

Cabeceras Aid Project

Spring 2003 Bulletin

Dear friends,

It is our pleasure to write to you as we plan an exciting summer of fieldwork for 2003 – but we do so with heavy hearts in light of the events unfolding in the Middle East. We wish to open this bulletin with a few words to remind ourselves that kindness, compassion, and peaceful solutions to conflicts are possible – even if those finer human qualities have lost any place in the relationship between the US government and most of the rest of the world. *What can we do?* For one thing, we can redouble our personal commitments to all of humanity and hope for a swift end to the present aggressions. We invite you to read this bulletin in a hopeful frame of mind. Thank you for your compassion and ongoing support for our activities on behalf of indigenous communities in Amazonia!

Focus: Healthcare in the Urubamba River Valley

The main focus of our efforts this year is to address the recent increase in contagious illnesses in the lower Urubamba River Valley. As you may know, the Nanti communities of Montetoni and Marankehari as well as nine Matsigenka communities are suffering impacts from the extractive activities in the Camisea gas fields, which are said to be the richest deposits of natural gas in all of South America. The Peruvian government is committed to extracting this gas both for domestic use and for export. From the government's point of view, the Camisea gas fields must be developed for national economic reasons. From the point of view of people concerned about both the natural environment and the rights of the indigenous people who live in the vicinity of the Camisea gas fields, however, the exploitation of the gas has many destructive consequences.

As you know, the mission of Cabeceras is to work in cooperation with indigenous communities to solve problems they wish to solve. One of the most grave problems associated with the gas extraction project in the Camisea region is the dramatic increase in contagious illness that results from the heavy influx and mobility of gas company workers. While we were in the region last summer, community members and healthcare workers alike expressed to us grave concerns about the current and future impacts of the gas company activities on the people of the region. In the context of these conversations, we were repeatedly asked to assist in combating introduced illnesses and in particular to provide crucial medicines necessary to combat increasing sickness.

The efforts to extract gas from the Camisea gas field are being realized by a consortium of companies from a number of countries, including Argentina, Korea, and



Chris and Bisarota reviewing the Nanti medical book in 2002

the United States. Despite consortium claims regarding their plans to minimize their impact on local health, the present impact on health is substantial. As always, a significant factor in healthcare planning is the chronic shortage of both healthcare workers and basic medical supplies in the Urubamba region. According to the staff in the healthpost at the mouth of the Camisea River, for example, promises of medical supplies – either from the consortium or from the government's ministry of health – rarely materialize, and in reality, the healthposts in the region remain grossly undersupplied.

All the while that policy negotiations unfold in Lima and debates flare regarding who is responsible for what, indigenous people in the Camisea region are suffering the impacts of the consortium's presence. Therefore, Cabeceras intends to provide as many medical supplies to the healthcare workers in the region as we can.

Because of our long-term presence in the region, a variety of people have contacted Cabeceras for information regarding the impact of the Camisea Project on local indigenous communities, and on the Nanti communities in particular. Cabeceras is clearly considered a reliable and accurate source of information regarding the Nanti communities. We feel that thus far we have been able to advocate firmly for the well-being of the indigenous communities who are being affected by the Camisea Project.

Our goal this year is to provide a basic kit of medical supplies to the healthcare workers based in following communities: Montetoni, Segakiato, Boca Camisea, Nueva Luz, and Kirigueti. Each kit for the first four communities will cost approximately \$500. The kit for Kirigueti must provide supplies for a number of other small, isolated indigenous communities in its care; that kit will cost approximately \$1500.

*Project Fundraising Goals: \$3500 for 2003
\$3500 for 2004*

Cabeceras would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support of Bob and Margo Minogue Heyl, and the Latin America Focus Group of Saint Luke Presbyterian Church in Wayzata, Minnesota, toward the Urubamba Valley Medical Aid Project. We especially thank Evelyn Headen for her efforts in coordinating between Saint Luke's and Cabeceras.

A message from Cabeceras' fieldworkers Chris Beier and Lev Michael

Hello! During the next few years, we'll be making a change in our annual work plan for Cabeceras. Since 1999, during the summer months we have carried out specific field projects in Peru and during the rest of the year we have fulfilled our obligations as graduate students of linguistic anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. Now, the time has come for us to complete an extensive period of research for our doctoral dissertations – which means a long stretch of time in Peru for us. Both of us will study aspects of language and verbal art among the Camisea Nantis. In order to meet our research goals, we expect to be in Peru from November 2003 until August 2004 and from September 2004 until August 2005 – in effect, nearly two years.



Lev writing down an Iquito narrative with Hermenegildo

This schedule has several consequences for Cabeceras. First, our extended stays in the Nanti communities will greatly increase the quantity and quality of healthcare training we can provide to interested individuals. Second, our research activities will allow us to make significant advances in our documentation work on the Nanti language, which we do with the Nantis' future educational and literacy needs in mind. Third, our presence there will allow us to understand better the ways in which we can assist the Nantis in meeting their own political ends, particularly regarding defining and defending their lands. Fourth, now from an organizational point of view, the day to day

activities of Cabeceras in the US and on the internet will be greatly reduced, due to Chris' time in Peru. Basic administrative tasks will be taken over by board member Margo Minogue Heyl (who lives in Houston) and volunteer Robin Gerrow (who lives in Austin). Fifth, rather than attempting to broaden our organization's activities in the next few years, we will focus on strengthening the projects we have already begun. Sixth – and though last, not the least significant change – Cabeceras will not be carrying out its annual spring fundraising campaign in 2004. As always, Cabeceras will be able to receive donations at any time of the year, either through mail or through our website; but our annual effort to raise funds for our specific summer activities will not take place. *Please feel free to send contributions – particularly to support our ongoing healthwork in the Urubamba River Valley – at any time.*

Camisea Nanti Project

We are pleased to report that the Camisea Nanti communities are doing well, and especially that the Nanti healthcare workers that Cabeceras has trained are doing an excellent job addressing the healthcare needs of the communities using the medical supplies that we provide every year. During our upcoming long fieldwork period, we will provide whatever supplementary training is necessary, but other than the need for medical supplies, the community healthcare workers appear very capable of working independently. Your support has made it possible for the Nanti communities to take much of their healthcare into their own hands. Congratulations for being an important part of this success!

Cabeceras has also been systematically providing the Nanti communities with basic tools and material aid since 1997. We are pleased to report that both communities are now well-provisioned with the basic material goods that they need but cannot manufacture themselves, including axes, machetes, knives, and cooking pots. Every family now has metal tools for farming and cooking, and last year we were told that at the present, people are stocked with what they need. As a result, the Nanti communities are now much less susceptible to manipulations by unscrupulous outsiders than they were in the past – as evidenced by the fact that last year, Nanti leaders resolutely rejected an attempt by acculturated members of a neighboring indigenous group to subvert their own plans regarding bilingual education. At this point, we are pleased that we do not need to ask you for funds for Nanti material aid this year.

As part of our fieldwork this past summer, we traveled to Montetoni with a delegation of Yabashtas from the Mishagua River. The Yabashtas are one of the two indigenous groups with whom the Nantis share their reserve, but a people whom they have never met. Since

land titling efforts for both the Nantis and the Yabashtas are linked with the fate of the reserve, and hence, each group with the other, we felt that facilitating a dialogue between the two groups would help foster amicable relations in the future.

The visit was quite an experience for everyone involved. We were in the unusual position of being witness to culture shock between two indigenous groups. Nevertheless, the Nanti and Yabashta community leaders discussed at length several important matters of mutual interest (with our translation assistance) and both sides expressed that they had learned a great deal through their meetings.

We anticipate that we will need to carry out more work as linguistic and cultural translators during our upcoming long fieldwork period, since the Camisea gas project has, in a certain sense, made a much larger public aware of the Nantis. As always, our guiding principle will be to carry out this work accurately and with painstaking attention to Nanti desires and goals.

At the request of the community, we are planning to make one major infrastructural improvement in Montetoni during our long fieldwork period: installing a solar-powered two-way communication radio. Nanti community leaders and healthworkers feel that the need for a radio of this sort is urgent, since it would enable the community to radio the nearest government healthpost in the case of a dire health emergency beyond the abilities of the Nanti healthworkers. A radio would also enable community leaders to stay apprised of important events in the region that might impact the Nanti communities.

Cabeceras already owns a communication radio, and since we plan to spend most of two years in the community, we plan to install this radio in Montetoni permanently, since this is the only place we ever use it. In order to install it properly so that it can be used over the long-term, we must purchase several additional components, including a solar panel, a current/voltage controller, and a deep-cycle battery. The community will build the radio room and the antenna tower.

It is said that knowledge is power; if so, the ability to communicate must surely be the basis for self-determination. The radio system sought by the community will contribute substantially to the Nantis' ability to communicate their needs to others, and to be aware of the powerful forces that affect their future.

Goal: \$1500 for system components and transportation.

The Iquito Language Documentation Project ...first, a brief recap of phase 1 (2002)

As you may recall, from June 15 to August 15 of 2002, Cabeceras' fieldworkers Lev Michael and Chris

Beier took part in the first phase of the Iquito Language Documentation Project, which was designed by the Iquito community of San Antonio de Pintuyacu in northern Peruvian Amazon region in conjunction with Cabeceras Aid Project.

In May 2002, the *Centro del Idioma Iquito* (Iquito Language Center) was constructed with funds donated to Cabeceras specifically for that purpose. Then in mid-June Lev, Chris, Mark, and Lynda (two other linguist volunteers from UT-Austin) arrived in San Antonio to begin working with community members to document and revitalize the Iquito language.

... and now, a few words about the future

We are delighted to let you know that the Iquito Language Documentation Project (ILDP) has just been awarded a major research grant through the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme based in London. The grant – which was formally awarded to the University of Texas at Austin with Dr. Nora England as the Principal Investigator – will support a research team of four to six graduate student researchers and seven Iquito community members during part of each year from 2003 through 2006. During that time, the ILDP team will produce an Iquito-Spanish dictionary, collections of texts in Iquito, a pedagogical (teaching) grammar, and a full reference grammar. The work done by the ILDP with the support of Cabeceras in 2001 and 2002 – and especially the infrastructure provided by the formal agreement between Cabeceras and the community of San Antonio and by the existence of the Iquito Language Center – was crucial in demonstrating the feasibility and great potential of community-based language revitalization projects. It is with pleasure and pride, then, that we do not need to ask you to support the Iquito Project this year!



Lev teaching linguistics to the community linguists in the Iquito Language Center in San Antonio

For more information on the Iquito Project, visit www.iquito.org

Many heartfelt thanks...

...to Cabeceras' board members for their long-term and enthusiastic efforts on behalf of our organization!

Lev Michael (President); Roahn Wynar (Vice-President); Chris Beier (Secretary and Treasurer); Cecilia Bustamante; Joan Wynar; Carol Fox; Margo Minogue-Heyl; Beth Morton; Diego Shoobridge; Tony Woodbury.

... to LJ Keogh, Raistlin Majere and WebHostWorks.net for hosting www.cabeceras.org and www.iqito.org.

... to Robin Gerrow and Margo Minogue-Heyl for their administrative help over the next two years.

... to Mark Brown and Lynda de Jong for their collaboration on the Iquito Project. ¡Suhuaata tii!



Centro del Idioma Iquito (Iquito Language Center)
in San Antonio de Pintuyacu, Perú

Send contributions to:

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502 Hammack Drive
Austin TX 78752-4126

OR

donate online at www.cabeceras.org

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