Indigenous heritage
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Newsletter
September 2012 Vol. 2, Issue 3

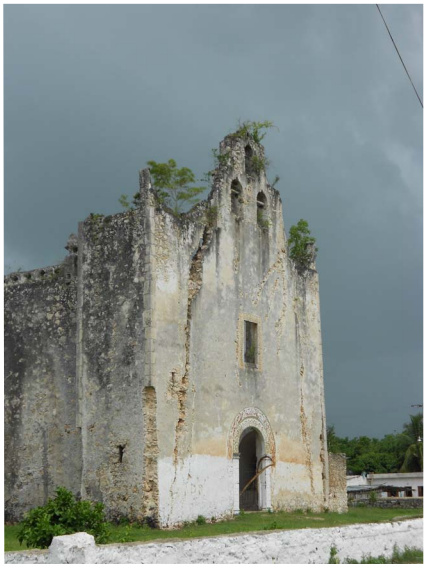
## InHerit Explores Colonial Yucatan on NSF Project

For much of the month of June, InHerit was in Mexico's Yucatan surveying colonial-era towns around Valladolid. The team was led by Dr. Patricia McAnany (UNC-Chapel Hill and InHerit) and Dr. Ivan Batún Alpuche (UNO-Universidad del Oriente). Three additional researchers from UNC-- Sarah Rowe, Maia Dedrick, and Maggie Morgan-Smith-- as well as three students from UNO-- Ricardo Cabañas Haas, Itzel Batún Meza, and Ricardo "Pepe" Poot Chuc-- composed the research team. The goal of the project is to involve local communities in the investigation of the daily lives and economic activities of the Maya whose labor supported the Colonial enterprise in Mexico.

*The UNO team.*

In 21 days the team of 8 visited more than 30 towns, villages, haciendas and ranchos in search of a site of future research. We focused our efforts on towns with old colonial churches and indications of a prehispanic population. The team climbed over prehispanic mounds, visited cenotes that had been used for centuries, toured churches that had been burned out during the Caste War, and searched for evidence of the Maya people who were resettled around the colonial churches.

Tixhualactun, one of the visited colonial churches, has ample evidence of late-Postclasic through Colonial occupation. It also has abundant oral histories about the place, many of which have been recorded by Didier Chan and Adriana Sanchez for their studies at UNO. The church itself is said to be built on a platform that once housed a temple to the Maya god of rain and thunder, Chaac, and has been struck by lightning four times. There is also a rejollada (a dry sinkhole used for cultivation) with caves that served as sites of refuge during the Caste War, the Colonial period, and possibly even earlier.



*The church of Tixhualactun, being threatened by Chaac again.*

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## InHerit in the Yucatan, cont'd.

Of these oral histories, however, comes a much more recent and troubling story. Apparently, not long ago, a man came through town and dove into the cenotes, bringing out numerous artifacts. He then told residents that INAH (Mexico's National Institute of Archaeology and History) would be coming to their village and jailing anyone who possessed ancient Maya objects in their household. Finally, he offered to buy these items from people and then hauled away everything, robbing the community not only of family heirlooms and the chance to learn more about the past from the cenote objects, but also seriously damaging the potential for a productive relationship between Tixhualactun and INAH. This is precisely the type of misinformation and misunderstanding that InHerit's programs work to correct.

*The largest of the rejollada caves of Tixhualactun.*

The uncertainty leading up to the July 1 national election meant that we weren't able to progress as far with the collaborative aspect of the project as we had hoped. With the potential for personnel and policy changes at all levels of government after the election, Dr. Batún recommended that we wait to directly liaise with the communities until after the new government appointments had been made. We are leaning towards a multi-sited, comparative project, and can't wait to return and really engage with the community involvement portion of our project!

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## Community Cultural Heritage Grants

InHerit is proud to announce a call for proposals for a Community Heritage Conservation grant for projects in the Maya and adjacent regions. The purpose of the grant is to support the conservation of landscape features of cultural significance that are in need of special attention or care. Proposals will address the threat facing the cultural heritage locale and outline a strategy to conserve, protect, or promote the heritage site. The proposal may include a program or educational activities that will communicate the importance and significance of a locale to members of a local community or to groups outside of the community. We are interested in supporting projects from groups who represent or have primary participation from an indigenous community. The deadline for submissions is November 15, 2012. The full call for proposals can be found on our website at http://in-herit.org/chc.html.

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## "13 Bak'tun: New Maya Perspectives in 2012" Conference at UNC

UNC Chapel Hill will host a conference this October 25th and 26th that focuses on the richness of Maya culture past and present and showcases the breadth of Maya scholarship on campus. The event has the national distinction of being the only university conference on 2012 to feature a majority of speakers who are members of ethno-linguistic Maya communities. The conference opens with a keynote address by noted Maya scholar Dr. Victor Montejo and includes a variety of lectures, open classes, multimedia presentations, and poetry readings across the two-day event.

13 BAK'TUN

Both Dr. Patricia McAnany and Ms. Cristina Coc, a partner of InHerit, will be presenting at the conference. A concurrent exhibit entitled "Ancient and Living Maya Through the Photographic Lens," featuring the photographs of George Stuart and National Geographic photographers, will run from September 18 through December 14 at the FedEx Global Education Center. All events are free and open to the public. More information on the event and a complete schedule can be found at http://maya2012.unc.edu.

### InHerit is Going to Honolulu

InHerit is taking the lead in organizing a session on collaborative archaeology for the upcoming 78th annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii. Titled "Collaborative Research in the Pacific Basin and Beyond: Re-Shaping Archaeological Practice to Provide Space for Communities", this session will bring together archaeologists working in countries throughout the Pacific Basin to critically examine the practices and conditions that impact collaboration between archaeologists and communities. We look forward to a lively discussion between presenters and attendees alike!

### Look for Improvements to the InHerit Website!

We've been making changes to the InHerit website that should be fully implemented in the coming weeks. A new page header will greet visitors to the site and make it easier to move through the site and keep updated on what we're doing. Hyperlinked images in the initial slideshow will improve interaction with the content of the website and highlight our new initiatives. Importantly, updated content and page layouts will improve the overall usability of the site. All these updates are complemented by our blog at http://inheritp2p.wordpress.com/ which provides a peek into the activities of our various partners and initiatives.

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## Bi-Directional Knowledge Exchange in Guatemala

As a recipient of our Bi-Directional Knowledge Exchange grant, Dr. Brent Woodfill (University of Louisiana, Lafayette) spent the last year in Guatemala engaged in community heritage-related projects with the people living near the well-known salt-production site of Salinas de los Nueve Cerros, in the Alta Verapaz. Woodfill's project combined educational initiatives, interactions with community and spiritual leaders, and civil engineering projects to improve the quality of life in communities around the archaeological site.

*Brent Woodfill holding an end-of-season information session, May 2011 (photo by Carlos Efraín Tox).*

Among the many initiatives that the project undertook, the Proyecto Salinas de los Nueve Cerros sponsored the construction of new sculptures of santos for the local church and team members participated in rituals conducted by local spiritual leaders. Members also developed an archaeology curriculum for fourth graders in the region that included several fun activities, end of chapter quizzes, and a teacher's guide. The project purchased a mold and concrete to make support tubes for well construction and bridge repair, helping to build essential infrastructure for the region.

In addition to open discussions with community members at conferences, ceremonies, and other events, over 100 local people worked with the project on excavations, which has helped to demystify archaeological practice.

*Left: Well construction was facilitated by the project donation of cement tubes. (photo by Seleste Sanchez).*

*Dr. Woodfill and comunity members examine a pecked cross in the Candelaria Caves (photo by Matt Oliphant).*

Dr. Woodfill reports that with InHerit support, Proyecto Salinas de los Nueve Cerros has become the leading development organization in the Nueve Cerros region. They have increased communication and trust between the project and local communities and built support for the protection of archaeological sites in the region.

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## A Big Thank-You From Dilcia and Norma

In our last newsletter we told you about Dilcia Rosa López and Norma López García, two Ch'orti' girls from Honduras who we sponsored to attend the 4th Annual World Heritage Youth Forum in Spain. Thanks to donations from many of our friends and supporters, Dilcia and Norma were able to participate in this amazing, multi-day conference that brought together youth representatives from all over the world. Now, Dilcia and Norma thank you in their own words (translation by Sarah Rowe).

*Hello I hope this letter finds you and those close to you in good health and I also wish you success in your daily endeavors. The reason for this letter is to let you know that I am very grateful for allowing me to travel to Spain and all the places I visited such as: Madrid, Baeza, Aranjuez, Cordoba, Mollina. For me it was a wonderful gift that you and the other sponsors have given me, and nobody, not even my father or mother, has ever given such a gift to a girl of limited resources. Thank you very much, and to you and the sponsors I send a hug and a kiss goodbye.*
- **Dilcia Aracely Rosa López**, La Pintada, Copan Ruinas, Copan, Honduras

*Norma (left) and Dilcia (right) with Norman Garcia Paz, the Honduran ambassador to Spain.*

*Norma (left) and Dilcia (right) with their advisor, Carin Steen.*

*Well my trip was wonderful. When I was asked if I wanted to go to Spain, I was excited. When we left I wanted to see all Spain's beauty. I am grateful for the invitation I was given, because I visited many places like museums. I am even more grateful that I could visit the Royal Palace in Madrid, a place that impressed me so much that I would love to go back. There are not many opportunities like this one I had, I never thought I would travel so far from my country. I thank all the sponsors, and now I can appreciate my heritage more, because on that trip I had an unforgettable experience that will last a lifetime.*
- **Norma Esperanza López García**, La Pintada, Copan Ruinas, Copan, Honduras

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## In The Next Issue

Sarah will be headed to Copan Ruinas, Honduras and Antigua, Guatemala in mid-September to meet with our partners Proyecto Maya and Fundación Riecken. She's looking forward to seeing these projects in action and meeting with all the people who have been working with communities in the area to protect and appreciate their cultural heritage. Expect a report on her travels in our December newsletter and on our blog, http://inheritp2p.wordpress.com/. Buen Viaje, Sarah!

*Proyecto Maya facilitator Londin Velasquez explains the archaeology of Copan to local school children during a visit to the site.*

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## Please Donate to InHerit!

You can support InHerit by making a donation to the Alliance for Heritage Conservation. The Alliance is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit, and donations are tax-deductible. Please visit our program-tailored donations page at http://www.in-herit.org/bazaar.html or send a check to

**The Alliance for Heritage Conservation**
**P.O. Box 941**
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