Indigenous heritage
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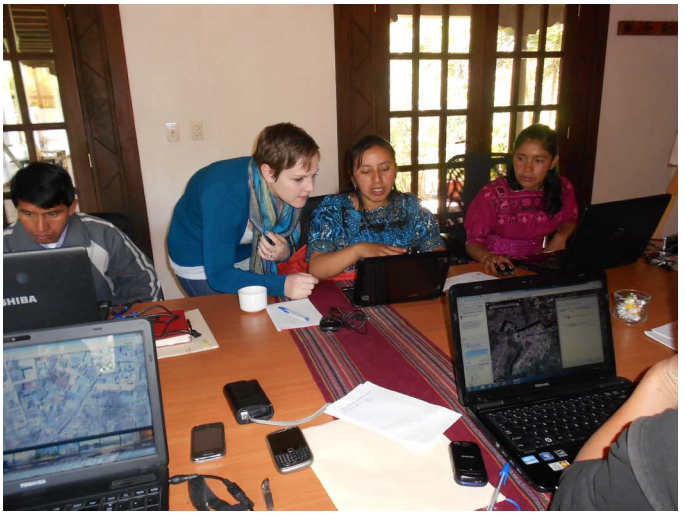
Newsletter
June 2013
Vol. 3, Issue 2

Cultural Heritage Projects in Guatemala

-Contributed by Sarah Rowe, Program Director

I traveled to Guatemala in mid-March to check on two of our amazing partnerships there.

I spent the first half of my trip at the Riecken Foundation offices in Antigua working with collaborators on our ongoing community mapping project. The mapping project coordinators from each of the five participating communities came to Antigua as well for a two-day mapping workshop that focused on computer editing of maps. We spent much of our time working in Google Earth and learning how to take the points the communities have been mapping and present them in meaningful ways on maps. The coordinators will take this knowledge back to their communities so that everyone who helps with the project also knows how to make and edit maps.



Top: Sarah confers with coordinators Evelyn and Isabel on the mapping process. Left: The mapping team gathers at the Riecken Foundation offices after the workshop.

We spent a lot of the time talking about the future of the project, and how to share information between communities and also with a broader audience through the web. Some communities would like to use what they have mapped to develop tourism or augment community planning, and to add photographs and local oral histories to the geographic information they have recorded. The possibilities for the future are very exciting! We closed the workshop by distributing new GPS devices to the communities and each coordinator got a certificate for their participation.

I then traveled to Flores, in the Petén District, where I met with our partners at ProPetén. We've been working together for a number of years to create and distribute a comprehensive elementary-level curriculum for third and fourth graders that incorporates elements of indigenous knowledge, archaeology,

Continued page 2.

Passed to Present
InHerit

Newsletter, p. 2
June 2013 Vol. 3, Issue 2

Cultural Heritage in Guatemala, Cont'd.

A teacher discusses the impact of the curriculum on her students.

and cultural heritage for use in local primary schools. We visited several schools where teachers are using the curriculum and I was able to see and hear first-hand the impact of the curriculum. Teachers pointed to improved learning outcomes, increased student self-esteem, and greater student interest and participation in the classroom. Everyone I spoke to asked for the same thing – more teaching materials! They want more stories and activities that they can use with their students and teachers want to expand the curriculum to all grade levels.

Our partners at ProPetén had an additional piece of good news. The curriculum is just steps away from being certified at the national level by the Ministry of Education! We will revise the workbooks and teacher guides in the coming months and then host sessions to receive teacher feedback before submitting the whole curriculum to the Ministry for final approval. This will be the second ever curriculum to be approved nationally, and the first created by a nonprofit. This is a very exciting time for the project and I'm thankful for the hard work of everyone at ProPetén!

A Big Thank You!

InHerit has been extremely lucky over the last few months to have the wonderfully talented Meirra Birath working as an intern in our office. She has been responsible for updating website content and even produced a brief promotional video which will premiere on the website soon. Thank you, Meirra!

Dr. McAnany Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship!

Dr. Patricia McAnany has been awarded a prestigious Guggenheim Foundation fellowship in recognition of her work democratizing archaeological practice. Established in 1925, Guggenheim fellowships are presented annually by the nonprofit John Simon Guggenheim Foundation to "men and women who have already demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts." Dr. McAnany will use the fellowship to write a book on Maya cultural heritage; the working title is, "Heritage Without Irony: Transcultural Dialogue at a Busy Intersection."

Newsletter, p. 3
Vol. 3, Issue 2 June 2013

Teaching and Practicing Anthropology at the Community of San Rafael, Copán, Honduras

- Contributed by Kristin Landau & Fredy Rodríguez-Mejía, recipients of an InHerit Bi-Directional Knowledge Exchange Grant

While most tourists arrive to Copán to see the Hieroglyphic Stairway, three-dimensional sculptures, and royal tombs, archaeological ruins are scattered widely across the landscape. An ancient neighborhood on the south side of the Valley is now receiving attention from local students. Since last February, we, Kristin Landau and Fredy Rodríguez-Mejía, have been collaborating with the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History and the directors of the San Rafael High School in order to carry out a bi-directional knowledge exchange program, awarded through InHerit. Our program teaches major concepts in anthropology, involves students in Landau's archaeological project, and promotes local appreciation for and conservation of archaeological ruins.

We developed a high school level anthropology curriculum for 10 young women and 10 young men, ages 16-25. Classes are held on Wednesday afternoons in San Rafael, and have included classroom lessons, anthropological field techniques, and field trips. We are proud to report that average grade for the first quarter was 90%, and we look forward to continuing with the high school until the end of the school year in November. A recent course evaluation from the students revealed that their favorite class so far was ethnographic interviews and the etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspectives.

San Rafael students make a map of their school to scale.

Practicing Ethnographic Interviews at the Guacamaya Spanish School.

Following basic lessons on ethnographic methods, students were taken to the Regional Center for Archaeological Investigation (CRIA, in Spanish) to receive a seminar on Cultural Patrimony from Licenciado Salvador Varela. In this seminar students learned a great deal about the history of archaeology in the Copán Valley and other Honduran regions. Varela placed specific emphasis on teaching students how to understand the different meanings of cultural patrimony and how to use such understandings to develop a notion of national as well as cultural identity. Most students never knew of the CRIA's existence, nor had ever seen the massive and meticulously organized sculpture collection. One student commented to Landau that she felt it was unfair that foreign archaeologists get to work here every day, and most Hondurans don't even have permission to enter.

Continued page 4.

Passed to Present Inherit

Newsletter, p. 4
June 2013 Vol. 3, Issue 2

San Rafael, Cont'd.

In addition to academic pedagogy, students participated in two workshops where we gathered adult members of the San Rafael community for a discussion about the social dynamics of the neighborhood, their notions of community identity, and people's conceptions of archaeological projects as well the archaeological park of Copan. Interestingly, we found that community members felt detached from or knew very little about the archaeological activities happening nearby. From this initial workshop we learned of the need to engage community members in more interactive and creative discussions that allow them to learn more about the different archaeological projects taking place in their backyard. We urge students to discuss school activities with their families, and once a month we invite families for a site tour to open an informal space for the sharing and exchange of knowledge.

Getting ready for a talk by Lic. Salvador Varela (Jefe del Parque Arqueologico Copan) about cultural patrimony and world heritage.

A community workshop at San Rafael.

Now that we have completed the first segment of the bi-directional project through classroom lectures, practical activities, and active-learning field trips, the group will begin participation on the archaeological project—a desire almost everyone expressed on the evaluation forms. Excavations of ancient households located no more than a 15-minute walk from the high school begin in mid-June. Students will join the archaeological team every Wednesday, to act as "interns" to the professional Copaneco excavators, learning, assisting, and asking questions. They will be an integral part of our efforts to conserve the unique carved bedrock outcrop known as Los Sapos (The Toads). Overall, we hope that such interactions will facilitate an intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and make archaeology a more transparent, accessible, and inclusive process.

The McAnany and Parks 2012 article "Casualties of Heritage Distancing" on Proyecto Maya in Honduras was chosen by the editors of *Mesoamérica* for translation and publication in Spanish! It's in press now and will appear in *Mesoamérica* Vol. 55 (2013).

Vol. 3, Issue 2 June 2013

Passed to Present InHerit

Community Archaeology at Aguacate, Belize

- Contributed by Claire Novotny, Recipient of NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant

During the 2013 field season, supported by an InHerit Community Heritage Conservation Grant, the Aguacate Community Archaeology Project initiated excavations and several exciting discoveries followed. Investigation of three different household sites revealed that the ancient inhabitants were part of an inter-regional trade network that circulated obsidian and ceramics. Also, several households were intensively making chert tools. At Kaq'ru Ha' (Red Water in Q'eqchi' Mayan), the remains of seven individuals were found in one structure that was inhabited throughout the Classic period (AD 250-900). These and other discoveries have inspired conservation efforts by the community of Aguacate, which is generously supported by an InHerit Community Conservation Grant. During 2013-2014 the Aguacate Conservation and Development Committee will be working with archaeologist Claire Novotny to construct interpretive signs, plant traditional trees and plants around the site, and establish a heritage center in the village to house educational materials about archaeology in the Maya region. The end goal is to make Kaq'ru Ha' a place of natural and cultural heritage for local Maya people as well as visitors (http://www.aguacatebelize.com/).

Site tour with elementary school children from Aguacate.

Mother's Day site tour for the women of Aguacate. In the center, Claire discusses the six sequential burials placed within in a single building.

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The Alliance for Heritage Conservation
P.O. Box 941
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514