goic and Armas, 2003).

In the case of San Pedro, the transfer of 'Rural Posts' (medical practitioners) took place on March 31, 1987 – previously these depended on the Antofagasta Health Service and the staff hired by the Calama Service or Hospital. Rounds were made every fifteen days by a nurse and a driver who toured the towns attending to emergencies. A position was also created in San Pedro itself, although at that time it was not possible to have a doctor on call. Through agreements with the Health Service, doctors were sent from Calama to the municipality at on a rotational basis.

In education, Decree No. 1641 was published in 1981, stipulating the transfer of educational management to municipal institutions. Manuel Alfaro Castillo, as person in charge of acquisitions, remembers the process of municipalization of education: "When the schools became the responsibility of the municipalities, it was my



First numberplates

responsibility to take charge of everything that related to the inventory of all the schools in the commune." Rubén Heredia Jiménez, as social worker, highlighted the deficiencies of the system: "The resources were never enough. To visit the entire commune you had to travel 400 kilometers, there were 7 schools and the system was always deficient, because there were single-teacher schools with 7 students, with 2 students, one lucky year they had 12 students, but in none of them was it possible to pay the teacher with the subsidies."

Along with these changes in the administration and functioning of the educational system, initiatives aimed at strengthening the presence of national culture in the commune were also promoted. The celebrations of national holidays, May 21 and national events already had roots in the commune since the mid-20th century, in the celebrations of the E-26 School or the popular Ramadas. As Mirta Solís remembers, "they always settled on Caracoles Street and in Mrs. Juana Chinchilla's house… people from the town sang and played accordion and guitar." Even so, the Municipality gave greater relevance to the events in an official capacity and promoted the inclusion of Chilean music in these vents, especially during national holidays: "In September it was pure cueca (national dance)" remembers Manuel Alfaro Castillo.

As for telecommunications, for years the unreliable tv signal made the experience of watching a simple soccer match a cumbersome—and at times even dangerous—affair. As Mirta Solís recalls: "Back before there was regular television broadcasting, athletes and local residents would travel to Barros Arana, bringing a television set along; they'd hook it up to a battery or a generator—setting up a makeshift viewing room inside a truck—just to watch a soccer match." In response to this, the local municipality took steps to secure the installation of the first television signal—Telenorte, provided by the Universidad del Norte—using repeater antennas placed on top of hills. Roxana Aranda remembers that, on Saturdays, "if the television channel was airing a movie at midnight—and if the operator happened to like the film—the power would stay on until about 1:00 AM." Furthermore, the arrival and establishment of the Compañía de Teléfonos de Chile (CTC, the telephone service) in the town greatly improved communication for residents and served as a key milestone in the area's tourism development by making its geographical isolation less of an issue.

The mayor at the time, Hans Schmauk Alarcón, notes: "Later, we focused on connectivity and began increasing the number of telephones in San Pedro. There was a staff member—who would later become mayor herself, Sandra Berna



Keys to the City, 1986. Inscription: "With the ever-open heart of a community grateful to its first mayor, Don Hans Schmauck Alarcón. San Pedro de Atacama, November 25, 1986. 'Archaeological Capital of Chile.'"
(Source: Hans Schmauck)

Martínez—who ended up knowing everything the townspeople were talking about, simply because those were the old-fashioned kind of operator-telephones."

Municipal life was full of the various trials and anecdotes typical of a town in its formative stages. On one occasion, the acting treasurer, Sergio Gavia Mondaca, had to hitchhike to Calama to collect the payroll funds. What made it particularly notable was that, after receiving the money in cash, he had to go all the way back to his office carrying it all in a briefcase. People also fondly recall the unsuccessful attempt to view Halley's Comet in 1986 in the Valle de la Luna. Although it went largely unnoticed, the municipality organized a show featuring performers—such as the University of Chile Symphony Orchestra—and served whisky with ice from glaciers, which left the Japanese tourists in attendance astounded.

One event that left a lasting mark on the collective memory was the visit of Princess Anne of England in 1991. Schoolchildren, who had expected to see her wearing a crown and a fairytale gown, were surprised when she stepped out of a vehicle dressed in heavy boots and a wool jacket. Recalling this occasion, Fanny Aguirre Olivares notes: "The security team arrived two or three days in advance with metal detectors, and everyone who was going to be present had to be registered. The security was incredible—the entire street was filled with men in black; they were even up on the rooftops."

At the community level, the municipality also helped bring the local population together, as Moisés Salva Cruz recalls: "It was a very good period; I really enjoyed it because, at that time, the community seemed to find new energy and began to unite. They organized

Adobe house with a wooden door



soccer tournaments and held dances to raise funds for a Christmas committee." The first Christmas celebration brought the entire town of San Pedro together: "They made pan de pascua (traditional Chilean Christmas fruitcake) for the whole town; there were drinks, and it was a truly lovely celebration. It was quite a major event—I remember there were little stalls set up in the town square where they were serving the pan de pascua," recounts Felisa Aguirre. Sports also played a role in this community spirit; officials formed a soccer team called "El Salado," which would compete on Sundays against the Carabineros (police) and a group from the Le Paige Museum, with matches typically concluding with lunch at the mayor's house.

According to Manuel Alfaro Castillo, "Throughout this entire period, San Pedro underwent a profound transformation—a clear 'before and after.' We greatly strengthened local customs and showed deep respect for the unique cultures of the people from San Pedro, Toconao, Peine, Socaire, Talabre, Camar, and Río Grande."

In April 1987, Law No. 18605 was enacted, mandating the establishment of a Regional Development Council (COREDE) in every region of the country. This body was intended to advise the *Intendente* (regional governor) and foster community participation—all within a context where civil rights remained suppressed by the dictatorship. Among its other functions, it was tasked with appointing mayors—when necessary—based on a shortlist of three candidates proposed by the Communal Development Councils (CODECO). The CODECO itself was defined as an entity whose "administrative structure included a mayor and a communal committee at its helm; these Communal Development Councils (CODECO) were presided over by the municipal authority and composed of representatives from community organizations and 'key sectors' within the commune (such as businessmen and industry figures—though notably excluding labor unions)" (Valdivia, 2013, p. 184). Such a meeting of different stakeholders from the communes in reality had a only consultative role, since the final decision always passed that of the mayor.

In the case of the commune of San Pedro de Atacama on November 18, 1988, the COREDE of the province opened consultation for the shortlist of representatives of the regional and civil services Community Organizations. For the former, one elector was assigned for each neighborhood unit: No. 1 San Pedro de Atacama, No. 2 Toconao, No. 3 Socaire, No. 4 Peine, No. 5 Talabre, No. 6 Camar and No. 7 Río Grande. For civil services, there was one delegate for each of the following organizations: the



Community event with Mayor Hans Schmauck Alarcón (source: Eva Siares F.)

National Community Aid Foundation, the Cema-Chile Foundation and the Local Sports Council. Finally, on March 31, 1989, COREDE selected one representative and one alternate for the territorial community organizations, civil service community organizations that made up CODECO.

Rubén Heredia Jiménez served as interim mayor until March 1989, when the indirect election system took over officially. Under the new system, CODECO proposed people for the role of mayor, and a list of candidates was chosen and reviewed by the Regional Council and the Mayor. In the end, it was the right-hand man of Mayor Schmauck Alarcón who was appointed as the first municipal authority up until the new elections in 1992. The same mayor created a prize in recognition of the achievements of local citizens called the "Cabildo de Oro (golden seal)", for Citizen Merit and Institutional Merit[3]. It is granted during the municipality's anniversary celebrations, "with the aim of highlighting and inspiring people and institutions that stand out for their contribution both to the development of the town and to the preservation of cultural heritage" (UCN News, 2013).

3.- To date, this recognition has been awarded to the following individuals: Manuel Escalante Pistan (2001), Vicente Conzue Morales (2003), Emiliana Chaile Morales (2004), Humberto Cruz Delgadillo (2005), Sotero Armella (2009), Marcelino Choque Mendoza (2010), Manuel Cortés Mora (2011), Félix Ramos Cruz (2012), Santiago Ramos Ramos (2013), Hilario Manuel Corante Cárdenas (2014), Manuel Rodríguez Yáñez (2015), María Miranda (2016), Arturo Mendoza Mendoza (2023), Ada Teresa Aramayo Conzue (2024), and Gabriel Cruz Urrelo (2025).


· Socaire, september 2026 ·



Chapter 3

Democratic Awakening

transition and expansion (1992–2000)

During the nineties, San Pedro de Atacama too experienced the restoration of democracy in Chile, and the beginning of demographic growth that lead to unprecedented social challenges for the territory.

There was huge enthusiasm in 1992 for the first democratic elections: social organizations and political parties began their search for candidates and programmes. Ana María Barón Parra remembers the process: "We campaigned for several candidates because at that time, the first time the mayor was elected, we were all candidates, and a lot of those who weren't were councilors themselves."

On voting day, a unique scenario occurred: a tie for the first place between Ana María Barón Parra and Sandra Berna Martínez, so the four-year term was divided into two halves between the winners. The fromer, an archaeologist by profession, focused her management on education and culture, while the second, leader of the neighborhood association, was the first Atacama (ethnic community) woman in the position and began in 1994 a leadership that would last 22 years, prioritizing basic services, housing and health.

Likewise, due to the insistence of the municipality to the government of Ricardo Lagos Escobar, the road to Calama was finally paved between 1993 and 1994, under the management of the MOP, thereby putting an end to the common sight of stranded or half-buried vehicles.



La Epoca

AÑO 8 Nº 2.616 LUNES 30 DE MAYO DE 1994 PRECIO $ 250 REGIONES I, II, XI y XII $ 300 IVA INCLUIDO

Lunes 30 de mayo de 1994 NACIONAL La Epoca / 17

Recibe sólo $7 millones por yacimientos

San Pedro de Atacama reclama mayores beneficios

Pese a las evidentes necesidades de esta comuna —de sólo tres mil habitantes— en los últimos meses el municipio se ha visto afectado por la investigación de preguntas irregularidades en la gestión de Ana María Barón, quien sostiene que hay razones políticas, especialmente de la derecha, destinadas a entrabar su administración.

KARINA VARGAS
Santiago

San Pedro de Atacama es un lugar que no puede omitirse durante un recorrido por el norte del país. Sus atractivos arqueológicos son motivo de una incesante llegada de turistas, especialmente durante el verano. A esto se suma, la creciente actividad minera de la zona, la que genera cientos de millones de dólares cada año. Sin embargo, este pequeño pueblo de poco más de tres mil habitantes, no disfruta de las regalías de estas actividades y, por el contrario, el municipio debe enfrentar los requerimientos con un magro presupuesto, que —en 1994— alcanzará a sólo 135 millones de pesos.

Por ello, la alcaldesa Ana María Barón ha solicitado formalmente al Ministerio de Bienes salud, puesto que hasta ahora sólo cuenta con una pequeña posta médica en la que no hay médico, debido a que el municipio no cuenta con los recursos suficientes. La presencia de un profesional —además del salario— demanda una casa a su disposición.

Ana María Barón, arqueóloga que llegó hace muchos años a San Pedro y se quedó viviendo allí, afirma que los escasos profesionales o técnicos que se quedan en la zona lo hacen por una verdadera vocación de servicio, puesto que deben renunciar a muchas regalías y trabajar por sueldos menores a los que recibirían en cualquier otro punto del país.

No obstante, en el último tiempo se ha logrado un avance. El municipio logró la donación de una ambulancia por 24 millones

EDUARDO VERDUGO

La alcaldesa Ana María Barón sostiene que seguirá trabajando con el objeto de obtener recursos para su comuna.

ciones de "negociaciones incompatibles" que la Contraloría Regional efectuó ante el Segundo Juzgado del Crimen de Calama,

comercial en la elaboración de un proyecto para adquirir la nueva ambulancia, por lo cual se le debían pagar 150 mil pesos,

Press release with Mayor Ana María Barón Parra (source: Ana María Barón Parra).

In terms of municipal plans, the creation of the Licanantay High School (1994) was promoted in the ayllu of Séquitor, meaning young people no longer had to travel to Calama to finish their secondary education. "We started operating with the high school in 1994 and it was a total and absolute record, because no one just



Plaza and town hall building, 2017

creates a high school (in one year) approved by the Ministry of Education and all the demands that were made" (Ana María Barón Parra). This also allowed for the development of agricultural education, as Sandra Cruz Reales mentions: "It was really lovely, and I will never forget, when the kids sold their products (…) And being in the desert we ate Calameños melons, lettuce, beets and everything, vegetables."

Regarding the infrastructure for education, the E26 School was also rebuilt, located at Ignacio Carrera Pinto 500, inaugurated by the then president Eduardo Frei Montalva on September 27, 1967. This included a dining room that today is already too small, as it was designed for 700 children and is currently used by more than 1,200.

In health, the Toconao Street medical posting, in place since the beginning of the 90s, had a small team of two nursing technicians, plus a service assistant, a driver and the first ambulance in the commune. In the middle of the decade, the first general doctor in the area arrived, along with a midwife, a nurse and another technician. That team was not only in charge of the posting, but also carried out rounds and emergency care in the towns. For Gloria Liendro Martínez, a senior nursing technician (TENS), "working in the villages was a good experience, because we learned a lot (…) The people of the villages are affectionate; if you know how to treat them well, they will reciprocate."



School E-26 of San Pedro de Atacama

The first ambulance in San Pedro de Atacama (source: Ana María Barón P.)



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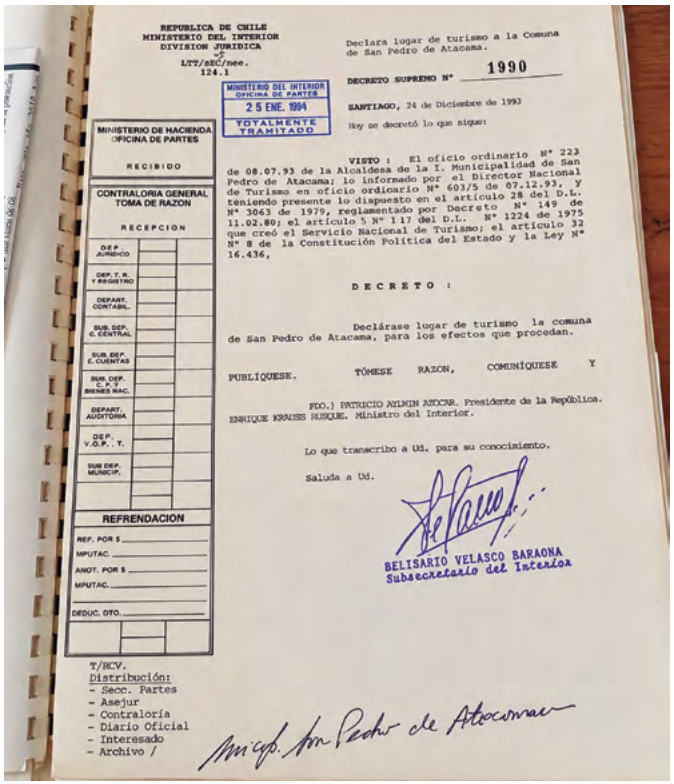
During this period, there existed a "Tramo A" (tier A) health allowance, which enabled individuals with limited financial resources and no formal health insurance to receive medical care. To determine eligibility for this benefit, the municipal social worker—the only social services professional working in the commune—would conduct an assessment. Later, this function was transferred to the public health insurance system, FONASA.

The conditions of the time also presented challenges, such as having to perform medical procedures by the lamplight or candlelight due to a limited power supply. "When I arrived, electricity was only available until 11:00 p.m. We would perform sutures and provide care using lamps or candles," recalls Gloria Liendro Martínez. Meanwhile, the emergence of tourism and an increased influx of people into the town led to a significant rise in emergency medical visits.

It was during these years that tourism began to gain real momentum, marked by the construction of high-profile establishments, such as the five-star Hotel Explora. "People started arriving, and tourism began to develop... Previously, there was much more livestock—sheep, goats, llamas, and donkeys—here in San Pedro, and there was extensive agriculture, including corn and even wheat. But with the arrival of tourism, everything changed," says Ana María Barón Parra.



REPUBLICA DE CHILE
MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR
DIVISION JURIDICA
LTT/ERC/mee.
124.1

Declara lugar de turismo a la Comuna de San Pedro de Atacama.

DECRETO SUPREMO N° 1990

SANTIAGO, 24 de Diciembre de 1993

Hoy se decretó lo que sigue:

MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR OFICINA DE PARTES 25 ENE. 1994 TOTALMENTE TRAMITADO

MINISTERIO DE HACIENDA OFICINA DE PARTES RECIBIDO

CONTRALORIA GENERAL TOMA DE RAZON RECEPCION

DEP. JURIDICO
DEP. T. R. Y REGISTRO
DEPART. CONTABIL.
SUB. DEP. C. CENTRAL
SUB. DEP. E. CUENTAS
SUB. DEP. C. P. Y BIENES NAC.
DEPART. AUDITORIA
DEP. V.O.P. T.
SUB DEP. MUNICIP.

REFRENDACION
REF. POR $
IMPUTAC.
ANOT. POR $
IMPUTAC.
DEDUC. DTO.

VISTO : El oficio ordinario N° 223 de 08.07.93 de la Alcaldesa de la I. Municipalidad de San Pedro de Atacama; lo informado por el Director Nacional de Turismo en oficio ordinario N° 603/5 de 07.12.93, y teniendo presente lo dispuesto en el artículo 28 del D.L. N° 3063 de 1979, reglamentado por Decreto N° 149 de 11.02.80; el artículo 5 N° 1 17 del D.L. N° 1224 de 1975 que creó el Servicio Nacional de Turismo; el artículo 32 N° 8 de la Constitución Política del Estado y la Ley N° 16.436,

D E C R E T O :

Declárase lugar de turismo la comuna de San Pedro de Atacama, para los efectos que procedan.

PUBLIQUESE. TÓMESE RAZON, COMUNÍQUESE Y

FDO.) PATRICIO AYLWIN AZOCAR. Presidente de la República.
ENRIQUE KRAUSS RUSQUE. Ministro del Interior.

Lo que transcribo a Ud. para su conocimiento.

Saluda a Ud.

BELISARIO VELASCO BARAONA
Subsecretario del Interior

T/RCV.
Distribución:
- Secc. Partes
- Asejur
- Contraloría
- Diario Oficial
- Interesado
- Archivo /

Mucip. San Pedro de Atacama

"Tourism Destination" Decree (1993) for the commune of San Pedro de Atacama

As for living conditions and quality of life, this decade brought to light social issues related to overcrowding. "A father, a mother, and their children—everyone would sleep in a single room—so I wanted to improve the value and quality of housing," recalls Sandra Berna Martínez. In response, efforts were initiated in collaboration with local housing committees, eventually leading to the development and subdivision of the Licancabur neighborhood. Meanwhile, around 1994, a series of complaints emerged regarding high arsenic levels in the local water supply—water that appeared white and was highly saline. To this end, the municipal administration took it upon itself to bring the issue to light and, together with the local residents, sought potential solutions. "Of course, no one came to provide us with water; I had to go get it myself, along with my people—we even had to dig the well," recalls Berna Martínez.

In 1996, following the completion of her initial shared term, Sandra Berna Martínez was re-elected. At that time, she notes, "For the first time, I heard that people were voting for the individual, and that really struck a chord with me. I told myself: if they are voting for me, it means I must do everything in my power to secure, at the very least, potable water and electricity for San Pedro." This second term (1996–2000) allowed for the continuation and further development of the initiatives already underway. The municipality set itself the mission of improving the living conditions of the local community—a population then considered to be living in extreme poverty, with no access to the benefits derived from mining or the lithium industry. As such, the municipal staff was expanded to include 23 permanent and contract-based employees.

The relationship between the municipality and the residents was defined by a sense of closeness and warmth, leading people to describe it using a familial analogy—as Roxana



Sandra Berna Martínez

Aranda Caru puts it: "We had a saying: 'the municipality as a mother.'" This sentiment stemmed from the institution's extensive efforts to engage directly with the public. As Fanny Aguirre Olivares explains: "Once a month—or more often, depending on the need—we would travel to the inland localities and neighborhoods to hold meetings. The mayor spent a great deal of time out in the field, connecting with people and learning about their needs firsthand." In the same social vein, an interesting episode was the visit of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle to San Pedro in April 1996. On that occasion, he was welcomed and presented with the key to the commune. During the event, Mayor Sandra Berna Martínez delivered a speech highlighting how these localities had been neglected by the State—as she herself recalls[4]:

This commitment had a deep impact because during the following periods progress was made in matters of basic services. Mirta Solís Cenzano recalls: "In the period of Sandra Berna Martínez, the first drinking water plants were installed that purify the water by removing the minerals... Before, we worked a lot searching for sources of water in the hills to see how we could channel it down and make it drinkable." Another great advance in electricity, as the years-long dependence on oil generators ended when it was possible to implement the mixed system of natural gas and oil, which provided the long-awaited 24 hours of light in San Pedro and, later, in Toconao.

Unfortunately, there are also sad anecdotes that have overwhelmed the inhabitants of the commune. One of them was an accident between

4.- The account reflects a recollection by the former mayor—it is not a verbatim transcript—which is why the time elapsed since Frei Montalva's visit, as she recalls it, would be 30 years rather than 20.



a bus and a school minibus in the Llano de la Paciencia, in 1995, where due to a moment of confusion while overtaking, both vehicles fell down a side-slope. In this unfortunate collision, two children and the minibus driver died. Justo Zuleta Santander recalls how difficult the situation was: "It was very tragic, and at that time I had to go to the Calama hospital and be there to receive the relatives and give them news of the status of each of the affected children who were taken there."

To end the decade, a great milestone was the celebration of New Years Eve in 2000, when fear of the turn of the century the possible 'end of the world' attracted thousands of tourists who performed rituals in the square and waited for UFOs in the Valley de la Luna, forcing all municipal personnel to work until dawn, as Patricia González Rivera, former Dideco official, recalls:

"All the officials had to work from the municipality for the new year (...) we had to



Town of Rio Grande

work together with CONAF and Carabineros, because in that period there was the idea that by 2000 the world would end, and there were many people broadcasting this as fact. A big show was put on that the municipality sponsored for the people in the Plaza de San Pedro de Atacama, where there were a lot of people, a lot of lights and everything."

In this fitting way, a crucial period of progress for the municipality in social matters and basic services came to a close. At the same time, this institution was consolidated as an figure of trust for its citizens in the face of the coming challenges of the 21st century.


· Santiago de Río Grande, september 2026 ·



Chapter 4

LThe Municipality in the 21st Century

global challenges on ancestral lands (2000–2025)

The 21st century brought with it a dizzying transformation for San Pedro de Atacama. In just a few decades, the territory experienced a 180-degree turn, going from a small, peaceful highland town to consolidating itself as a world-class tourist attraction and a tentpole of large-scale scientific and mining interest. This was reflected in the population increase. The 1992 census recorded a total population of 2,829 people, a figure that almost doubled by 2002 with 4,969 inhabitants (Integrated Territorial Information System). This rapid evolution forced the municipal administration and its inhabitants to take on the tremendous challenge of managing overwhelming growth, seeking the necessary balance to project local development without losing the valuable cultural heritage of the towns and ayllus.

Inauguration of new school, 2009





Municipal event from the 1990s

The Authority and Centre of Operations

The governance of the municipality in the 21st century was marked by profound political transitions and a strong focus on the administrative order. After the extensive leadership of former mayor Sandra Berna Martínez (1994 - 2016), Aliro Catur Zuleta (2016 - 2020) took office, allowing for the expansion of municipal operations. In 2021, in the atypical circumstances of a mid-pandemic election which limited in-person campaigns in inland towns, Justo Zuleta Santander was elected mayor. He had a previous career as president of the indigenous community of San Pedro de Atacama and other social organizations. Thus, he assumed the mayor's office with a track record of technical planning and experience in the tourism sector.

The internal structure of the municipality also had to expand at an accelerated pace. From being a small institution, with only 13 staff members around 2006, it now has more than 100 specialized professionals to respond to the growing demands of the community. César Díaz Cruz reflects on this constant social pressure: "I believe that in the community there is always a demand regarding public officials and the assistance they can provide towards the community, a very high parameter, so being able to cover it properly always generates a gap, like something is always missing."

Under the current administration an important heritage management milestone was achieved by acquiring land adjacent to the municipality, specifically the old site that belonged to the

Yutronic family, in addition to other spaces in the historic center, increasing the municipality's heritage assets by 1,500 million pesos (per appraisal) and planning a new building to unify disparate services.

During the term of Aliro Catur Zuleta, in 2019, a new municipal site was approved that created long-awaited key directorates such as Legal Advice, a Directorate of Transit and Public Transportation, a Directorate of Environment, Cleanliness and Decoration and a Directorate of Public Security. Subsequently, upon assuming office as mayor in 2021, Justo Zuleta Santander focused on organizing and professionalizing the administration. Thus, the Municipal Driver's License Unit was launched within the Transit area in 2023, finally allowing the inhabitants of the commune to obtain their driver's licenses without having to travel to Calama.

Population Explosion and Demand for Services

The explosive growth of the population and tourism led to a collapse in basic services, threatening the ability of families to remain on their ancestral lands. Between 2010 and 2015, the area experienced a loss of residents; the lack of basic services, quality healthcare, and education compelled many locals to emigrate—primarily to the city of Calama.

Jaime Coria Gavia recalls the difficulties of that period: "The challenge for the municipal administration at the time—under Mayor Sandra Berna Martínez—was to foster the growth of these localities while ensuring that local customs and the broader culture—of the villages, the ayllu, and the community itself—were not lost."

The core issue at the time was a lack of resources. Funding for social programs relied exclusively on grants from the Undersecretariat for Regional Development (Subdere) and the National Fund for Regional Development (FNDR), which served as the primary sources of financial support.

Faced with this situation, the administration prioritized schooling and the diversification of secondary education within the commune. As



Municipalidad de San Pedro de Atacama
2010

En Centro de eventos Coyo Antay

Municipio Atacameño, entregó balances positivos

Con la presencia de Luis Garrido Ampuero, gobernador de la provincia El Loa, el pleno del concejo municipal junto a funcionarios municipales y vecinos de las diversas localidades, Sandra Berna Martínez, entregó cuenta pública 2009.

Cumpliendo con el artículo 67 de la Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Municipalidades, el municipio de San Pedro de Atacama informó de su gestión del año 2009. En la ocasión asistieron comunidades Atacameñas, organizaciones sociales y deportivas de la comuna, junto a funcionarios municipales y público en general.

Principales gestiones

La primera autoridad comunal se refirió a los avances en el tema energético, señalando la puesta en marcha blanca del tendido eléctrico en las instalaciones El Litio - Peine, concluyendo el último proyecto de generación pendiente en las localidades. Además se trabajó en la CNE Comisión Nacional de Energía en las bases de una planta fotovoltaica en SPA y paralelamente el proyecto de mejoramiento de redes eléctricas, lo que se espera, pueda ejecutarse el 2010.

El Municipio en su misión de mejorar la calidad de vida de los habitantes de los distintos pueblos que componen la comuna, destacó el convenio ejecutado entre el municipio, la Fundación Minera Escondida, el Gobierno Regional GORE y MOP. Gestión que permitió el alcantarillado para Toconao, agua potable para Socaire y muchos otros proyectos para el mejoramiento de los localidades Durante de 2[illegible] "nuestro compromiso es ejecutar la solución integral de Socaire; en agua potable y alcantarillado, para continuar con el agua potable para la localidad de Río Grande".

afirmó Berna Martínez.

En vivienda, se informó la gestión de un convenio con Bienes

Nacionales, aprobando se recursos para la urbanización de nuevos sectores poblacionales, logrando licitarse - en primera llamada - la urbanización de la Población Likiñi Antai o Alto El Carmen. "Nuestra deuda en esta materia es la actualización del Plan Regulador de San Pedro de Atacama a cargo del MINVU que recién está en trámite de aprobación ambiental y que demanda una solución urgente", enfatizó la primera autoridad comunal.

En equipamiento comunitario se destacó: el mejoramiento de la plazoleta El Carmen y de la Apacheta de acceso a San Pedro; los juegos infantiles para las localidades de Toconao, Río Grande y escuelas de Socaire y Peine. Junto a los diseños, de los Pavimentos Participativos, el que ya tiene sus primeras postulaciones de Toconao, localidad que ya tiene terminado su alcantarillado. Así mismo se adquirieron los terrenos para la multicancha del aylla de Solor.

El presupuesto total 2009, para el área de educación comunal fue de 1.429 millones, de los cuales el municipio aportó con un 12,3%. En obras del ámbito, se elaboraron los diseños de la reposición del Liceo C-30 y el centro Jurike. Así mismo se aprobó vía [illegible] emergencia, el mejoramiento de la escuela y la escuela G-30de Socaire y la construcción de la multicancha de la Escuela G-27 de Peine. Gestiones de gran relevancia junto a la implementación del consultorio de la comuna con ambulancias por una suma de 68. Apoyo del municipio de 39 millones de pesos y 29 millones de Fundación Minera Escondida.

En fomento productivo se instaló la INFOPYME, que es el centro de apoyo al microempresario que se está formando y que necesita apoyo profesional, el centro cuenta con una red de computadores y 2 profesionales que, en conjunto a Prodesal y Servicio País, tienen la misión de apoyar nuevos emprendimientos.

Un gran paso fue el que se dio en identidad étnica, gracias a que Chile suscribió el convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo, OIT. Instrumento que resguarda los derechos de los pueblos indígenas. Fue en diciembre de 2009, que el municipio de San Pedro manifestó adherirse voluntariamente al convenio que firmó en enero del 2010, siendo la primera municipalidad a nivel nacional, en adherir al convenio 169 y la única hasta la fecha.

Futuro

Con la gestión 2009 se consolidaron varios aspectos en infraestructura y para el año en curso, se trabajará fuertemente en gestión social y recursos humanos, trabajando en el diseño de una política comunal de Turismo, con muchas interrogantes aún por resolver y muchas necesidades que suplir; siempre bajo el compromiso del apoyo y la entrega de oportunidades, para la población comunal.

Para este año 2010 hay compromisos pendientes, como; la terminación de la piscina techada San Pedro de Atacama; ampliar la capacidad de la minicentral hibrida solar, instalada en la localidad de Camar, gestión que se trabaja con la Comisión Nacional de Energía; mejorar los servicios medioambientales y fortalecer a San Pedro de Atacama como la capital Turística, Arqueológica, Astronómica y Solar del país.

Finalmente se hizo hincapié en la actualización del Plan de Desarrollo Comunal o PLADECO, proceso de participación ciudadana que iniciará su acción en agosto 2010 y donde el municipio invitó a la comunidad a contribuir en ese proceso, para definir juntos nuestro desarrollo comunal.

Press note regarding the 2009 municipal public accounts

Marcela Pereira Carter explains: "We focused on schooling—developing schools, the secondary school, preschools, and nurseries. These initiatives were planned and implemented concurrently. We began addressing secondary education, specifically by integrating tourism-related curricula, and later started evaluating other areas." Throughout this process, the administration's goal was to provide opportunities for young people, ensuring that progress would not erase the community's identity. As Sandra Berna Martínez herself emphasizes: "It is crucial that they do not lose touch with their land—that they take pride in being Atacameño or Licanantay—while also becoming meaningful contributors to society." In the educational sector, Law No. 21,040 was enacted in 2017, establishing the Public Education System—a new framework that would entail significant changes to the previous model of municipal-run education. The legislation mandates the creation of Local Public Education Services (SLEP), which assume the management of public educational institutions—facilities that had previously been under municipal control. In the commune of San Pedro de Atacama, implementation began toward the end of 2023, involving site visits and informational sessions at schools, as well as discussions with the Municipal Education Administration Department.

At the same time, the municipality worked in coordination with the Ministry of National Assets and the Public Works Department to secure land for housing committees—groups of families living in shared or overcrowded conditions. Marcela Pereira Carter notes: "At that time, there were many such groups—many housing committees. We worked collaboratively with the Ministry of National Assets and the team then in the Public Works Department to allocate the land located next to the El Carmen neighborhood."



Gustavo Le Paige Street and the parish church

Strategic Plans and a Financial Turning Point – The Lithium Boom

During the first decades of this century, the municipality found it necessary to move beyond a reactive approach—addressing only immediate, isolated emergencies—and instead develop a territorial planning model with a medium- to long-term perspective, spanning 20 to 30 years.

This structural planning effort became truly viable thanks to an unprecedented financial turning point: the influx of extraordinary resources derived from agreements with the lithium mining industry. These funds made it possible to triple the budgets of the municipality, the Regional Government, and the local communities themselves. Mayor Justo Zuleta Santander explains this turning point: "The agreements established between the companies and the communities created new terms for their relationship. The influx of significant resources for the communities, the municipality, and the Regional Government brought about a completely different financial situation."

This newfound financial flexibility made it possible to undertake ambitious medium- and long-term projects. These funds financed the updating of the Municipal Regulatory Plan—a tool that had been obsolete for years—which now involves an investment of 800 million pesos (about US$40,000,000) and incorporates formal processes for consultation with Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the innovative "Enlace" (Link) program was created; it assigns a permanent municipal staff member to each of the localities in the interior of the commune, aiming to decentralize state services—especially municipal ones—and bring them closer to all residents.



Poster for the update of the San Pedro de Atacama Municipal Regulatory Plan

In turn, this new scenario opened the doors to achieve goals that previously seemed unattainable due to lack of budget: "We are in a transformative stage, because our community has never experienced such an important turning point nor has it ever had the necessary resources to realize so many plans" (Justo Zuleta Santander).

Despite these advances, historical structural problems related to water treatment, sewage and electricity persist. Although matters such as water treatment and electricity are not the direct responsibility of the municipality, building management continues to provide critical support to local administration committees, such as CAPRA (Rural Drinking Water and Sewage Committee, San Pedro de Atacama), CESPA (Electric Cooperative of San Pedro de Atacama), APR Committees (Rural Drinking Water) and Electricity Administration Committees.

Advances in Health and Citizen Participation

One of the greatest achievements of the period has been the profound renewal and provision of the community's health personnel. Gloria Liendro Martínez, with more than three decades of service, describes this gigantic difference compared to the founding years of the post: "Today, there are more than one hundred people working, an enormous difference compared to when I arrived more than thirty years ago. There are doctors, nurses and technicians, and each area has more defined functions." However, a constant struggle continues to transform its rural general office into a definitive Family Health Center (CESFAM), since currently the population registered in the Health Catchment Area is 14,183 people as of August 2026.

In parallel, programs such as Health Promotion (active between 2013 and 2025) have revitalized the lives of the community's older citizens through group walks, cueca workshops, and weaving workshops whose products are subsequently sold at the craft fairs in San Pedro Square.

The evolution of citizen participation in San Pedro de Atacama reflects a profound institutional transition that began with the Communal Development Council (CODECO) in the eighties, a limited representative body, and continued throughout the transition to democracy with the Communal Economic and Social Council (CESCO), which, despite expanding local representation, had little impact before its repeal. This gap was overcome with the promulgation of Law No. 20,500 in February 2011, which established the Communal Council of Civil Society Organizations (COSOC). In this

region, where the pressure of local development is constant, the voice of indigenous peoples and local organizations is in constant dialogue with building management to decide on the direction the municipality should be taking. In this way, local participation has moved from something of a consultative nature to a management that seeks to protect the identity and social, economic and cultural progress of the oasis

New Territorial Governance – Tourism and Science

The relationship between the Atacama communities and the physical environment has recently undertaken a significant leap towards regional governance. Strengthening its technical capabilities has been a key element in negotiating with third parties. As Mayor Justo Zuleta Santander describes: "Communities began to have teams of advisors and lawyers. Their demands, which previously were not always heard or did not have a greater impact among national authorities, today have a much more significant impact."

This same social maturity has turned to constructing a new tourism governance plan, which seeks sustainability and ethical respect for the desert community heritage. Since the term of Sandra Berna Martínez, efforts were made so that this development would translate into direct opportunities for local inhabitants, negotiating as equals with the industries of the area, as she herself points out: "To unify my people, to be recognized worldwide as a tourist commune, we demand first that today there are Atacameños working in tourism, working in mining, and then we strike agreements so that Atacameño women can also go to work in mining."



In this way, the dizzying evolution of tourism in San Pedro de Atacama, which went from registering some 40,000 annual visits in the 1990s to adding 156,478 arrivals in 2016 - with 70% of foreign origin and 30% national - has profoundly transformed local development (Valenzuela, Asocas & Morales, 2024). This change is evident in a registry of 385 accommodations, 203 tourist agencies or operators

Toconao Bell Tower Plaque, Historical Monument

with a municipal license and 96 restaurant establishments (PLADETUR, 2020), with influxes that reach hotel occupancy peaks of 88.2% in Easter 2023 and 71.8% in January 2025. Far from being limited to a simple commercial dynamic, this scenario requires coordinated and sustainable territorial governance to protect the fragile ecosystem of the salt flat and mitigate the impact on basic resources. Therefore, through co-management models of visiting sites of the Los Flamencos National Reserve with the Licanantay communities, the municipality has set out a strategic plan that reevaluates ancestral heritage and designates the commune as the only international-class tourist destination certified in Chile with the Green Destinations Silver Award in 2026.

Looking to the future, the municipality has also begun to integrate other focuses of interest, such as science and astronomy. Such a link began at the end of 2003, when the construction of the ALMA radio telescope began. "We were also involved in the astronomical project, we laid the first stone there on the hill, we also went up with the Japanese, with the Europeans, with ALMA, and valuing what we have is wonderful, but we have to take care not to leave a trace so that our future, those who come in the future, can continue caring and valuing and working in this land that is kind to everyone" (Sandra Berna Martínez).

In the same way, the development of radio astronomy and the scientific potential of the TAO project (Atacama Observatory of the University of Tokyo), which will install one of the highest infrared optical observatories in the world, goes hand in hand with a new tourism governance that seeks to promote a sustainable destination, focused on the heritage and ethical value of the territory, and not only on the rapid consumption of land. "The intention is to move towards a much more sustainable destination, in which the tourist experience is not limited to the rapid land consumption, but rather contributes to understanding the cultural, heritage, scientific and environmental value of the commune" (Justo Zuleta Santander).

In addition to this work dedicated to tourism, the current mayor oversaw the creation of stamps with Correos de Chile (Chilean Post) that showcase some of the landscapes of the commune, with photographs he took himself. "The mayor takes two photographs, one of the church of San Pedro de Atacama, which is the postcard that all tourists know, and another we took on the road (...) from Peine arriving at Camar (...) the mayor takes the photograph where you can see the Licancabur volcano and the Jurique volcano," says Evelyn Martínez.



Sketch of Chilean Post Office stamps. Stamp on the left: church of San Pedro de Atacama. Stamp on the right: Licancabur and Jurique volcanoes

The creation of private law entities linked to municipalities was a strategy to expand local management capabilities, especially in areas such as culture, where municipal administrative procedures made the reception and execution of certain external resources difficult. In San Pedro de Atacama, this need gave rise in 2013 to the Culture and Tourism Foundation, currently the Culture Foundation, an institution in whose creation Rubén Reyes Aymani participated while he served as a councilor. As he recalls, in that period there was a significant availability of resources from companies, particularly mining, associated with the rise of corporate social responsibility. In this context, he explains that the foundations emerged "to leverage resources, to cover any cultural initiative" and carry out projects that the municipalities had difficulties effectuating due to administrative restrictions. The possibility of receiving private contributions was decisive: "The municipality could not legally receive these contributions, but the corporations and the foundation could," which is why the commune decided to create one.

Over time, the Foundation significantly expanded its scope, shifting from primarily administrative functions to a more active role in the region's cultural management. Reyes Aymani notes that when the administration led by Mayor Justo Zuleta Santander took office in 2021, it inherited an institution that operated essentially from an office, with little infrastructure of its own and a focus limited to administrative tasks and a few isolated activities. Since then, the Foundation has begun managing various cultural and

community spaces: it established a cultural center, took over a cultural house in Toconao, assumed co-management of the Pueblo de Artesanos (Artesans' Village), and took on the administration of the library. This expansion was centered on a primary objective: "to safeguard the cultural heritage that exists within the territory," encompassing both the tangible and intangible. From this perspective, the Foundation's work seeks not only to preserve or highlight cultural expression but also to revitalize them through engagement with children, adults, and communities—ensuring that practices and knowledge once carried out only by previous generations can be rediscovered, learned, and practiced once again in the present day.

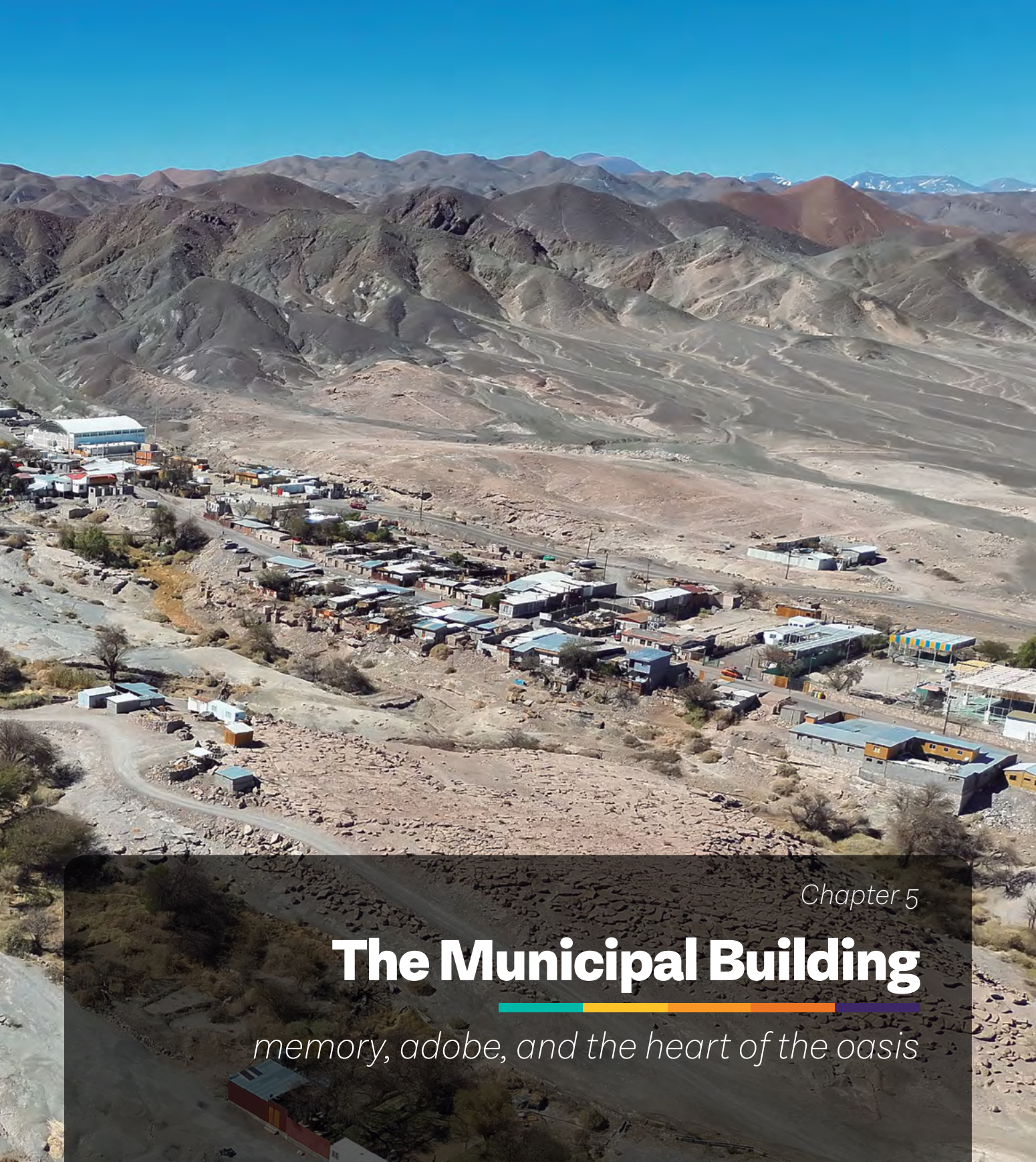
The significance of the Foundation also lies in its ability to marry municipal action with social organizations and the various localities within the commune. Although it operates as an autonomous entity, it maintains a direct institutional link to the municipality; it is chaired by the mayor, its board of directors includes representatives appointed by both the municipal leadership and the municipal council, and it currently relies heavily on a municipal subsidy for its operations—a necessity that arose following a decline in the corporate contributions that had been vital during its early years. At the same time, the Foundation has strengthened its relationship with the public by providing logistical support and equipment, and by collaborating with local organizations and institutions. Reyes Aymani maintains that there is currently "a close connection with all the organizations" and highlights that the Foundation has sought to decentralize cultural offerings by bringing workshops, theater, cinema, and artistic performances to the various localities within the commune. In contrast to the historical situation where many activities were concentrated in San Pedro de Atacama, the current objective is for cultural programming and services to reach other settlements as well, thereby strengthening a territorial approach to cultural management with a greater community presence.



Snow in San Pedro, August 2013

· *Peine, september 2026* ·





Chapter 5

The Municipal Building

memory, adobe, and the heart of the oasis



Municipal Building, 2026

The municipal manor and the old colonial *cabildo*

The current municipal building of San Pedro de Atacama stands on a site deeply imbued with history for the inhabitants of the commune. Serving successively as a colonial *corregimiento* (administrative district), a *cabildo* (municipal council), a *carabinero* (police) outpost, and finally the Municipality of San Pedro, this building embodies the evolution of the community's civil organization since the 16th century.

During the colonial era, what was once known as "Atacama la Alta" (Upper Atacama) became a strategic settlement, essential for the Spanish Crown's control over the area. The presence of Hispanic authorities was established very early on; by the mid-16th century, the *Corregimiento* of Atacama was formed, falling under the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of Peru[5]. It was during this period that the building for this institution was erected—though the exact date is unknown, it likely dates to around the time the Church of San Pedro was built in 1557. The corregidor (magistrate/administrator) was responsible for the administration of justice, the collection of tributes, and communication with other *corregimientos*.

By the 19th and 20th centuries, the former *corregimiento* building began to be referred to as a *cabildo*. As recounted by Professor Eva Siares Flores, the building housed key roles essential to the community's daily life, such as the *juez de aguas* (literally 'water judge', an

5.- More information in Chapter 2. A valley of history: before the commune.



official tasked with regulating irrigation time based on the number of hectares cultivated by each resident), the *alguacil* (constable), and an official responsible for the town's cleanliness. In those days, water flowed freely through the streets to irrigate the cultivated plots; this also allowed residents to wet the dirt roads, preventing dust from rising—a practical necessity in an era when transportation relied solely on animals and carts. The *cabildo* (town council building) even housed the San Pedro prison, though there were few detainees: "The jail also operated there; people were sometimes held, though I don't know why—just imagine, there wasn't even any alcohol for sale. People only drank *aloja*, made from crushed carob pods," remarks Siares Flores.

Furthermore, the building housed the customs office, where an official monitored the livestock being driven across the border from Argentina. In this way, the institution encompassed a wide range of responsibilities for community life, predating formal state administration. "It was tasked not only with regulating the town's supply needs, but also with overseeing its defense, pubic health, public meetings, and finances. The cabildo typically met three times a week. Later, this was reduced to twice a week, and on more than one occasion, sessions had to be adjourned because there was no business to address" (Siares, 2024, p. 21).



Opposite the main square of San Pedro de Atacama, in front of what would later become the Carabineros (police) station, 1922. Second from the right: Juan Carabantes San Román (source: Heritage Photography Collection, National Historical Museum; donated by Adriana Braithwaite de Sáez).

However, this historic colonial structure was demolished in 1933 by order of a regional official to make way for a Carabineros barracks—a facility constructed from sheet metal and painted in the organisation's signature green. According to institutional information, the San Pedro de Atacama Carabineros outpost—subordinate to the 3rd Precinct of the Calama Prefecture—was established on July 16, 1946, with a staff of six Carabineros (…) in the building currently occupied by the municipal government (website of the Carabineros Historical Museum and Cultural Center).



Town hall building, 2008

The town hall building and its reconstruction in the 80s

With the formation of the new commune in 1980, the construction of its own municipal headquarters became a priority for the first mayor, Hans Schmauck Alarcón. He recounts the efforts carried out: "We started by going to Antofagasta to speak with the mayor, and with the architecture department we began to design the building. We looked in the records and found the town council actually existed in the years of Pedro de Valdivia."

After investigating these records further, they confirmed that the important colonial building had functioned exactly in the same perimeter where the Carabineros stables were located at that time. To recover the site, the municipality began talks with the police, who graciously gave up the space on the condition that the municipality repair the old school to move its headquarters there. This school (Mixed School No. 5), which bordered municipal lands, had previously been donated by Andrónico Abaroa and built by workers from the Antofagasta railroad for the education of the boys and girls of San Pedro de Atacama[6].

In this way, Carabineros moved to the old educational facilities and the municipality began its construction from scratch on the land of the stables. The design sought to resemble the colonial building, especially in its front with columns and the central patio. The the work was carried out with remarkable speed, taking only around eight months to complete. When the house was inaugurated around 1983, the municipality moved in and thereby left the headquarters of the old San Pedro de Atacama Neighborhood Council, Neighborhood Unit No. 1, where it had initially been housed.

As a detail of the construction process, Manuel Alfaro Castillo remembers that "on one of the walls of the new municipality there is one of those little cardboard tubes that architects use, and we are all commemorated in it."

6.- The school operated from 1913 to 1975. It currently houses a facility for the Carabineros de Chile (Chilean national police). Source: San Pedro de Atacama Culture Foundation.



San Pedro de Atacama square

Historic center and Caracoles street

The municipal building forms part of the urban environment of the historic center, which seeks to maintain an aesthetic with nuances typical of colonial Andean architecture. In this way, as the author Eva Siares Flores indicates, "the resources of the environment such as clay, stone, wood, leather were used. Elements that served as support for technological solutions for the construction of houses, churches, irrigation canals, farming tools, etc." (2024, p. 12).

As part of this same historic center there is also San Pedro Square, in front of the town hall building, a meeting place for centuries. In this building "products were exchanged (by bartering) between from the inhabitants of Atacama. A large quantity of sheep, llamas, fabrics, dried meat, medicinal herbs, parinas eggs, etc. It was set up for the benefit of the inhabitants of nearby *ayllu* and the town itself" (Siares, 2024, p. 35). The same teacher remembers it in her youth full of plants, fruit trees and flowers that beautified the environment. Currently, the square continues to be a meeting space, where fairs are located and which accompanies the transit of neighbors and tourists through the center of town.

Next to the square is the church of San Pedro de Atacama which, as already mentioned, dates back to 1557 at the time of Spanish colonization and evangelization. It was built in the mestizo Andean style that "was erected on a stone foundation and for its construction mortar, mud plaster with straw, and carob, chañar and cactus wood were used, all tied with strips of leather" (Council of National Monuments of Chile, s/f). It was had several extensions and repairs due to natural wear and also the earthquakes that affect the commune. The temple was declared a Historical Monument in 1951, marking its architectural, heritage and cultural importance to the town. On February 13, 2001, the temple suffered an arson attack that caused outrage and a feeling of insecurity in the community. During this incident, the Municipality formed part of the lawsuit against the perpetrators.

The houses of the town also preserve an essence of colonial times. The authors Téllez and Silva indicate that "During the 16th century, villages composed of "crooked" adobe houses persisted, mezzanine made of carob wood which served as dwellings and, in some places, as family burial sites" (1989, p. 64). Similarly, Siares Flores highlights the construction materials around the 19th century where "The walls of the houses were made of adobe plaster, sand, clay, water and prickly pear sap.



San Pedro de Atacama square under snow 2014 (source: Roxana Aranda Caru)



Craft fair, 2020

The walls were finished with molding, which is a way to highlight and give an aesthetic to the finish, low in height and straight" (2024, p. 73).

The emblematic Caracoles street also stands out because it was firmly defended, by the neighbors



San Pedro de Atacama Church, frontispiece, 2026



San Pedro de Atacama Church, interior



Caracoles Street, 2020



Tocopilla Street

themselves, against attempts at changing its name. Siares relates that on one occasion a mayor of the commune expressed his intention to change the name of this street to Bernardo O'Higgins (Chile's founder). She strongly opposed this and explained the deep historical meaning of the name: "Caracoles Street was important in its time when shipments were coming and going by cart from here to the Caracoles Mine. People came to wait for new arrivals, say goodbye to those who transported goods like water, wheat, flour, meat, chicken, etc to the mines, which were for silver... People would say "He who goes to Caracoles, stays in Caracoles."

This was the place where the families of the oasis gathered to wait or say goodbye to the workers who undertook the journey to the site, leaving the name engraved in the identity of the town.



Vilama passage, 2020

Heritage Valuation and Future Prospects in the Designated Heritage Zone

Currently, the historic center of San Pedro de Atacama seeks to safeguard its urban aesthetic and traditional, rustic character, as defined by its adobe architecture. As Jaime Coria Gavia notes: "A recurring theme here has always been how to move forward without losing the town's rustic character. There is already a regulatory plan in place, and an urban aesthetic—centered on adobe construction—that we strive to preserve within the historic center."

Under the current administration of Mayor Justo Zuleta Santander, the municipality has promoted heritage conservation by acquiring three significant properties within the historic district. The first, located on Tocopilla Street and spanning over 3,200 square meters, sits directly adjacent to the municipal government building; it is currently being renovated to house the municipal casino. The second site, situated at the intersection of Tocopilla and Gustavo Le Paige streets, formerly belonged to the Yutronic family and has been adapted to accommodate the municipal health department and the procurement office. The third property acquired is a one-hectare, undeveloped plot on Ckilapana Street, designated for vehicle storage and a municipal impound lot.

Furthermore, in 2024, the transfer—at no cost—of a roughly two-hectare plot in the heart of the historic district was formalized. This land

had legally belonged to the Municipality of Calama since the commune's establishment in 1980. Following an exhaustive title review conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of National Assets and the Real Estate Registry, the Calama Municipal Council approved the donation of this property—valued at nearly 900 million pesos (US$900,000)—thereby enabling the local government to confidently invest in the beautification and restoration of this area. With these new, adjacent acquisitions, Mayor Justo Zuleta Santander plans the future construction of a new municipal building, which will include space dedicated to heritage appreciation in the form of a museum. The current mayor considers this highly significant, "because this site carries great heritage and cultural weight—it is an ideal location for a small museum to showcase the evolution not only of the municipal administration itself, but of our entire commune."



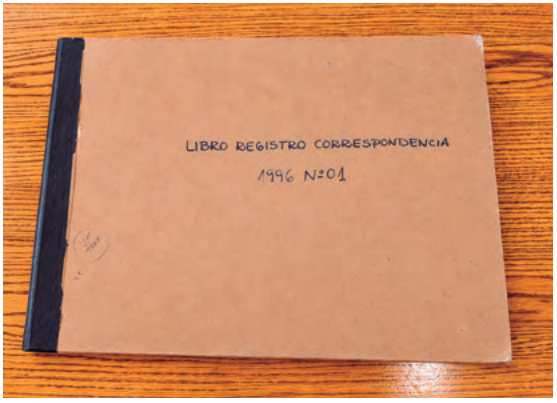
Municipal building, 2026: casino (staff lounge/dining area)



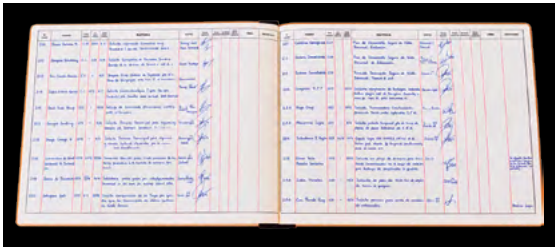
Municipal building, 2026: interior courtyard and offices



Municipal building, 2026: entrance hall

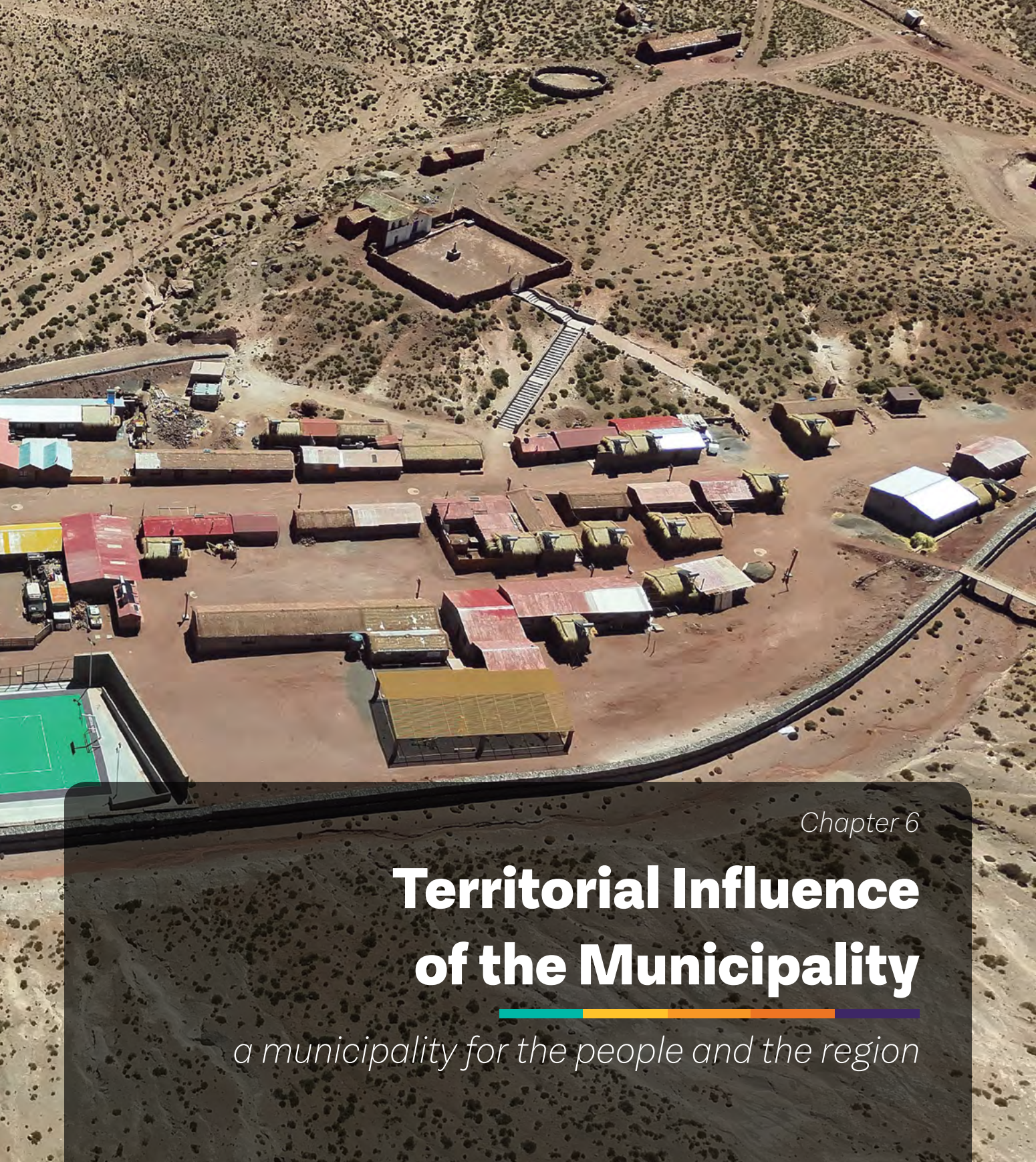


Cover of the Register of Correspondances



Interior of the Register of Correspondances


· Machuca, september 2026 ·



Chapter 6

Territorial Influence of the Municipality

a municipality for the people and the region

In a previous chapter, there is a quotation from Roxana Aranda Caru that reflects and summarizes a certain vision that communities throughout the country have about municipalities - "The mother municipality." San Pedro de Atacama is no exception, even more so in a remote area and with localities scattered over a vast communal territory.

Precisely one of the reasons why the commune was created in 1980 was to bring the State closer to the Atacama people and allow greater fluidity in the delivery of the services it offers. In this sense, the territorial influence that a municipality has is undeniable, and the quality and extent of that relationship depends largely on the clarity of objectives and the support of the municipal team. That is something that in San Pedro, when the commune and the municipality were created, the seven officials, including the mayor, who took on the task of giving life to the new institutionality, kept in mind from the beginning. And with all the challenges they faced, one of the first actions was to learn from other experiences all the administrative work necessary in these cases. This is what Felisa Aguirre exemplifies in this regard:

"Since we couldn't go to San Pedro yet, because there was no place to live, we worked for the municipality of San Pedro for about two months, but remotely from Calama. So there I took advantage of learning how things worked, because since I had no knowledge of secretarial work, or very little, but I shadowed the sectretaries in Calama and they taught me how to make notices, decrees, and when they elected me treasurer I worked with the municipal treasurer in Calama so they could teach me how a municipal treasury worked. We had a lot of help from the municipality of Calama."

Along with this education, the challenge of meeting the expectations and needs of the community was also important. As an example, the physical transfer of the town of Talabre about five kilometers to the west, in order to improve its poor geographical location, was a great undertaking that the municipality spearheaded in its first years of existence. The then mayor of the commune, Hans Schmauck Alarcón, reflects this:

"We came to solve a problem in Talabre, which is a town at the foot of the Láscar volcano. They had sunlight only for an hour and a half when it wasn't behind the volcano; it was very a very narrow window. They were frozen, they couldn't harvest anything, so we made this huge effort and moved the town of Talabre. Today it is on a plateau overlooking the entire salt flat. Obviously the conditions changed, the raising of livestock changed."



Talabre Church

The implementation of public works and services by the municipality, such as what happened in Talabre, was also a way of gaining the trust of the population of San Pedro and to strengthen municipal leadership in the territory from the beginning. This could then be translated into a growing commitment to the communities. Mayor Schmauck Alarcón himself endorses this when he tells of how they brought water to Talabre:

"The issue was how to get the water from the small stream up to the plateau. The Regional Government saw it as too difficult; the engineers went and said it was going to be very expensive because you had to buy a pump and pump the water. The president of the neighborhood association said: 'Mayor, hire people from the employment scheme'. So we hired the entire town and they started cutting the stones, carving them, and they got the water up to the plateau. How, I don't know!"

Indeed, as in the entire Norte Grande, water has always been a basic problem for people. In the municipality they were clear about this from the beginning and assumed the responsibility of leading the costly process that would allow the population to have drinking water, as well as electricity and later, among other services, telecommunication. A whole effort that underpinned trust with the territories through the improvement of the quality of life, as indicated by Mirta Solís Cenzano:



Road to Rio Grande, 2026



Rio Grande Church and Traditional Architecture, 2026



Rio Grande, 2026

"During the term of Sandra Berna Marínez, the first drinking water plants were installed that purify the water by removing minerals... Before, we worked a lot on getting water from the hills and bringing it down and making it drinkable. We also procured the gas generator after negotiating with the gas pipeline companies, allowing us to have electricity 24 hours a day in San Pedro and then in Toconao. It was an enormous advance for people's quality of life."

In this way, the trust of the community and the influence of the municipality in the territory was being won step by step. Not only with material works, but also addressing in a sentive way the situation of the communities, with all the singularities present in San Pedro. That is what Paola Piñones Araya points out, for example: "Working with communities, working in San Pedro is complex because you have an area of indigenous development that is not easy to work on. When you have two different areas there, not just neighborhood-type social organizations, it is not that it is easy, but here you have a different area where everything that has to do with the territorial



Heads of Household Program, 2026

issue and the ancestral issue that has to be combined also comes into play."

Indeed, this mix of the material and the social was how they strengthened the link between the State and the communities, as Patricia González explains: "During that term (Sandra Berna Martínez's) there was a lot of urban development in San Pedro de Atacama and, obviously, in the surrounding towns in the commune in general. When I arrived, in San Pedro there was no 24-hour electricity, the water was not drinkable, there was no sewage. So during Sandra's period, at least the three years that I was working with her, We worked precisely to expand the issue of electricity for 24 hours, the issue of making water drinkable, we started with the whole project of sanitary cabins, which was important. She also worked a lot on the issue of urban development. And in addition, there was a point with another program, which was the area of indigenous development, where there were many projects that were oriented to the communities and to generate income, and resources for the communities."

Focusing on meeting the requirements of the inhabitants of San Pedro implied, in addition to detecting and solving material, social and human needs, also doing so in extreme conditions of adversity, such as when natural disasters occurred. An example of this is given here by Paola Piñones Araya:

"When it was raining, the first ones who had to go out were us. Well, I lived in a house that was given to me and was called Villa Municipal, but it is behind the library. And this house had a slope where most of the water gathered. Then there was heavy rain and when we got home, because I and two social worker colleagues lived there together, when we got to the house to change clothes it was completely flooded, so we had to pack up a few necessities and head out to the country. It was between funny and unfortunate, we had nowhere to sleep even, the house was unliveable."

That institutional capacity to address the needs of the community and the courage to do so, sometimes in extreme conditions, generated a connection that enabled the municipality to assume a leadership role, extending its influence in the territory. In addition, care was taken to do things in accordance with the practices and rituals of the inhabitants of San Pedro, especially the ancestral towns, as Patricia González says:

"If the municipality had not been so active, I believe there would not have been so much development, not only in the urban development, of the sanitary cabins for examle, but also of the constitution, the empowerment of the indigenous communities. I believe that this is an important element because we worked a lot with the communities and also consulted the communities a lot. That



Láscar volcano eruption, April 2006



Inter Ayllu Meeting, 2024

they were also participants in the project. In fact, every time an inauguration was held, that inauguration was done together with the community, because there is a lot of rituality in San Pedro, as payment to the land. Although the municipality took the lead on many projects, it always did so with a view of local relevance, and of respect towards the community itself, its traditions and everything."

Thereby, the bond that González mentions and the role that the municipality has played in leading communal development is something that the communities recognize, in different terms and under different administrations, as endorsed by Sara Plaza Cruz: "I want to highlight the work of Sandra Berna Martínez because we have always had help from her, especially when we brought mountain water to our town of Peine, she helped us and has always been with us; not only in Peine, but in all the towns, because in Socaire too she did many things (…) The same as Don Justo Zuleta Santander. Also CONADI, when Liliana Cortez Cruz was there. I have also worked a lot with Wilson Reyes Araya. He was from the Council of Peoples, he always worked for the towns, for the communities."

This concern for the situation and needs of indigenous communities has marked municipal management from the beginning. And it is no coincidence, because if there is an element that characterizes San Pedro, in the past and currently, it is its inhabitants and their link to the Atacama peoples, although in the first years there were still not protection laws for indigenous communities. This is how Juan Carlos Pereira Bordones remembers it:



Toconao square and bell tower, 2026



Peine Church



Toconao Square

"At that time, indigenous communities did not exist officially, as they do now, so the operation was more through neighborhood meetings. That allowed us to work with the communities. When the indigenous law came out and the communities were recognized, we began to better outline how to organize or help the communities themselves organize."

The above is endorsed by Roxana Aranda Caru, who experienced first-hand the implementation of this policy on indigenous peoples, and the municipality's emphasis on the relationship with ancestral peoples, with a new legal framework. Aranda recalls that even a former president of the republic, and political leader of the commission from which the new law emanated, personally attended the commune

to give solemnity to the event and to recognize that San Pedro was an important link in this policy: "Sandra Berna Martínez worked on the indigenous policy of the New Deal and former president Aylwin came to San Pedro to deliver here the book of Truth and New Deal, the recognition of the native peoples."

Given this effort, it is easy to understand why the municipality has managed to amass a strong bond with the native peoples of the commune and, in this way, also deepen its influence over the territory, gaining a leadership that is difficult to ignore.

If the indigenous policy promoted by the central State helped to improve the situation of the native peoples, so did a new initiative at the beginning of the 21st century promoted by the State of Chile and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB): the Orígenes (Origins) program that, before being mayor, was led by Justo Zuleta Santander in the commune of San Pedro, who points out in this regard: "After I had worked on other social programs at the regional level, I was in charge of an Orígenes program, which required coordination with "the municipality's teams in the governance of the territory to work together with the indigenous development areas, which was a program promoted by the Inter-American Development Bank."



Exhibition of local crafts at the San Pedro de Atacama Culture, Art and Heritage Foundation, 2026



Local artisan, 2026



Municipal officials and neighbors in a moment of downtime, among whom: Felisa López Ramos (neighbor), Mirta Solís Cenzano, Justo Zuleta Santander (current mayor), Sandra Berna Martínez (former mayor), Antolina Mondaca M., Tomás Morales. Source: Mirta Solís Cenzano)

But it was not only the original population that marked municipal tasks; It was the entire population of San Pedro, as Moisés Salva Cruz exemplifies with these words: "In that first period the officials became very close to the people here. It was like a family. Many things were done and there were ceremonies that were held, for example, in Solor, they invited the mayor, everyone went, a meal was made, lovely things were done, soccer championships. And we (Salva and his band) went to play, at Socaire, at Peine. It was so nice."

Along the same lines as what was expressed by Salva Cruz, examples of the various recreational activities led by the municipality must also be mentioned, as Manuel Alfaro Castillo remembers: "We took Viejito Pascuero (Chilean Santa Claus), whom many children did not know and, if they did have an idea, it was only through cartoons. Someone dressed up as Viejito Pascuero; even we, with Juan Carlos, dressed up as elves and brought parties to the towns, with presents."

As noted above, the action of the municipality and the strengthening of its bond with the community was not expressed only in resolving material or even social issues. In effect, municipal empowerment even reached the level of defending the dignity of the commune, as when from the national media some well-known figures mocked the Atacameños for the unnecessary expenditure of public resources. The events occurred in April 2006, when in a DUNA radio program, the hosts, upon hearing about the eruption of the Láscar volcano, did a show in which they simulated the phone call of a tourist who was escaping danger. Roxana Aranda Caru narrates it in the following way:

"These characters, Mr. Izquierdo and Mr. Comparini, who had a program on the Duna radio, were doing some kind of jokes, and it occurred to them to act on the air as if they were receiving a call from a tourist who was escaping from the Láscar volcano, near Talabre, because it was erupting."

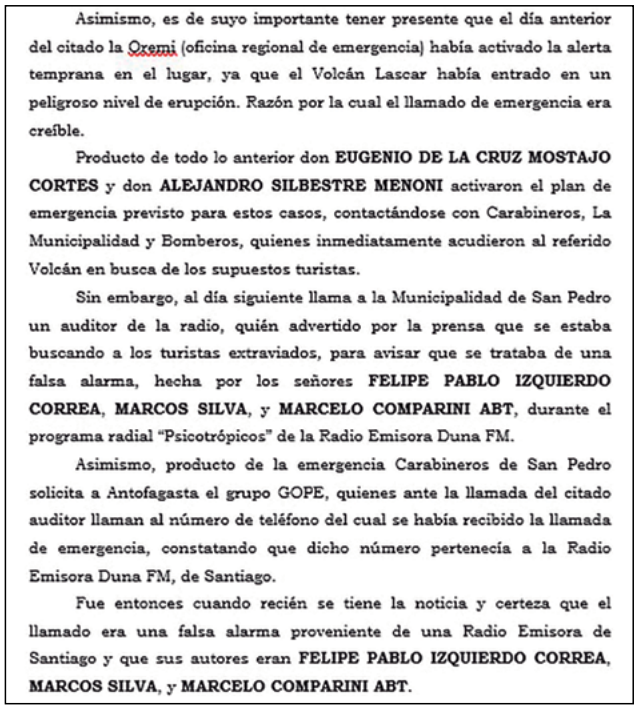
Indeed, one of the radio hosts called a restaurant in San Pedro de Atacama pretending to be a tourist who, along with five other foreigners, was lost and in danger due to the eruption of the volcano (an eruption that had been ongoing for two days). From the restaurant they communicated with the community's Firefighters and Police, which led to the implementation of a broad emergency operation. It was not until 9 a.m. the next

day that the municipality was alerted that it was a prank. This incident, the pitanza, was flatly condemned in the commune and the authorities went to court. Aranda Caru herself recounts the municipal response:

"Faced with this hoax, the mayor took legal action regarding the radio station and the skit, because resources had to be mobilized in the face of it all. So, the Municipality sued the radio and finally won compensation, and in this way resources were obtained for Carabineros, for Firefighters and for the Municipality. For the Municipality it translated into official jackets that we wear for emergencies. Mr. Izquierdo came to San Pedro to give a public apology and he did it here, outside the municipality."

This anecdote is just an example of the strength that municipal institutions had acquired after only a quarter of a century of coming into being.

The entire framework between the institutions and the towns and communities of San Pedro generated, not without setbacks, a relationship of trust that is at the basis of what has been possible to advance in these 45 years of history, with the leadership of the municipality. Perhaps a phrase by Gloria Liendro Martínez sums up this relationship: "The people of the villages are affectionate; if you know how to treat them well, they will reciprocate."



Asimismo, es de suyo importante tener presente que el día anterior del citado la Oremi (oficina regional de emergencia) había activado la alerta temprana en el lugar, ya que el Volcán Lascar había entrado en un peligroso nivel de erupción. Razón por la cual el llamado de emergencia era creíble.

Producto de todo lo anterior don **EUGENIO DE LA CRUZ MOSTAJO CORTES** y don **ALEJANDRO SILBESTRE MENONI** activaron el plan de emergencia previsto para estos casos, contactándose con Carabineros, La Municipalidad y Bomberos, quienes inmediatamente acudieron al referido Volcán en busca de los supuestos turistas.

Sin embargo, al día siguiente llama a la Municipalidad de San Pedro un auditor de la radio, quién advertido por la prensa que se estaba buscando a los turistas extraviados, para avisar que se trataba de una falsa alarma, hecha por los señores **FELIPE PABLO IZQUIERDO CORREA**, **MARCOS SILVA**, y **MARCELO COMPARINI ABT**, durante el programa radial "Psicotrópicos" de la Radio Emisora Duna FM.

Asimismo, producto de la emergencia Carabineros de San Pedro solicita a Antofagasta el grupo GOPE, quienes ante la llamada del citado auditor llaman al número de teléfono del cual se había recibido la llamada de emergencia, constatando que dicho número pertenecía a la Radio Emisora Duna FM, de Santiago.

Fue entonces cuando recién se tiene la noticia y certeza que el llamado era una falsa alarma proveniente de una Radio Emisora de Santiago y que sus autores eran **FELIPE PABLO IZQUIERDO CORREA**, **MARCOS SILVA**, y **MARCELO COMPARINI ABT**.

Extract from the complaint about the Láscar volcano pitanza

· *Camar, september 2026* ·





Chapter 7

The Municipality from Within

a municipality that built itself



Municipal staff, 1999

Looking at the history of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama from the inside reveals an ongoing transformation—an evolution from a virtually non-existent structure to the creation of new departments and the adoption of increasingly complex protocols. In its early days, as previously noted, the municipality was a small institution tasked with serving a vast, scattered territory, where towns and ayllu were separated by great distances and services remained limited. This reality shaped the initial teams: they were few in number, roles were loosely defined, and much of the administration relied on the staff's personal availability, their knowledge of the territory, and their individual ability to address whatever challenges arose.

"In those early years, there were seven of us on the municipal permanent staff; I was one of the first locals from San Pedro to join the permanent staff. We had the mayor, the municipal secretary, a social worker, a head of finance, a treasurer, a procurement officer—and there I was, working in an administrative role within the Finance department," recalls Sergio Gavia Mondaca. Juan Carlos Pereira Bordones echoes this, describing a structure that was still very small for a territory spanning approximately 25,000 square kilometers—though the population at the time was quite small. In this context, he notes, "There were 10 of us in the municipality, including the mayor—at a time when there wasn't really a culture among the public of demanding a wide range of services."

Given this scenario, "doing a bit of everything" was simply part of the job. While formal positions existed, the demands of daily work frequently extended well beyond their defined boundaries. Sergio Gavia Mondaca recalls it this way: "Back then—I was in an administrative role—we did a bit of everything. For municipal events, such as those held at the stadium, people from the more distant towns would be brought in to work on them, and of course we had to look after them, set up lighting for the



Mirta Solís Cenzano, a civil servant with 44 years of service, 2026

entire day, play the national anthem, and the person in charge of procurement would act as the announcer. The same thing happened whenever the municipality held events at schools in the towns more inland." This versatility went beyond formal job descriptions; it was a practical response to the needs of an organization that was still taking shape.

Elizabeth Astudillo Berna, who took on various roles while learning how the municipality functioned, recalls something similar. In those years, it was common for a single person to work in different areas, assist with various activities, and step in wherever they were needed. Rubén Heredia Jiménez, for instance—a social worker by profession—oversaw programs related to food assistance, employment, and social support—areas that would eventually be divided among specific teams and dedicated programs. This broad scope of responsibilities partly explains why many long-time staff members describe their early years as a period of continuous learning.

The career path of Mirta Solís Cenzano offers another example of this versatility within an administrative role. She began as a secretary, but her duties expanded as new needs arose. She recalls: "In reality, I wasn't just a secretary here; I also handled matters for the Local Police Court." Since the municipality had limited resources, the mayor secured authorization to sell vehicle registration permits in Chuquicamata, which was part of the Calama jurisdiction. There, Solís was responsible for typing up documents and learned the ins and outs of vehicle registration, official vehicle records, and technical inspections. Later, she even had to learn Traffic Law, because at that time—up until the tenure of Sandra Berna Martínez—mayors also served as judges for the Local Police Court. So, while working in the Secretariat, I ended up doing a great many things."

Daily administration also had a much more 'jack-of-all-trades' dimension. Looking at the

municipality from the inside allows us to see that a good part of its administrative functioning then rested on manual procedures and practical learning that often happened on the job. Not so much an intentional multitasking operation, it was moreover just a working environment where officials generally had to learn and solve on the fly with whatever resources they had to hand.

As already seen in other sections of this book, some experiences of the first civil servants give us a window into this way of working. Sergio Gavia Mondaca remembers that, when he was substitute treasurer and had to travel to Calama to withdraw in cash the money intended to pay municipal salaries, on one occasion he had to hitchhike to get there. Felisa Aguirre, for her part, had to learn basic tasks of administrative work in the Municipality of Calama, such as the preparation of official letters and decrees and the operation of a municipal treasury. This learning is also visualized in the memories of Mirta Solís Cenzano regarding the fact that correspondence was recorded in books, the letters were paged and typed on a typewriter, so that an error at the end could necessitate the entire operation to be done from scratch.

This literally hands-on way of working was maintained for years and was replaced, little by little, with the arrival of new technologies. Justo Zuleta Santander remembers a scene that



Mayor's Office, 2026

allows us to see this change in practice: "I had the opportunity to return, I don't remember well if it was around 2000 or at the end of the 90s, but I had the opportunity to work for a few months here in the municipality, I remember at that time I was supporting Mirta Solís Cenzano in the Health area. In those years she worked on the municipal budget on a large sheet of paper; I saw how she suffered every end of the month when she sometimes had to figure out discrepancies of two or three pesos [less than 1/10 of a US cent], and at that point I was at least able to help her out with Excel."

Along with this practical education, there were also training sessions to strengthen the teams' capabilities. Mirta Barreda Morales remembers it like this: "I liked those times because, at least those of us who worked in Health, they took us to many courses, we went to many places on courses, Antofagasta, Tal Tal, Paposo. They cared about bringing us up to standard."



Municipal officials, 2001

In this way, municipal work was sustained for a long time by a combination of accumulated experience, learning by doing and training. This way of learning and solving together also strengthened the bond between those who made up the first teams.

Small, close-knit teams, and Commitment

The small number of officials often fomented close relationships. Felisa Aguirre remembers it like this: "The first days we went everywhere together, if they invited the mayor to eat somewhere, we all went. Later, more people began to arrive, the operation was enlarged, and it was as if there was a kind of distance then." This gives us an idea of how that initial closeness changed as more staff were incorporated, although for many years it continued to be an important feature of the internal life of the municipality.

But the initial closeness was not limited to the offices. The officials participated in community activities, celebrations and sports events with neighbors. Moisés Salva Cruz says that in the first term

Municipal banner in institutional parade, 2010



Municipal officials, 2006

"the officials got very close to the people here. It was like a family." Elizabeth Astudillo Berna, for her part, remembers the municipal soccer team, El Salado, the nights out organized by the officials and the subsequent lunches at the mayor's house. This sociability helped build trust within the team, but also between the municipality and the community.

Commitment to the work features prominently in different generations. Patricia Lanas Véliz, who joined several years after the founding stage, specifically in the 2000s, still remembers a small municipality: "There were 13 regular employees, plus some contract employees and a couple of honoraria. The municipal staff, discounting Health and Education that did not depend on the municipality, were no more than 22 people. So, although we were co-workers, due to being far away we were also a family. Super manageable as a group." In this context, the days did not always end at a fixed time and the limits of the position remained flexible.

Patricia Lanas Véliz herself sums it up with a very clear phrase: "The job description was quite vague because it was up to you to do your job plus whatever it was necessary for you to do." This willingness to take on diverse tasks was expressed especially strongly in the technical units, where small teams had to carry out very different projects. The scarcity of resources and available professionals forced them to innovate and solve.

A good example of this combination between multitasking, continuous education and commitment appears in Marcela Ramos

Colque's memory of her work in the Construction Department: "In 2000 I went to the Construction Department... all the projects were done by hand and we stayed until three in the morning drinking tea and doing the projects (...) I learned that we had to look for funds, we had to meet the deadlines... we made between 14, 15 to 20 projects and there were three of us: Patricia Lanas Véliz, Loreto and Iris... I learned that it was more than just coming to work and keeping schedule. I didn't mind staying late, we stayed because we had to meet our targets, so that people could have drinking water, better streets, better squares. Later, Patricia told us that of the 15 projects we applied for funding for, 10 were awarded."

That same spirit appears in the testimony of Patricia González when she remembers the emergencies due to rain and the highland winter, when the team remained working until dawn and had to coordinate to respond to the demands of the different towns. Marcela Pereira Carter also points out that emergencies were the moments where joint work was best evidenced: "Teamwork was most evident was when we had an emergency. It was there as if we'd been doing it for ages."

Roxana Aranda Caru recalls that, although high water levels continue to occur in similar sectors, emergencies can currently be dealt with in a better way thanks to some mitigation works carried out over time; "to the machinery that was acquired through regional fund projects, and to the commitment of a small group of officials—Patricio, Dagoberto, Mario, Joel, Raúl and José— who, since 2012 and during the following years, were always willing to carry out work on the ground to attend to and repair the damage caused by emergencies," says Aranda.

Among his first memories of this type of situation is an emergency that occurred around 1999 or 2000 in the town of Licancabur. According to Roxana Aranda herself, the waters that descended from higher areas formed a kind of river that crossed the territory, forcing the team to go directly on-site: "The water reached our knees and the land was muddy." Homes were flooded and, once the emergency



Family Health Center (CESFAM) of San Pedro de Atacama, 2026

was over, the mud that remained on the streets and houses ended up hardening "like stone." This type of episode required an immediate and coordinated response, reinforcing the importance of teamwork in such moments of need.

Commitment also defines the long career of Mirta Solís Cenzano. Looking back at her more than four decades in the institution, she relates that "I was just another official, I contributed what I had to contribute, I worked for 44 years with responsibility, administrative honesty, discipline, respect. I have given everything." For example, in periods of heavy rainfall and other emergencies, she remembers days that extended into the night, including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, because, as he explains, behind that availability "there is a commitment" to the town and its people.

In health, this solution-based working culture was particualrly intense. Gloria Liendro Martínez remembers that, at the beginning of the 90s, only two officials worked across different towns to respond to emergencies, organizing among themselves to cover both the day and the night shifts. Ester Buston Cruz describes a similar experience from the medical positions, where a single person had to make decisions and respond in conditions that today would be exceptional, although, at the same time, she evokes that "the experience was beautiful because one was prepared for everything. That's the difference between how it is today and how it was before."

Growing, specializing and coordinating differently

That logic of small teams, broad functions and shared learning did not disappear overnight. However, over the years it did transform. Population growth, the expansion of tourism, the formalization of services and the increase in citizen demands made it necessary to expand programs, incorporate professionals and formalize procedures. The municipality stopped being a small group where everyone what everyone else was doing. New departments were created, protocols were strengthened and responsibilities were defined with greater precision.

One of the first changes could be seen in the way administrative procedures were carried out. For many years, a small structure coexisted with new management demands. Marcela Pereira Carter remembers that, when she assumed the direction of Community Development in 2003, her team was small and they had to learn on the job how to apply for and procure funds. In this context, the public procurement system began to modify practices that were previously resolved in a much more direct way: "Before, I used to go with the



Selection of photographs of officials

municipality's RUT [national ID] and buy the things I needed. Then this public procurement thing appeared. For us, the transition was chaotic, understanding how that worked."

As for formalizing protocols, a greater differentiation of functions was progressively developed. This became very visible in areas such as health, where what previously rested on very few people gave way to teams with doctors, nurses, and technicians, all of whom now had more defined tasks. Gloria Liendro Martínez summarizes this change from her own career, from the nineties to the present: "Over time, more staff arrived. Now I am happy because there are professionals for each function. Everyone can do what corresponds to them, unlike before, when we all did everything."

This movement toward specialization also reached other municipal areas. Mirta Solís Cenzano remembers that, after years in which one person could assume very diverse functions, the tasks began to be distributed among more officials and the responsibilities were delineated more clearly. Her own experience in Finance shows why this specialization became necessary, since when assuming responsibilities



Municipal officials, 2024

that required specific accounting knowledge, she recognized that there were matters that she could not solve alone, "that's why I had to have a team." Institutional growth did not only mean adding officials, but also recognizing that certain tasks required increasingly specific knowledge and responsibilities.

In the midst of this transition, Paola Piñones Araya remembers an transitional phase, after joining in the early 2000s, when the size of the team still allowed for especially close coordination: "I have fond memories, especially of people, fond memories of the team that we made in San Pedro. We were a small team and one plus of that is that we communicated very easily, allowing us to do more coordinated team work, and with more speed and efficiency." Her testimony shows that growth was not one step, but a process in which for years small teams coexisted with a structure that was beginning to expand.

Later, and especially in recent years, the expansion of the plant marked another important moment in this process. New directions and functions were incorporated that did not exist before, or until then depended on very small teams. This growth was significant: from 7 regular officials in 1980 it went to 13 in 1994 and 20 in 2019. As of 2020, the municipal staff increased considerably, reaching 96 officials, including the mayor. This, through the application of Law 20.922, which empowers mayors to modify the HR strictures of municipalities every 8 years, with

the approval of two-thirds of the councilors in office, and which establishes that 75% of the new positions created must require a professional or technical degree.

César Díaz Cruz observes this change from within: "I would highlight, in terms of the current municipality, the change, the ability to adapt as officials, which is not a simple thing. We went from being people who worked here for many years to a new kind of operation; I think that is an important milestone, incorporating new people to the municipality. We went from being a very small municipality to a significantly larger one."

The increase in scope and the creation of new departments expanded the capabilities of the municipality, but also changed the way of working and relating within the institution. New management tools were added to this. Roxana Aranda Caru remembers that they were "the first in this region to use digital transformation in terms of documentation," during the Justo Zuleta Santander administration. For her, technology allowed the institution to develop without losing the possibility of having initiative, doing creative things and working with people. At the same time, a larger organization began to demand forms of coordination that previously occurred almost naturally in small teams. Cecilia Rojo Díaz raises precisely this tension: "I would like to highlight the communication that existed before, because at this time we still have so many departments and we do not communicate as we should, we lack communication, we need to have more camaraderie. The number of officials that there are now is an improvement, since before there were so few of us. But what we need is to maintain that team spirit."

In this way, growth brought capabilities that did not exist before, but also new internal challenges. Specialization allows us to better respond to a much more complex community, but at the same time, it requires communication to be clearer while maintaining the collaboration that emerged almost spontaneously in the first years of the municipality.

Despite all these changes, there is still continuity in the stories: the idea of the municipality as a space for learning and service. Roxana Aranda Caru gives her opinion regarding her own career: "We trained and went to school, those of us who are old, the community training school; that is what the municipality gave us professionally, to work with people." This learning is also associated with a way of understanding public service, in which "one is there to serve, not to serve oneself," he adds.

Viewed as a whole, the internal history of the Municipality of San Pedro de Atacama

reflects a transition from an institution that was, by necessity, multifunctional, toward an organization that is more specialized and regulated. Initially, it was necessary to build procedures almost from scratch, master various functions, take on diverse tasks, and operate with limited resources. Subsequently, the municipality had to expand its teams, develop programs, professionalize specific areas, and adapt to new regulations. Today, with a much larger structure, the capacity to adapt and find solutions—while maintaining a steadfast commitment to service—remains one of the most enduring characteristics of the municipality's internal operations.



· *Matancilla, september 2026* ·



Historical table of authorities

mayors / councilors

1980 • 1986

Mayor

Hans Schmauck Alarcón



1987 • 1989

Mayor

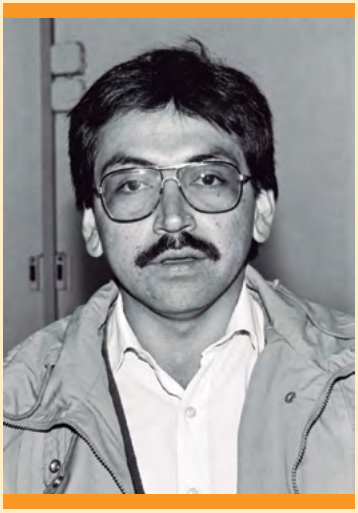
Erick Bachler Beca



1989 • 1991

Mayor

Rubén Heredia Jiménez



1992 • 1996

Mayor

a) Ana María Barón Parra

(1992 a 1994)



Mayor

b) Sandra Berna Martínez

(1994 a 1996)



MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Rubén Heredia Jiménez
Hernán Plaza Condori
Domingo Toroco Mondaca
Ada Aramayo Conzue

The period 1992 - 1996 was shared between both mayors due to an electoral tie. For more details, see p. 34



1996 • 2000

Mayor

Sandra Berna Martínez

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Mario Noland Contreras Guzmán
Hernán Plaza Condori
Rubén Heredia Jiménez
Wilfredo Armella Barboza
Zenón Cruz Choque



2000 • 2004

Mayor

Sandra Berna Martínez

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Luis Buston Liendro
Eva Siarez Flores
Jorge Espíndola Toroco
Carlos Hernández Ossandón
Hernán Plaza Condori



2004 • 2008

Mayor

Sandra Berna Martínez

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Eva Cruz Ramos
Juan Sota Aguayo
Carlos Hernández Ossandón
Jorge Espíndola Toroco
Juan Carlos Pereira Bordones
Cecilia Rojo Díaz

2008 • 2012

Mayor

Sandra Berna Martínez

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Juan García Martínez
Rubén Anselmo Reyes Aymani
Jorge Espíndola Toroco
Justo Zuleta Santander
Oriana Mabel Mora Rodríguez
Margarita Catalina Chocobar Cruz



2012 • 2016

Mayor

Sandra Berna Martínez

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Nazario Celso Tito Condori
Humberto Patricio Argandoña Catur
Rubén Anselmo Reyes Aymani
Ricardo Francisco Vilca Solís
María Teresa Véliz Guerra
Lilibeth Paola Reyes Ramos



2016 • 2021

Mayor

Aliro Catur Zuleta

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Marcela Petrona Ramos Colque
María Teresa Véliz Guerra
Humberto Patricio Argandoña Catur
Nazario Celso Tito Condori
Manuel Guillermo Cortés Mora
Ricardo Vilca Solís



2021 • 2024

Mayor

Justo Zuleta Santander

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Iván Andrés Bautista Colque
Orlando Alberto Cortés Mora
María Eugenia Cornejo Cádiz
Marisol Angélica González Reyes
Carolina Andrea Soto Poblete
Jorge Rolando Titichoca Servantes





2024 • 2028

Mayor

Justo Zuleta Santander

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Carolina Andrea Soto Poblete
Iván Andrés Bautista Colque
Williams Andrés Puca Mamani
Vilma Arcadia Catur Mamani
Sergio Rodrigo Huaiquiñir Servantes
Carolina Ruth Colamar Lique

Municipal team 2026



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