

Dear Friends,

We have recently returned from this year's fieldwork in Peru, and we are writing to tell you about our ongoing work there, focusing on our accomplishments during our stay between May and August, 2001.

We are pleased to report to you that the success of our field projects during our organization's first five years of operation has led to new, exciting opportunities for Cabeceras Aid Project to collaborate with indigenous communities and their allies to promote the social and physical well-being of these communities. Your support over the years has made Cabeceras Aid Project one of the most effective and respected field organizations working in lowland indigenous Peru. We hope you continue to share our enthusiasm about the future of our work in Peru, and continue to support our much-appreciated fieldwork with people and communities who have wonderful ideas and are seeking resources for bringing these ideas to life.

Lev Michael            Chris Beier  
*Fieldworkers for Cabeceras Aid Project*

**2001 Fieldwork: The Camisea Project**

As always, our time in Montetoni with the Camisea Nanti was productive, enjoyable, and full of fascinating events. During our month-long stay in the village, we worked intensively with Bisalota, the community's healthcare worker, reviewing and expanding his knowledge of the basic medicines we are able to provide. Using the pictographic manual that we developed for him last year, Bisalota has maintained an excellent level of understanding and competence in administering these medicines appropriately. As both he and Migero, the community *peresetente* (president), were pleased to tell us, not a single Nanti person died of illness in the last year. Bisalota's ability to recognize



Migero (in front) brings together a large group for a photograph.



Dr. Jaime, nurse, Lev, Bisalota & Dr. Victoria at the Boca Camisea healthpost.

dangerous respiratory or intestinal illness, particularly in infants, meant he was able to treat every serious case successfully, even during the severe outbreak of respiratory infections in Montetoni during April and May.

At the end of our stay, Bisalota accompanied us downriver to the Matsigenka community of Boca Camisea, where he met the doctors and other staff at the government-run healthpost there. Bisalota stayed in Boca Camisea for two weeks, learning more skills useful to him as a village healthcare worker and working closely with the Matsigenka nurse there as his translator. The primary motivation for Bisalota's trip was to gain him recognition as the named and trained healthcare worker for the Nanti communities. This will enable him to interact directly with the government doctors and staff in attending to the healthcare needs of the Nanti communities in the future and to obtain training and medicines provided by MINSA, the Peruvian Ministry of Health. All the staff of the post were very glad to meet Bisalota and to begin a professional relationship with him. We look forward to talking with Bisalota about his experiences in Boca Camisea during our visit to Montetoni next year.

In addition to our healthwork, we continued our research activities focused on the Nanti language and on fascinating sociocultural aspects of village life. Of special interest, a large Nanti family from the Timpia River came to visit Montetoni for the first time while we were in the village, and we were able to watch the process of this family and the families in Montetoni getting to know each other. The eldest man of the Timpia group came to visit his son Birari, who lives in Montetoni. He and the rest of his family had never seen such a large village nor so many people in one place

and were very timid at first. But as the days passed, they became more comfortable in the village and spent more and more time in the company of other Nanti. Moreover, much to everyone's pleasure, the oldest woman among the Timpia group turned out to be the sister of Tsyabera, one of our closest friends in Montetoni. These two sisters had been separated as children through the movements of their extended family, but have quickly reestablished a bond since being reunited. This important connection appeared to help the new family feel much more comfortable in Montetoni. When we left the village, the family was still visiting, and we are curious to discover next year where they will have chosen to call home -- the Camisea or the Timpia!

### 2001 Fieldwork: The Iquito Project

During July and August, we launched an exciting new project in the Iquito community of San Antonio. Having heard through colleagues in Peru and the US of a growing interest among the Iquito in revitalizing their heritage language, we traveled to their village on the Pintuyacu River (some 50 miles from Iquitos in northern Peru) to offer our assistance with this project. As linguistic anthropologists, we could offer our skills and training to assist in the process of documenting the language, as well as in the creation of educational materials that would be appropriate for language learners of all ages.

Since we had no way to communicate our offer to the community before arriving, we didn't know what to expect when we got there. To our pleasant surprise, we were given a far more enthusiastic welcome by the community than we had ever imagined, and our offer of assistance was very well received. Within hours of arriving in San Antonio, we were already gathering language data and talking with the older Iquito speakers about their hopes for passing their language on to the younger generations. These conversations gave us a picture of the environment in which the Iquito language has had to survive.

Like so many other indigenous groups around the world, the Iquito have for centuries been pressured and even received overt threats to give up their indigenous identity and language. Efforts by SIL missionaries in the late 1950s and early 1960s to establish a bilingual school in San Antonio were abruptly put to a stop by the local *patron*, or "boss," who essentially enslaved the indigenous people in the area, including the Iquito. As several people told us, they were taught to 'be ashamed to speak' their heritage language. By

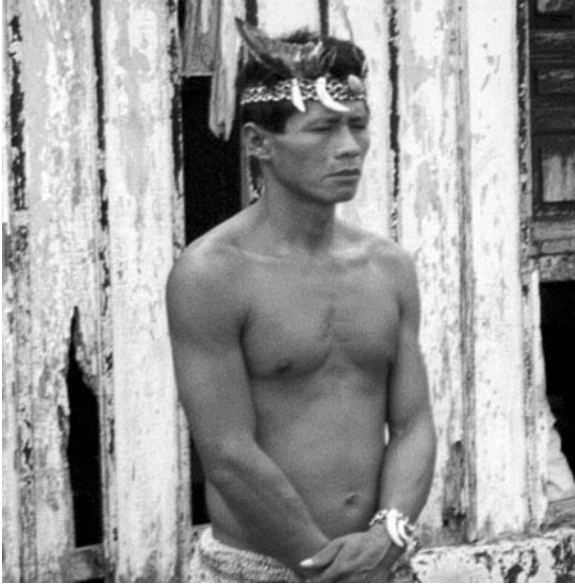


Our most dedicated Iquito language teacher Ema (right), with her aunt Agucha.

the late 1960s, Iquito was rarely spoken in public settings, and parents ceased teaching Iquito to their young children. As a result of this sad situation, no one under the age of 52 speaks Iquito fluently, and people under 30 only understand the language to a limited degree. Iquito, which had thousands of speakers when Europeans encountered this group in the 16th century, now has only fifteen fluent speakers in San Antonio, and about eleven others scattered around the region.

But a profound change has occurred in the last six years. Ethnic Iquito people of all ages have begun to see their indigenous heritage as unique and as a source of pride, not shame. Overt efforts by the municipal government in recent years to valorize the region's indigenous history have provided a constant source of encouragement and support for the Iquitos' ideas of maintaining important elements of their Iquito identity. All in all, the conditions today are better than ever for a long-term language revitalization project.

During our stay in San Antonio, we achieved several important goals. First, we gathered a substantial amount of basic data, which will provide a foundation for planning further research. Second, we produced a few new language instruction materials, including audio cassettes, for the children and the bilingual schoolteacher, *Ciro Panduro*, to use in the classroom. And third, we drew up a three-year agreement with the community to produce an Iquito-Spanish dictionary, a pedagogical grammar, and many more teaching materials based on new language research. Crucial to this agreement is the central role Iquito themselves will play in this project: we will train *Ciro* and several other community members to do linguistic and social research so that this project and all of its products are created by Iquito with assistance from Cabeceras Aid Project.



Ciro, San Antonio's Quito bilingual schoolteacher.

### **2001 Fieldwork: The Purús Project**

This summer we advanced our investigations into the developing early-contact situation on the Alto Purús River, which involves nomadic Mashco-Piro groups and a group of North American fundamentalist missionaries who are attempting to make contact with them. This situation continues to be both potentially very harmful to the Mashco-Piro and very frustrating to concerned outsiders like ourselves and the Peruvian Public Defender's office, since there is no legal or practical way at this point to stop the activities of these missionaries. The primary reason the Public Defender's office is concerned about this situation is that the Mashco-Piro have made very clear through their actions over many decades that they do not wish to begin sustained contact with non-Mashco-Piro; therefore the missionary group is directly violating the Mashco-Piros' right to self-determination as guaranteed by international treaties. But a far more immediate danger is that contact poses a grave risk to the health of the Mashco-Piro. History tells us that the chances are overwhelmingly high that the majority of Mashco-Piro will fall ill and probably die as a result of sustained contact with outsiders.

The profound lack of respect or concern that this group of missionaries is showing for the well-being of the Mashco-Piro is troubling to many people, both inside and outside of Peru, including anthropologists, indigenous federations, and other missionary groups. In the absence of legal grounds to expel this group, our collective strategy is to convince them to decide to leave through wide exposure of their activities. Cabeceras Aid Project will continue to collaborate with

these other groups to challenge and make public the activities of this group and any others who violate the rights and disregard the wishes of isolated indigenous groups like the Mashco-Piro.

### **On-Going Collaboration:**

#### **The Matsigenka Pisciculture Project**

Although Cabeceras Aid Project usually works with indigenous communities located in remote places, we have considerable contact with people in the communities on the main Urubamba River that lie along our way to more remote sites. The large and growing number of long-term settlements on the Urubamba, both indigenous and colonist communities, has significantly impacted the protein resources in the area in terms of both the amount of game available in the forest and the amount of fish available in the rivers. Requests for assistance from the directors of the Matsigenka community of Nueva Luz led us to develop a plan over the last two years, in coordination with them, other Matsigenka communities in the region, and ASPRODE, a Peruvian non-profit organization, to build fish farming installations in four communities along the Urubamba River. ASPRODE has had considerable experience and success with projects of this type, which they have carried out in other parts of Peruvian Amazonia.

In both May and August, we met with ASPRODE in Lima to continue the development of this project. During the summer months, ASPRODE drafted an excellent proposal and budget for this project, and we are presently working with them to find funding through US-based sources to implement their proposal. We are very pleased to be working with this diverse team of people in creating a long-term, locally-based solution to the serious problem of dwindling food resources.

#### **A New Goal: Broadening our medical aid program**

Upon arriving this past May in Sepahua, the small jungle town that serves as our launching point into the lower Urubamba River valley, we heard from colleagues that the doctors stationed at the government healthposts in Kirigueti and Boca Camisea urgently wished to speak to us on our way up the Urubamba River to Montetoni. Happy to cooperate, we stopped at the hospital in Kirigueti and made the acquaintance of Dr. Jorge, the head of the hospital. What he had to say surprised us quite a bit.

For decades, the three hospitals in the lower Urubamba were managed and staffed by PISAP, the medical arm of the Catholic church. In the last year, however, the management



of these hospitals passed entirely into the hands of MINSA, the Peruvian Ministry of Health. Dr. Jorge was very forthright with us; MINSA must respond to overwhelming demands for resources throughout the nation, and is particularly hard-pressed to meet these demands in remote, hard-to-access places like the lower Urubamba. A recent arrival to the region, Dr. Jorge told us he had heard from several sources about Cabeceras Aid Project's healthwork with Nanti and Matsigenka communities in the region. Not mincing words, he asked us if Cabeceras Aid Project would be also able to provide medical aid for as many of the other isolated indigenous communities in the region as we were able! He drew us a map of the ten communities within the jurisdiction of his hospital that lie in distant places at the headwaters, or 'cabeceras,' of small rivers like the Camisea. His hope was that we could provide a small supply of basic medicines destined for these ten communities, which he would provide to them either when patients arrived in the hospital for treatment or when itinerant teams of hospital staff made visits to these communities.

Dr. Jorge knew he was making a substantial request of us. We told him we would do as much as we could to provide medical aid to as many of these communities as we were able, and he received this promise with much gratitude and understanding.

When we arrived in Boca Camisea, Dr. Jaime at the healthpost there made essentially the same request of us, and we gave him the same answer. Therefore, a significant new task for Cabeceras Aid Project in the coming year is to seek new sources of funding so that we can substantially increase the number of isolated indigenous communities that we assist. To this end, we plan to increase the number of presentations we make to groups whose members may be able to make a contribution. If you are a member of a group that might be interested in our organization's work, or if you have any suggestions concerning this effort, please contact us!

#### **On-Going Collaboration:**

##### **Matsigenka Ethnomedicine Documentation**

In both May and August, we met with Daniel Rios Sebastian, a young Matsigenka man who is working to document Matsigenka ethnomedicinal knowledge. Last fall, Daniel conducted research with specialists in five communities in the lower Urubamba River valley, and he is presently working in Lima to compile and present his data in both Matsigenka and Spanish. His goal is to create an

illustrated book for use in the schools and healthposts in Matsigenka communities so that this knowledge is not lost or forgotten. Daniel is also collaborating with the two Matsigenka federations, CECONAMA and COMARU, to develop this book as an enduring document of Matsigenka cultural heritage. We look forward to continuing our association with Daniel and to the eventual printing of this important bilingual book.

#### **Building our Organization: Investing in Field Safety**

In our last mailing in April, we explained the need Cabeceras Aid Project had developed for a two-way radio. The remoteness of our field sites creates a substantial risk to our fieldworkers, and having no means of communication exacerbates that risk. We are happy to announce that we were able to raise the funds necessary to purchase a two-way radio, antenna, battery, and waterproof case. This equipment gives our field team much more logistical flexibility in the field, as well as providing a (perhaps life-saving) connection between us and the rest of the world. We send a special *Thank You* to Margo and Bob Heyl for making this investment possible!



Lev making a radio call in Montetoni with a fascinated audience

#### **Permanent 501(c)(3) Status:**

##### **An important landmark for our organization**

When Cabeceras Aid Project incorporated in October of 1996, we applied for and received an Advance Ruling from the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization. After our first five fiscal years, we were required to prove that Cabeceras Aid Project is indeed a non-profit organization in order to gain permanent 501(c)(3) status. Happily, we received notification from the IRS that we have been awarded permanent tax exempt status -- an important landmark in our organization's development. Thank you for your continued financial support of our charitable and educational activities!