

Horizons

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NEWSLETTER

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GUATEMALA *up close*

In February, Horizons of Friendship Board member Dr. Henry Becker was part of a delegation of 20 people who visited Guatemala and saw Horizons-supported projects 'Up Close'. These are his reflections on the trip.

I'd visited Guatemala before - in 1995 as an ordinary tourist with my wife Andrée. We saw beauty and grandeur: the centuries-old, earthquake-scarred colonial capital, Antigua; the lake Lago de Atitlan with its surrounding volcanoes; the majestic remains of ancient Mayan Tikal. We experienced the picturesque and exotic: Maya women and children in their colourful costumes; bustling markets overflowing with artisanal products; the jungles.

How different was my visit this year on Horizons' exposure tour! Here, the focus was not on the "touristy", it was on the people - their problems, their aspirations, their achievements and their needs. The people that the ordinary tourist hardly

notices - the poor of a country where the distribution of wealth is grossly skewed and leaves three quarters of the citizens below the poverty line.

Most of these poor are indigenous, nearly all Maya. Both of Horizons of Friendship's partner organisations in Guatemala are working with the Maya. Because of this, we saw a lot of these resilient and tenacious people who have endured centuries of oppression. Despite this, the Maya have retained an amazing uniqueness and vitality in their culture and traditions. It was an experience I'd hoped for, and one, which I'll forever treasure.

There were twenty of us on the tour, including three Horizons staff. Most of us were from Ontario, but two came from Alberta and one from Nova Scotia. Six, besides the staff, were veterans of previous tours, and old friends. I've been struck on these tours-as have others-by the compatibility and close camaraderie of the members. Do people who are interested enough to want to visit the less fortunate of other lands tend naturally to be companionable? True or not, it certainly adds to the pleasure of the experience!



Henry (r) & a Fundación Solar member discuss the new tree nursery.

The work of the Horizons of Friendship's partner Fundación Solar is in communities around Lago de Atitlan, so I saw the lovely volcano-girded lake once more. Fundación Solar started operations in 1993 and sees its mission as "...a driving force in the fields of renewable energy services, environmental services, legislation and policy



Delegation members listen to a briefing on current conditions in Guatemala.



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Walter Castro, Kabawil's director, addresses community members prior to introducing Horizons' delegation.

formulation for water and energy, to support sustainable development..." The project supported by Horizons features income-generating initiatives with a strong environmental thrust and is designed to attract eco-tourism. It will transform the village of San Juan de Laguna into a living museum, with Mayan textile and visual arts centres, the production and sale of traditional medicines and health products, and illustrations of recycling operations.

A new project just started has established a tree nursery with the twin aims of conserving native forest species and reforesting vulnerable slopes. Deforestation is a huge problem of Central America.

The second Guatemalan organisation currently supported by Horizons of Friendship is the Kabawil Peasant Farmers Council. Kabawil works for farmers and bases its approach on a Mayan worldview and the principles of freedom, justice and cultural

identity. Kabawil grew out of an informal grouping of farmers' organisations working for land reform, and was launched in 1993; three years before the civil war ended.

The acquisition of land for peasants remains a major mission together with the rebuilding of the Mayan culture and identity, promoting the rights of women, enhancing community empowerment, improving access to education and training, seeking fair wages and working conditions for rural workers, and promoting participation in the political process both locally and nationally.

Two of Kabawil's projects are currently funded by Horizons of Friendship. The first supports sustainable rural development. It aims to organise groups of families, train young leaders, help to establish community stores selling basic necessities, and purchase equipment needed for youth programs.



The second project is very unusual and, in my opinion, has huge potential: a Mayan Peasant Popular Education School. It's Kabawil's intention that this school "...will give youth the opportunity to meet their responsibility to create a better society in which the problems of unequal opportunity, the distribution of wealth and systematic injustice will be addressed, leading to true development and a dignified standard of living". The program will be 11 months long and include courses such as Citizen Participation, Agriculture, Livestock Farming, and Identity and Culture. This could be an extremely significant development for the Mayan people, with benefits such as the preparation of future leaders; empowerment of the youth by strengthening their pride, dignity and understanding of their rights; the preservation and revitalization of Maya culture and the recovery of Maya history.

We visited the school at a very special moment - its official opening. The ceremonies were very touching and I'm sure every person in our delegation wishes the school an immediate and unqualified success.

Not all our time was spent learning about projects. We also visited various local sights, markets, museums and shops. To close the tour, we had a day and a half sight seeing in Antigua.

I remain deeply impressed with the value of Horizons' activities in Mesoamerica and the quality of the people involved. I really wish that every supporter of Horizons of Friendship could have the opportunity to see how effectively their contributions are being used. If only the governments of the region could be instilled with even a quarter of the effectiveness of Horizons work, what a difference it would make to the task of improving the lives of their impoverished people!

Patricia Rebollo, Horizons director (centre), cuts the ribbon at the official opening of Kabawil's School.

Delegate's comments after the Guatemala Trip

"Although I have been a supporter of Horizons for years, I am a bigger supporter now. The attention to detail and care of the organization and its sensitivity to its partners in Guatemala is excellent."



Meticulous bookkeeping is a feature of all Horizons-supported projects



Education is a vital component of all projects.

"The meetings with partners and tour of projects were very emotional for me - I always feel that I learn best when I feel issues, rather than just understand them. I was so struck by the pride and dignity of those who have so little, this will make me reflect on myself and how I live in Canada."

"As usual Horizons is doing great work, and although it seems like a drop in the bucket, many drops of water do have an impact over time."



Mayan community members with medicinal herbs

"I would express Horizons work as a productive and respectful relationship in which funding the partners is a means to the achievement of community goals."

Our Program

INGUA

The Country

A country of striking features and a strong indigenous culture, Guatemala's natural beauty and powerful identity stand in stark contrast to its bloody past and troubled present.

Mountainous, heavily forested and dotted with Mayan ruins, lakes, volcanoes, orchids and exotic birds, Guatemala is one of the most beautiful countries in Central America.

Its indigenous population, the Maya, makes up about half of the population. Mayan languages are spoken alongside Spanish, the official tongue. Many Guatemalans are of mixed Amerindian-Hispanic origin.

Guatemala's beauty and strength of identity have not been accompanied by cohesion and prosperity. In 1996 the country emerged from a 36-year-long civil war in which more than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared.

In spite of an official finding that 93% of all atrocities carried out during the war had been committed by the security forces, moves to bring those responsible to account have only recently started after a long delay.



Guatemalans live in one of the most iniquitous societies in the region. Poverty is particularly prevalent in rural areas and in indigenous communities. Illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition are among the highest in the region, life expectancy is among the lowest and the country is one of the most violent in Latin America.

Horizons two partner organizations in Guatemala



Kabawil Peasant Farmers' Council (Kabawil) is a nationally-known nonprofit organization based on the Mayan world view and the principals of freedom, justice and cultural identity and is based on recovering, valuing and living in harmony with Mother Earth and works for the peasant farmer population of Guatemala. Kabawil is a Mayan word meaning "Double Sight," a mythical ability to see simultaneously up and down, near and far, day and night, good and bad, past and future. It is a profound and integrated

philosophy for the Mayan people.

The roots of Kabawil lie in the historical struggle of Guatemala's indigenous communities for land: "We cannot be separated from Mother Earth, because we are part of her." The struggle is spiritual and material, inner and outer worlds entwined in the perpetual dance of life and being. Kabawil has been in Guatemala working to gain access to land for its membership by submitting applications to the Land Fund, a government agency that was set up under the Peace Accords to provide land to those in need. Kabawil actively involves its members in the land application process.

More than 3,100 families in 112 communities

ATEMALA



Training session at Kabawil's Office

have learned the specifics of the peace agreements and how to complete applications for land. This has increased their sense of ownership of the organization and belief in themselves. Women have equal participation in Kabawil's organizational structures, and have been recognized as heads of households in the land applications - a significant achievement that has required intensive lobbying of the Land Fund, which initially recognized only men as heads of family.

In 2001, Kabawil acquired four farms. Given the importance they place on a respectful relationship to the land that sustains and nurtures them, Kabawil communities are striving to implement ecologically sustainable programs on these farms.

On a recent visit to one of the farms, we were shown the intricate irrigation systems that had been designed for the subsistence plots, as well as the coffee, cardamon and banana groves. Communities have gained the necessary expertise to develop the farms themselves, rather than having to contract outside help. Kabawil is now offering its acquired agricultural knowledge to other groups who have recently obtained land. Life on the farms is hard, but the Kabawil communities are gradually building a future for themselves in harmony with the land.



The Solar Foundation (Fundación Solar) has been a registered nonprofit organization in Guatemala since 1994, one year after it began its work to promote the environment. Its early work in this area emphasized environmental research and policy dialogue with like-minded organizations, national government and international bodies. However, in 1998 it began working with grassroots organizations to promote environmentally-friendly strategies for socioeconomic initiatives. It decided to focus this

work in the Lake Atitlan area in the department of Solola, because of the ecological importance of this part of the country and because of the predominance of indigenous people struggling to overcome conditions of poverty and oppression.

The Solar Foundation currently works with a number of community organizations in San Juan La Laguna, one of the municipalities in the Lake Atitlan area. The Foundation is working with each of these groups to strengthen their organizational processes and to assist them in achieving more efficient, environmentally friendly and ultimately more profitable

operational methods and procedures. At the same time, the groups are participating in developing a common vision to turn the area into a community museum of "living culture" which will offer ecotourism to visitors.

Horizons of Friendship assists The Solar Foundation with technical capacity building, focussing on soil conservation techniques, forestry management, coffee cultivation (including the use of natural fertilizers) and protection of water sources; Recuperation of forests, which involves taking inventories to document the current situation, studying native species and collecting seeds for their tree nursery. Depleted areas will be reforested and a variety of species added to coffee plantations, where they will provide increased shade.

The Solar Foundation works in a respectful manner with local populations to integrate local experience and culture with academic and technical knowledge and practices. They promote mutual respect among all participants regardless of social class, age or gender through sensitivity training, exercises in participatory decision-making and rotation of responsibilities.



Solar oven for drying medicinal herbs

Horizons at Home

Images from Horizons fundraising event Writers & Friends at Le Van Hall, Trinity College School, Port Hope in November 2004.



L-R; Stuart Grainger, Trinity College School Headmaster, authors Paul Quarrington, Kate Taylor, Richard B. Wright, Farley Mowat, Stuart's wife Monica, MC David McFarlane, Horizons Board Member Dr. Paul Caldwell.



Farley Mowat accepts a gift of a Mayan tapestry from Walter Castro Simon, Director of Horizons partner Kabawil, visiting from Guatemala.

Thanks to our many friends and supporters for contributing their time and talents to make our special events so enjoyable and successful!

Homes Gardens & Music

**Sunday July 10, 2005
Cobourg**

Horizons 8th Annual tour of heritage homes, lakeside vistas elegant gardens with live concerts and light refreshments

Call 1-888-729-9928 or 905-372-5483 ext 10 for tickets & information

Exposure Tour to Chiapas, Mexico February 19-28, 2006

A unique travel & educational opportunity to see the work supported by Horizons of Friendship with excursions to historical and cultural sites.

Limited enrolment. Deadline to reserve a place; September 30, 2005

For more details on both of these trips, contact Jessica at 1-888-729-9928 ext 24 or email tour@horizons.ca

Rose Richardson 1938-2005

We were all saddened by the recent death of Kingston, Ontario's Rose Richardson after a long battle with cancer. For decades, Rose had supported the work of Horizons of Friendship both personally and through Chez Piggy (the restaurant) and Pan Chanco (the bakery). The restaurant hosted benefit dinners when hurricanes hit Central America, the bakery donated gourmet fare and servers for our Kingston Writers & Friends fundraiser. Rose sat on committees, she travelled to Guatemala, she understood as well anyone the need. Zal Yanovsky, her partner in business and in life, likewise believed in supporting Horizons work in Central America. When Zal died two years ago, The Rose & Zal El Salvador Fund was set up. That fund will continue as a monument to their commitment. Rose showed us how to help others with grace and good humour. She will be sorely missed.

Mayan Community Outreach in Eastern Canada

Last November, Horizons of Friendship sponsored the visit to Canada of Walter Castro, an indigenous Mayan man from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala and the director of our partner organization the Kabawil Peasant Farmers' Network.

Walter's visit is part of our goal to bring about greater understanding amongst Canadians of our work with indigenous people in Guatemala.

During his visit, Walter met and spoke with a variety of groups including faith-based, university, advocacy and charitable organizations. His travels with Horizons of Friendship took him from Cobourg to Kingston, Ottawa, and Peterborough and also to Nova Scotia, where both Walter and Horizons staff made new friends and met with long-time supporters of Horizons' work.

Walter's visit reminded Canadians of the continuing struggles of indigenous peoples in Guatemala who are discriminated against, and of the acute poverty, which is rampant in rural communities. His talks emphasized that, although approximately 60% of Guatemala's population is indigenous, political power, wealth and land ownership are



Patricia Rebolledo (l) and Walter meet with the Sisters of St. Martha in Antigonish, Nova Scotia

concentrated in the hands of very few people, of mostly European descent.

Violence and repression also continue to be a widespread problem and Guatemala City is one of the most violent urban centres in the world. Walter explained to audiences that Guatemala is emerging from a 36-year-long civil war in which more than 200,000 people were killed. He also emphasized that until the 1996 Peace Accords are completely honoured by the government, there will not be a lasting peace and an end to violence.

During his presentations in Canada, Walter shared the importance of understanding the values promoted by the Mayan peoples - principles like recovering, valuing and living in harmony with Mother Earth. It established and combined the need of communities to legally acquire land in order to the improve quality of life of indigenous peoples, who then become agents of their own development process. He highlighted the success that communities are having by organizing at the grassroots level in communal projects; such as fish farms and collective agriculture, while continue to practice their cultural values.

Throughout his two-week visit, Walter raised awareness of the new challenges and opportunities for social change facing Guatemalans and strengthened the commitment and solidarity of Canadians towards the Mayan indigenous peoples.

Walter had an opportunity to repay the Canadian hospitality when he welcomed participants on Horizons exposure tour to Guatemala earlier this year.



Walter (l) presents a Mayan tapestry to Peter Delanty, Mayor of Cobourg

Gifts to Fund the Future

A Gift of Property with Residual Interest

It's like having your cake and eating it, too! You have the satisfaction of making a major gift to your favourite charity now and receiving an immediate tax benefit, yet you can continue to use and enjoy the gift property for the rest of your life!

This type of planned gift is known as a gift of residual interest with retained life use, and it usually involves your principal residence or other personal real estate, such as a cottage. In making such a gift, you transfer the property to your favourite charity, but retain its use for your lifetime and, if you wish, for as long as your spouse lives as well.

When the transfer is made, you get a receipt for the present value of the "residual interest" -- the value, in today's dollars, of the property your favourite charity will receive at your death. This is calculated on the basis of the property's appraised value, your age, and the current

discount rate as determined by the Canada Revenue Agency.

An example of giving your principal residence

Catherine Darcy, 72, owns a home valued at \$200,000. She wants to live in it for many more years, but would like her favourite charity to have it when she dies. So she decides to give her favourite charity the home now, retaining a life interest for herself. She receives a donation receipt for \$85,421 which will reduce her income taxes by around \$41,000 over the next five years. Because Miss Darcy's house is her principal residence, she realizes no taxable gain at the time of the transfer, no matter how its value has gone up since she bought it. While she lives in the house, she will be responsible for maintenance and other expenses specified in her gift agreement with her favourite charity. If it becomes necessary for her to give up the house sometime before her death, she

has several options. She can rent the house and keep the income from that, give her life interest to her favourite charity and get an additional donation receipt, or, she and her favourite charity could jointly sell their respective interests in the house. Miss Darcy would then get a share of the proceeds based on the value of her life interest.

Living in your principal residence or enjoying property such as a cottage can be all the more satisfying if you know that, when you no longer need it, it will become your gift to your favourite charity. (You should always seek professional legal, estate planning and financial advice before deciding on a course of action.)

If you have any questions, please contact John Belton at 1-888-729-9928 extension 20.



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We welcome your comments, please write!
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Together we can build strong communities. Please join us today!!

I want to support Community Development by joining Horizons' Sustaining Donor Plan. I authorize Horizons to receive monthly tax-creditable donations from my specified account in the amount of:

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