



Isabel Hawkins, Ph.D.

Astronomer & Project Director

Fulbright US Global Scholar

Exploratorium

San Francisco, California

ihawkins@exploratorium.edu

Cell: +1 (510) 384-8860

Fulbright Website: 7adelfes.org

I was born Isabel Trecco in Córdoba, Argentina, growing up surrounded by big families of Italian and Spanish heritage. Long tables full of food, laughter, and beloved cousins to play with fill my memories of childhood. My family spent every summer in a ranch in a tiny town called San Francisco del Chañar in the northwest corner of Córdoba Province, where we had no running water or electricity. The remote setting offered very dark skies full of stars. My cousins and I ran around all day long barefoot, hot, and dusty. In those days I knew exactly where my food came from, and absolutely every part of the cow, pig, or chicken was used—"chicken feet soup" and "curdled blood stew on toast" were the children's favorites. Because of the heat, we would pull the mattresses off our beds to sleep outside, and on moonless nights the sky was outstanding. We could see the Milky Way and the Magellanic Clouds (two companion galaxies to the Milky Way that are only visible from the Southern Hemisphere), and, oh! so many "falling stars." The next day we'd run towards the field where the brightest star had "fallen," hoping to find it lying on the ground. On my tenth birthday, my father took me to the planetarium in Buenos Aires. Research shows that early experiences in museums, zoos, aquaria, and planetariums are key indicators of a person's life-long relationship with informal education institutions. The beauty of the night sky and a planetarium visit charted the course of my career. Since there were no professional telescopes in Argentina at the time, I applied with my family's support to be an American Field Service high school exchange student, coming to California in 1976. My high school had an astronomy class! But a love other than astronomy rooted me in the U.S.—John Hawkins—my husband of 43 years. Lots of schooling and the birth of our two beloved daughters, Elizabeth and Mary Ellen, kept us busy for many years. I have a B.S. in Physics from UC Riverside, an M.S. and Ph.D. in astrophysics from UCLA, followed by a hybrid career—twenty years at UC Berkeley Space Science Laboratory and ten years as Astronomer and Project Director at the Exploratorium. I love working on NASA, NSF, and museum-funded efforts focused on Latinx audience engagement ([total solar eclipse](#), [GENIAL](#)). I am Co-Investigator of the NSF-funded Cambio project, contributing my passion to make the cultural roots of STEM come alive for the practitioners and institutions that are part of the Cambio community. I am also a Consultant for the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. I also work as a volunteer coordinator (with Dr. Shelly Valdez, Laguna Pueblo) of the [Yakanal](#) Indigenous Youth Cultural Exchange Program. I am a Fulbright US Global Scholar for 2018-2020, a collaborative research project on the indigenous knowledge of the [Pleiades](#) star cluster in three cultures: Aotearoa/New Zealand, Guatemala, and Peru. I am also a late bloomer to Latin dance, starting at 50 years of age. Great teachers and supportive dance partners helped me become a seven-time, Latin dance world champion in [salsa and bachata](#) in the "over-50" amateur, professional-amateur, and professional categories at the World Latin Dance Cup international competition (2013-2017, Miami, FL).