Indigenous heritage
Passed to Present

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

The Alliance For Heritage Conservation

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"MUSEUMS CONNECT" STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

After six months of online interaction, fifteen students from Morganton, NC, and ten from Valladolid, Mexico had the opportunity to meet each other in April as part of the "Museums Connect" program. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, Museums Connect was established to build bridges of cultural understanding between youth in the U.S. and other countries through collaborations focused on museums or archives. In collaboration with UNC's Southern Historical Collection and the State Archives of Yucatán (AGEY), InHerit proposed a series of workshops and archival research that would take place both in North Carolina with a group of Maya-descendant high-school students from Morganton and in Yucatán, Mexico with a group of college students from the Universidad de Oriente in Valladolid (UNO). In both places, the students had the opportunity to explore their history, heritage, and identity over the course of the spring semester. Working with university faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill and UNO, they translated their research into a traveling exhibit called "Maya Cultural Revitalization: Our View from the Archives."

The visiting students try out their skills at archaeological mapping at the excavations at Tahcabo, Yucatán.

The Valladolid students traveled to North Carolina in early April with their exhibit panels. They spent a week exploring Chapel Hill and the western part of the state alongside students from Morganton. Their combined exhibits (five panels by the Morganton students and four by the UNO students) were displayed in Morganton on April 10th, in Asheville, NC, on April 11th and in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill on the 13th. One of the highlights of the trip for the UNO students was their visit to the Museum of the Cherokee Indian; another was the cookout on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus that was accompanied by games of soccer and volleyball.

For the Morganton students, the trip to Yucatán was an eye-opening experience. Having studied photographs and journal entries by archaeologists and explorers working in Yucatán in the 19th and early 20th centuries, they were excited to experience sites—such as Chichén Itzá—that they had researched. More than one of the students was awe-struck by the realization that the places they were visiting had been built by Maya people many hundreds of years before the first encounter between Europeans and Indigenous cultures in Mesoamerica. This same sense of deep history was felt by the students when visiting Yucatec Maya communities, where they were treated like family. Students talk about their experiences with the program in the "Amateur Archivists" video at www.unc.edu/spotlight/amateur-archivists/; for additional pictures from the exchange trips, see InHerit's Facebook page at www.fb.com/inheritpassedtopresent.

Lasting friendships formed among the students from UNO and Morganton as we explored Yucatán by bus.

REFLECTIONS ON THE "MAYA FROM THE MARGINS" PROGRAM

BY MATEO GONZALEZ

Being chosen to be part of this program was an honor and a privilege for me. From the beginning, I knew it was going to help me academically; however, I was unaware how impactful it would be in my personal life.

Mateo Gonzalez introduces himself at the first "Museums Connect" workshop held at Patton High School in Morganton last September.

Throughout the months I participated, I was able to acquire so much information about my identity and heritage. Through the entertaining workshops with college professors, I learned countless interesting facts about the Mayan language, history, migration, and heritage. Through the archival-based research we did at Chapel Hill, I was exposed to a unique, exciting, and intriguing way of exploring 19th and early 20th century explorers' materials through photographs, letters, maps, and journals. I was amazed by the fact that only a small number of people had ever accessed this priceless and extraordinary information.

Learning more about my identity and expanding my knowledge about my ancestors through a research project of my choice was a unique opportunity.
Presenting this project and exhibit to my school and on university campuses was extraordinary. However, these experiences were nothing compared to our trip to Yucatán. The educational part of the trip helped me connect the dots and answered questions that I raised after the completion of my project, but this was only one part of the trip that was meaningful to me.

Walking around places such as Valladolid, Tihosuco, and Tahcabo and seeing in person the people's appreciation for the architectural accomplishments and cultural heritage of the Maya by preserving part of them in museums and exposing them to the public was an incredible experience. Our interactive activities with the entire community at Tahcabo were also unforgettable moments, from the warm welcome they received us with through enlightening tours of archaeological and historical sites, dances depicting Mayan rituals, a soccer game between the Yucatecans and us, and their traditional and exquisite food!

Beyond this, our visit to Chichén Itzá was one of my favorite parts of the trip. Having the opportunity to visit one of the seven wonders of world was breathtaking, and I was deeply touched by the fact that my ancestors, thousands of years ago, built such architecturally perfect temples and pyramids. I was also inspired by the fascinating and intriguing stories behind each one of them. Other things that I enjoyed were the spontaneous moments I had with the other students, chaperones, and professors such as when we went out for dinner late at night, our swim in the cenote deep underground, and our afternoon walks around Valladolid and Mérida. I have learned so much not only about Yucatecan culture but also about myself. In a way, meeting the Yucatec students has helped me develop a sense of pride and confidence about myself as Latino with a Mayan identity. The trip had a tremendous impact on me, and I plan to go back to Yucatán when I can to connect to the culture there.

GENEROUS DONORS MAKE STUDENTS' DREAMS OF TRAVEL A REALITY

We greatly appreciate the generosity of those who contributed to The Alliance for Heritage Conservation in support of the student exchange component of the Museums Connect program. Thanks to these generous donations, we were able to bring an additional eight travelers (six high school students, a teacher as chaperone, and an undergraduate student mentor from UNC) to Yucatán. The contributions also allowed students from the high school in Tahcabo to participate in three Museums Connect workshops offered at the Universidad de Oriente in Valladolid last fall and in the visit of the U.S. delegation to Yucatán in April. (Continued on p. 3)

GENEROUS DONORS MAKE STUDENTS' DREAMS OF TRAVEL A REALITY (CONT'D)

A special note of thanks to those who contributed $1500 or more to sponsor one or several students' travel – William Giltinan, Florence Peacock, and a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. We also appreciate the generosity of the Governors Club in Chapel Hill; the Institute for the Study of the Americas at UNC; the Asheville San Cristóbal-Valladolid Sister Cities organization; and the students in Penny Jenkins' Civics class at R. L. Patton High School in Morganton. The students voted to donate the money they raised from their start-up bakery venture to help their classmates with the cost of their travel.

Other tireless supporters of the project included UNC-CH doctoral candidates Maia Dedrick and Hannah Palmer; the two undergraduate student mentors (see the story adjacent); Thedy Bowman and Hannah Hawn, Spanish teachers at Patton High School; Dr. Dylan Clark of UNC-Asheville; and Lisa-Jean Michinezi of UNC-CH.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT MENTORS FOR THE "MUSEUMS CONNECT" PROJECT RECEIVE THEIR BA DEGREES

Jackie and Raina enjoy their Latin American Studies graduation ceremony. Photo courtesy of Bryan Giemza.

Our hats are off to Raina Enrique and Jacqueline (Jackie) López, who have been serving as mentors for the Museums Connect project at UNC-Chapel Hill since last September. Jackie and Raina met with the Morganton students several times a month via Google Hangouts to talk through the topics addressed during the workshops and respond to their questions. As graduates of the Duke-UNC Yucatec Maya language program, they had previously spent time in Yucatán. They were wonderful role models for the high school students while traveling and even taught them Yucatec phrases in preparation for their visit to Yucatán. With bachelor's degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill, Jackie and Raina plan to devote next year to working for service organizations to help youth both at home and abroad.

SECOND ROUND OF AIA FUNDING PROMOTES CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TAHCABO, YUCATAN

The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) recently approved a second round of funding for the Site Preservation Grant awarded to Inherit in 2015 for community heritage work at Tahcabo. Funds received to date have supported the distribution of Soy Maya! coloring books to Maya children, workshops related to the Maya codices, and student-designed marionette performances. The grant also funded the creation of the Tahcabo Community Museum and the Heritage Trail that winds through town (recently enjoyed by students from NC!). The second round of funding will allow heritage committee members to travel to the municipal and state government seats in Calotmul and Mérida to speak with officials to request additional resources. The heritage committee is designing a sign directing visitors to the museum that will be displayed on the main highway at the turn-off to Tahcabo and is also developing promotional brochures for local distribution. They also plan to introduce additional events to attract locals and visitors to the museum and to offer workshops to prepare committee members and other Tahcabo residents to lead community tours. A Yucatec Maya language workshop will take place in early August, and the museum's second anniversary celebration is scheduled for later in the month.

FACTORIES OF CHANGE: INHERIT'S LATEST PARTNERSHIP WITH UNC'S ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT AND SOUTHERN HISTORICAL COLLECTION

Led by Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (UNC Anthropology), the "Factories of Change" project brings together an unlikely cohort – anthropologists and an archivist from UNC-Chapel Hill, an anthropologist from Puebla, Mexico, social studies and history teachers from Rocky Mount, NC, and business and municipal leaders from Ecuador. The goal: to explore how industrial spaces (primarily textile mills or factories) have been repurposed and their role in the communities they inhabit. InHerit Program Director Gabrielle Vail joined the project team for an inside look at repurposed textile mills in a variety of communities in NC (including Greensboro, Rocky Mount, Saxapahaw, and Star) in late May. These were of interest to Ecuadorian visitors Mauricio Ayala, Richard Calderon, and Fernando Jara in light of their connection to the Fábrica Imbabura, a former textile factory in Atuntaqui, Ecuador that was converted into a state-of-the art museum. Through collaboration and consultation with archivists and museum professionals in the U.S., the Ecuadoran delegation hopes to find solutions to some of the most pressing issues of Ecuadoran industrial heritage: cataloguing, preserving, and digitizing dozens of boxes of archival materials relating to the factory and also finding ways to increase traffic to the museum. A solution for increasing visitation was presented by a visit to the Tsongas Industrial History Center, an educational facility in Lowell, Massachusetts that was built within an original textile factory and is visited by 40,000 school children each year.

Meeting between "Factories of Change" participants and Natabuela community leaders.

The project team visits the community museum in Cotacachi, Ecuador.

The U.S. team's visit to Ecuador in late June allowed project members, including Gabrielle Vail, to tour the former factory. We also talked with representatives of groups in Imbabura Province concerned with cultural heritage, including school teachers, mayors, university professors, artisans, and leaders of indigenous communities. These meetings resulted in several calls to action – to help the Fábrica Imbabura develop resources (including its archive) that will make it a true center of community life for the residents of Atuntaqui and surrounding regions, and to work with residents of the indigenous community of Natabuela to develop strategies for heritage conservation and to dialogue more widely about issues of cultural survival.

PREVIOUS INHERIT PROGRAM DIRECTOR AWARDED A FULLBRIGHT

Dr. Sarah Rowe, past Program Director of InHerit, was granted a Fulbright Scholar award to continue her community archaeology work in Ecuador. Rowe, who is currently an assistant professor at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, is partnering with the community of Dos Mangas in Santa Elena Province to investigate the site of Buen Suceso, a Valdivia period village dating to around 2000 BC. The Fulbright Scholar award provides two months of support each year in the summers of 2017 and 2018. Rowe is currently in Ecuador for the first phase of this project, conducting excavations to identify ancient households at the site.

Members of Dos Mangas' community tourism guides group are working with her on these excavations, to learn archaeological methods and techniques for site excavation and interpretation. During the second phase of the project, in 2018, she will work with community members to develop signage and interpretive material about the site, which will augment existing ecotourism infrastructure in the community. She will also hold a series of workshops about archaeology and the prehispanic coastal cultures for the community guides and the town's primary school. Congratulations, Sarah!

Dr. Rowe presents a copy of her dissertation on Buen Suceso at a community meeting in Dos Mangas. Photo by Guy Duke.

Dr. Rowe and her team have had a very wet field season so far, but are making good progress towards the project goals. Photo by Guy Duke.

THE ALLIANCE'S NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

Dr. Dylan Clark, of the University of North Carolina–Asheville and Boundary End Center in Barnardsville, NC, recently joined the Board of the Alliance for Heritage Conservation. Dylan is a Mesoamerican archaeologist whose work focuses on coastal and island archaeology, especially in the Maya region.

He has conducted excavations at Chichén Itzá, the port of Isla Cerritos, and at sites in the Copán Valley. Additionally, his interests revolve around heritage and museum studies, as well as community and public archaeology. Dr. Clark played a key role on the Museums Connect project by facilitating a visit to Asheville (a sister city of Valladolid, Yucatán) by the student delegations for a presentation of their exhibits on the campus of UNCA. Welcome Dylan!

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.

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