Indigenous heritage

Passed to Present
in-herit.org

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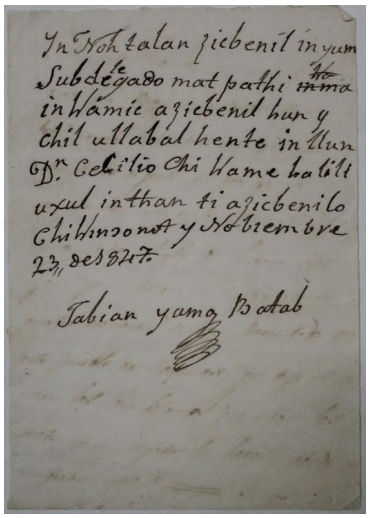
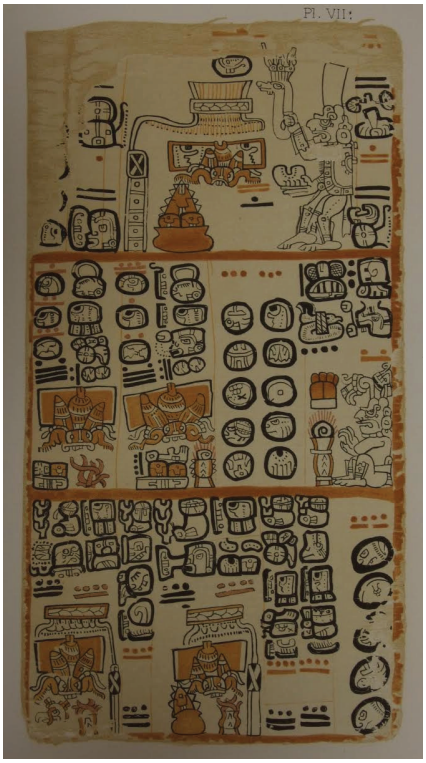
October 2016

InHerit's Newest Initiative: Maya from the Margins, a Museums Connect Project

This program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, fosters cultural understanding among Maya youth through archival-based research at the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill and the State Archives of Yucatán (AGEY). Participants include high school students of Maya descent from Morganton, NC and Maya students of similar ages from Yucatán, Mexico. Through a series of workshops led by university faculty, students will explore topics addressing Maya identity, including literature, language, and migration during the fall of 2016. Working with archival specialists, they will then delve into these issues from a historical perspective next spring.



The Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán (AGEY) contains one of the world's largest collections of documents in Yucatec Maya, including this letter dating from the Caste War. Students from Yucatán will work with these original Maya language documents.



Page 104 of the Madrid Codex showing ceremonies surrounding the indigenous stingless bees, as reproduced by Brasseur de Bourbourg in 1869-70. Students from Morganton will have the opportunity to work with this and other facsimile editions of the codices at UNC's Wilson Library.

Through videoconferencing and social media, the students will forge connections and share their thoughts and discoveries with each other. As the capstone event, students from Morganton will travel to Yucatán to visit cultural sites and present their findings in an exhibit to be held at various locations, including AGEY. Likewise, the Yucatec students will travel to North Carolina to present their own exhibit and participate in cultural events in the Chapel Hill and Morganton areas.

Maya from the Margins: Archives and Experiences of History, Identity, and Migration is a Museums Connect℠ project. Museums Connect is an initiative of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs that is administered by the American Alliance of Museums. It builds on InHerit's ongoing work with the community of Tahcabo (see stories on p. 2) and a newly formed relationship with Patton High School's teachers, administrators, students, and their parents in Morganton, NC. We are delighted to be engaging in new partnerships and to be helping Maya youth from Yucatán and NC build connections between their communities!

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Welcome to Our New Program Director

UNC program InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present and the independent non-profit Alliance for Heritage Conservation are pleased to introduce Dr. Gabrielle Vail as the new Program Director. Dr. Vail, known to friends as Gaby, brings to our heritage programs a wealth of experience in Maya archaeology, Maya epigraphy (decipherment of hieroglyphics), and in conducting workshops with descendant and local communities in the Maya region as well as in North America.

InHerit's new Program Director, Gabrielle Vail.

Gaby received her PhD in Anthropology from Tulane University in 1996 and recently was a Visiting Professor at New College in Sarasota, Florida. Gaby is particularly known for her scholarship on the Madrid Codex, one of the few extant Maya codices that survived the 16th century wars of Spanish conquest. As the true innovator and educator that she is, Gaby built a website that features glyph-by-glyph decipherment of the codex in an easily accessible format. You can check it out at mayacodices.org. Gaby also gave a series of workshops on the Madrid Codex for the PACOY project (Proyecto Arqueológico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatán) over the summer (see story below).

Dr. Vail with students from grades 5-6 in the primary school in Tahcabo.

In late August, Gaby hit the ground running as the InHerit Program Director because InHerit just received funding from the U.S. State Department for a project called "Maya from the Margins" (see more on p. 1). Previous Program Directors (Drs. Sarah Rowe and Claire Novotny) were involved with the initial and revised submissions of this grant and Gaby will be the one who oversees the shaping and implementation of grant activities. Please join me in extending a big Carolina welcome to Gabrielle Vail!

Madrid Codex Workshops in Yucatán, Mexico

Last June, Dr. Gabrielle Vail (Gaby) gave a series of well-received workshops in Tahcabo and Tizimín, Yucatán. Workshop themes, tailored to participant level, addressed various aspects of the Maya codices (books in a screenfold format), including deities, numbers, colors, animals, details of the scenes pictured, and the calendrical system. The workshops focused on the Madrid Codex because it is believed to have been painted in a community in the general vicinity of Tahcabo and Tizimín.

In Tahcabo, Gaby presented three workshops in the primary school, two workshops in the secondary school, and a workshop for high school students that was also open to members of the public. In the nearby city of Tizimín, she provided a workshop to 30 teachers who work in schools across the region, along with lesson plans so that they can introduce the material from the workshops to their classes. The students especially enjoyed making their own codices, which required them to recognize deities and glyphs for the world quarters and other locations in order to organize the pages of their book correctly. They were all eager to show Dr. Vail their fine work!

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Tahcabo Heritage Trail

Beginning in January 2016, landscape architect and PACOY (Proyecto Arqueológico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatán) volunteer M. K. Smaby designed six signs to mark and explain locations of interest in Tahcabo: the museum, the church, the central mound, cenotes, *rejolladas*, or dry sink holes, and ancient houses with walls still standing. Details and photographs of the design process can be found on the InHerit website (in-herit.org).

The process included interviews of community members and meetings with the heritage committee, who provided opinions about the most important locations in the community that they would like to see highlighted, and expressed their priorities for the heritage trail. This led to the creation of a sign that provides recommendations for behavior in the community of Tahcabo, as well as suggestions for how to enjoy the visit.

Tahcabo resident Gabriel Santiago Dzul Balam (right side) and his team install a heritage trail sign that contains details about the Colonial church ruins.

Community members also expressed interest in attracting international in addition to local visitors, so we incorporated English into the designs that already included Yucatec Maya and Spanish. The posts for the signs are made of local wood donated by heritage committee members, as all residents we spoke with were of the opinion that wooden signs would be more ecological and fit better with the small-town feel of the community. We are delighted that the signs were installed in time for this year's Feria de San Bartolomé!

Tahcabo Museum Anniversary

The heritage committee in Tahcabo held a big celebration for the first-year anniversary of the community's museum. During the event, the president of the heritage committee gave a report on the museum's accomplishments during the previous year. The report featured the number of museum visitors (more than 300!), as well as initiatives such as the Mérida fieldtrip for Tahcabo students to the archaeological site of Dzibilchaltún, as featured in the spring newsletter. Next, four members of the PACOY archaeological team, including Maia Dedrick, Amanda Brock, Roger Alejandro Balam Chemal, and José Miguel Kanxoc Kumul, presented on the progress of excavations that began in March 2016.

New members joined the heritage committee, which is now a group of eight community members, and they inaugurated their new constitution, which will guide committee continuity in the future. Tahcabo's new community council, recently developed by SEDESOL (the Ministry of Social Development), supported the event by preparing an exhibition of medicinal plants that was featured during the evening. Additional cultural highlights of the event included the performance of songs in Yucatec Maya as well as traditional *jarana* dancing.

Dancers from Tizimín *jarana* group Ok'ot Ik'al perform for invited guests and community members in celebration of the museum's one-year anniversary.

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Site Stewardship Project in Toledo District, Belize

In June 2016 InHerit initiated a new project in the Toledo district, southern Belize. The site stewardship project envisioned a sustainable method of mapping and managing material heritage on Maya community lands in the Toledo district, with InHerit providing training and support. Local people have been stewards of the land and cultural resources for millennia; combining archaeological knowledge with local priorities could serve as a foundational platform for local management of heritage places.

Working in collaboration with the Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) and geographers from the University of Colorado and the University of Arizona, we conducted GPS training with ten community participants selected from villages throughout the district.

The workshops started with a discussion about heritage and its meaning to local people. The group discussed the different components of maps, how they are made, and how they can be used to record community boundaries and heritage places. After thinking about the concepts behind Global Positioning Systems (GPS), participants were given GPS units and notebooks in which to record coordinates and draw sketch maps.

Claire Novotny discusses GPS mapping techniques with community members.

Three young boys from Aguacate explore a map of Belize at the Heritage Center inauguration ceremony in June 2016.

The highlight of the training week was getting into the field and practicing mapping skills! Participants mapped the boundary of a family farm, and then braved a torrential downpour to apply their skills in Aguacate village. The group worked together to map the main road through the village as well as the heritage center and the archaeological site of Kaq'ru' Ha'. We also enjoyed a delicious lunch of chicken *caldo* (soup) generously provided by the village leaders.

We hope to continue this collaboration moving forward and follow up with the new community heritage stewards in the spring of 2017.

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Park and Heritage Center Inaugurated in Aguacate, Belize

In 2012 the Aguacate Community Development Committee (ACDC) was awarded a Community Heritage Conservation Grant by InHerit. The goal of the committee was to conserve the archaeological site of Kaq'ru' Ha' as a community park and establish a heritage center in Aguacate village to store artifacts from excavations of the site and house educational materials.

Additional elements of the project include procuring plants and saplings for the park, signage for the site, a mural to be painted on the outside of the heritage center, and field trips for Aguacate students to other nearby archaeological sites.

In June 2016, the Kaq'ru' Ha' park and heritage center were inaugurated by ACDC and the village leaders. A celebration was held at the site and archaeologist Claire Novotny, who excavated at Kaq'ru' Ha' for her dissertation project, gave a site tour.

Artifacts were displayed at the heritage center and everyone gathered to admire the mural painted on the walls.

A lunch of delicious pork *caldo* (soup), *poch* (corn tamales), and fresh, hot tortillas was served to the entire community. ACDC thanks InHerit for their generous support, and looks forward to maintaining the community park for years to come!

Mural painted for the inauguration of the Kaq'ru' Ha' Park and Heritage Center in Aguacate, Belize.

InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present is a UNC-Chapel Hill program administered by the Research Labs of Archaeology and the Department of Anthropology. The Alliance for Heritage Conservation is a registered 501(c)3.

Patricia McAnany, Executive Director
Gabrielle Vail, Program Director

Correspondence can be addressed to P.O. Box 941, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, or to connect@in-herit.org. Please visit our website at **in-herit.org** for further information about our programs.

Help a high school student of Maya descent participate in a cultural exchange program!

The Program

UNC-Chapel Hill program ***InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present*** has received a highly competitive grant from the US Department of State, which aims to build a cultural bridge between students of Maya descent living in North Carolina and peers in Yucatán, Mexico.

For these children of migrants who journeyed from Guatemala and Mexico to NC in search of a better life, this unique opportunity reconnects them with a rich cultural heritage and introduces them to contemporary issues facing Maya peoples on both sides of the border. Through this program, students learn about the historical forces that have shaped their lives and those of their ancestors and how their cultural identity is an important part of the increasingly diverse tapestry that is the 21st-century US.

Building Cultural Bridges

In-depth Study & Research	Through workshops on language, literature, and migration, students explore their history. Students undertake primary research on these topics—NC students at UNC-Chapel Hill's Southern Historical Collection, and Yucatec students at the State Archives of Yucatán.
Connecting & Creating	The two student groups connect with each other through Facebook and Google Hangouts, and each group creates a bilingual exhibit to be displayed at the Wilson Library.
Coming Together	As the capstone event, the NC delegation travels to Yucatán with their exhibit, where they visit cultural sites and get to know their Yucatec counterparts. In March, Yucatec students travel to North Carolina for a reciprocal visit.

Making it Happen—We Need YOU!

Sixteen extremely deserving and qualified students at Morganton's Patton High School have been nominated to participate in this program; however, the grant provides funding for only eight US students. Students, teachers, and parents are conducting fundraisers of all sorts to raise the **$1,500 per student** needed to allow all 16 students (plus chaperones) to travel to Yucatán.

The return on this investment is enormous. While there, students will visit the Maya community of Tahcabo; explore the archaeological sites of Balankanche' Caverns, Chichén Itzá, and Ek' Balam; and visit the cultural attractions of Mérida, including the State Archives and the Mundo Maya Museum.

Help sponsor a student today!

Please consider making a donation -- your tax-deductible contribution in any amount will help tremendously. For those interested in sponsoring a student, an individual or group donation of $1500 will cover their travel. Sponsors are listed on InHerit's website, receive an invitation to the opening of the student exhibit, a behind-the-scenes tour of the archives, and letters from the sponsored student(s).

Donations can be made online at **in-herit.org** or by check to The Alliance for Heritage Conservation, P.O. Box 941, Chapel Hill, NC 27541. Thank you for helping to make a difference in the lives of these students who have so much to offer!