

Indigenousheritage

Passed to Present



P.O. Box 944 • Chapel Hill, NC • 27514

September 2013

Newsletter
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PACOY 2013 Summer Update

InHerit and the team returned to Valladolid, Mexico in July for the second season of PACOY – the Proyecto Arqueologico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatan, a collaborative endeavor between the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Universidad de Oriente (UNO). Our focus this summer was in developing a collaborative relationship with the participating communities and conducting preliminary survey and mapping work for the archaeological investigations. After visiting over 30 potential research locations last summer, we focused this summer on the communities of Tixhualactun, Tahcabo, and Chebalam to explore in greater depth the potential both for collaborative work and archaeological investigations.



The crowd assembles for the meeting at Tixhualactun.

For example, Chebalam’s population is shrinking as community members leave for larger towns with more perceived economic opportunities. It became clear through conversations with community members that what they really want is something to focus town pride, something that would tell their story and help give people a reason to stay. To that end we are pursuing archival and oral history research that will help tell the story of the town.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Tixhualactun has over 4000 inhabitants with very diverse views of the past and potential for collaboration. Our discussions there included developing after-school classes for children that will focus on cultural heritage themes, and cultural enrichment events for the town as a whole.

Each town has its own set of archaeological features that will inform later work, with evidence of occupations spanning the Preclassic through the Colonial Period and to the present. It is their unique recent histories and the desires of each community that will shape the collaborative work as we go forward.

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The third community, Tahcabo, is home to around 1000 people. The church there dates from 1569 and is one of the oldest churches in the area. This church is surrounded by unmarked burials, and the community is very concerned to not disturb these burials in the course of civic improvement projects. Additionally, they are eager to create Maya-language materials about local history that can be used in the school and shared in the village.

This summer set the foundation for exciting collaborations, and Dr. Ivan Batun and his students at UNO have already started work in Tixhualactun and Tahcabo to bring these projects to fruition. We look forward to continued work with these communities as we incorporate further archaeological research as well! ≈



Children color in educational sheets at Tahcabo.

Kaxil Kiuc Cemetery Renovation

– Contributed by Phillip Boyett



Rancho Kiuc descendants gather in the renewed cemetery.

With the support of InHerit, Kaxil Kiuc A.C. and the people of Xkobenhaltun worked together during the summer of 2013 to restore a small, historic cemetery on the Kaxil Kiuc Biocultural Reserve. Around 1900, the owners of Rancho Kiuc (a cattle farming ranch on what now is the biocultural reserve) and the people of the surrounding community of San Sebastian created the cemetery to bury their deceased. In the 1970's, many of those community members moved nearby forming Xkobenhaltun and continued to use the cemetery until the present day. Although the family members regularly push back the encroaching jungle and clean the cemetery, many of the stone niches had fallen into disrepair or had been buried over time. With the support and guidance of community leader Evelio Uc Uc and other community members, a

restoration team led by a Kaxil Kiuc student archaeologist restored the niches using limestone-based mortar and stones to imitate the originals and created new niches in the old-style for more recent burials. The restoration restored the proper form and dignity to many very old graves, and it also encouraged community members to think about their past and share it with younger generations who had never seen the cemetery in such good condition. ≈



Archaeologists and Community Collaborate in San Antonio, Belize

– Contributed by Jessica Griggs Burnette

As a recipient of InHerit's Bi-directional Knowledge Exchange grant for the 2013 field season, PRAP (Pacbitun Regional Archaeological Project) worked alongside school officials, local leaders, farmers, business owners, and other community members of San Antonio, Belize to implement the initial stages of a sustainable heritage and Yucatec Mayan language preservation project coupled with the already existing archaeology project of Pacbitun.

The PRAP team, directed by Dr. Terry Powis of Kennesaw State University, participated in an assortment of community events. The team sponsored and took part in San Antonio Day, a festival held annually in the community. While introducing themselves to community members outside of the archaeology project, the team played in a good-spirited soccer tournament and won the traditional "Greasy Pole" event. School children were invited to the archaeology site to experience the excitement of excavation, while learning about their own heritage and the negative effects of looting on the archaeological site.



Girls help with excavations in San Antonio.

The Bi-Directional Knowledge Exchange initiative, led by Jessie Griggs Burnette (Master's Student of Anthropology from Georgia State University), is working with local anthropologist Fernando Tzib to print and digitize a children's book in Yucatec Maya for use in the local pre-kindergarten school. A Yucatec language curriculum, created by Mr. Alfonzo Tzul was printed, and will be placed in the local schools. PRAP was introduced to fruit and greenhouse farming by Melvin Tzib, a local farmer. Ms. Griggs Burnette also suited up to learn about beekeeping from a local Maya keeper. The team was given a unique opportunity to be the guests of honor at a local wedding and graduation ceremony. The beginning stages of a digital photo journal were also initiated. This is an exciting project intended to capture the Maya culture of San Antonio through snapshots of daily and traditional events. The plan is to continue this project with local school children next field season. ≈

Community Heritage Conservation Grant Announcement

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 programs 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, 2013. The full call for proposals can be found on our website at www.in-herit.org/chc.html

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ADIPIPES Teaches Children About Traditional Forest Utilization in Komchen, Mexico

As beneficiaries of our most recent round of Community Heritage Conservation grant, ADIPES A.C. has just finished the first half of their program focused on restoring knowledge about the responsible utilization and management of forest resources in the western Yucatan. Through a combination of artistic expression, game play, media projects, and the critical participation of elders for knowledge sharing, children in the former hacienda town of Komchen participated in a multi-week cultural enrichment program. Not only did the children learn about the cultural uses of the natural world around them, but themes resonated with the community at large and started some broader discussions about how to care for and utilize the local environment. InHerit Program Director Sarah Rowe was honored to visit the ADIPES project in Komchen, and even got to join in with the children on some of the games! ≈



Program Director Sarah Rowe plays cooperative games with the children of Komchen.

BKE Sets the Stage for Collaboration in Popolá, Mexico

– Contributed by Jessica Wheeler



Children practice in a hieroglyphics workshop.

The Proyecto de Interacción Política del Centro de Yucatán (PIPCY) was awarded a Bi-Directional Knowledge Exchange grant to support collaborative work this summer in Popolá, Mexico. The focus this year was on setting the stage for future years of collaborative work. One of the most tangible outcomes of this season was the construction of a small bodega, attached to the comisaría, where carved monuments from the archaeological site of Popolá can be stored. These monuments are threatened both by environmental degradation and looting if they are left in situ. PIPCY purchased the materials for the construction of the bodega, and Popolá's ejidatarios, under the direction of comisario ejidal Javier Lugo Dzul, donated labor to build the bodega. The comisarios and PIPCY directors are awaiting final permission from INAH-Yucatán to transport the monuments to the bodega.

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BKE in Popolá, Mexico, Cont'd.

The team sponsored a convivio (public get-together) in front of the comisaría to celebrate the completion of the bodega. The convivio was attended by most of Popolá's residents. Javier Lugo Dzul and BKE Director Jessica Wheeler each spoke before food was served, celebrating the completion of the bodega and publicly asking community members for their approval to continue working with them, both in sponsoring archaeological projects as well as outreach.

Ms. Wheeler also held hieroglyph classes for any interested participants (who ranged in age from five to fifteen or sixteen). Participants who attended all four classes received a gift of school supplies at the last class (pencils and notebooks). Lessons included reading and writing bar and dot numbers, colors and directions, calendar glyphs, and writing last names in glyphs using an updated version of the Thompson syllabary. Ten to twenty participants attended each class, demonstrating the interest among community members in these types of programs. ≈

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The Alliance for Heritage Conservation

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