

CABECERAS AID PROJECT

FALL 2003 UPDATE

Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to write to you, our friends and supporters, to tell you about the advances that Cabeceras Aid Project made during the last summer of fieldwork, and about our plans for the coming year.

Another Fieldworker Joins Cabeceras

We are very excited to write to you about an important new member of our fieldwork team, Catherine Clark. Although Cabeceras has been carrying out collaborative field projects with other organizations for several years now, Catherine will be the first new volunteer fieldworker to join Cabeceras since the organization was founded in 1996. With Catherine Clark's involvement, we will be able to carry out several very important projects that we had been unable to continue due to simple lack of time (We'll discuss this more on page 3).

Apart from a gift for languages, Catherine has the intrepidity, resourcefulness, and independence that are so crucial for the kind of work we do. In 2002, Catherine traveled by herself from the mouth of the Amazon to its source and then spent several months in Aguaruna communities in northern Peru. Please welcome Catherine to our team!

Camisea Nanti Project

This summer, Cabeceras participated in an important collaborative project to assess the health situation in the Camisea Nanti communities, focusing on the impact of outsiders – particularly of PlusPetrol, the petrochemical company working in the nearby Camisea natural gas



Chris Beier and Migero, the leader of Montetoni, after a meeting with the MINSA and AIDSESEP teams



Lev Michael works with Bikotero in updating the Montetoni census in June 2003

deposits – on the well-being of the Nantis. Lev Michael and Chris Beier worked closely with a team of investigators from the General Office of Epidemiology of the Peruvian Ministry of Health and a team of representatives from organizations concerned with the impact of PlusPetrol's activities on the indigenous communities of the region, including Dora Napolitano from Shinai Serjali; Haroldo Salazar from AIDSESEP, one of the major indigenous federations in Peru; and Carolyn Stephens, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.



Migero and Haroldo Salazar, vice-president of AIDSESEP

Chris and Lev contributed their intimate knowledge of Nanti social life, a detailed census of the Nanti communities, and of course, crucial translation services, to the project. With input from Cabeceras, the Ministry of Health and AIDSESEP are now completing reports on the results of the investigation. We have reason to hope

that these reports will be helpful in convincing the Ministry of Health to reinforce basic healthcare infrastructure in the region and to take specific concrete steps to provide additional medical resources for the Nanti communities.

Urubamba River Valley Medical Project

Due to the generosity of Cabeceras' supporters, we were able to deliver much-needed medical supplies to several healthposts in the Urubamba River valley, fulfilling Cabeceras' commitment to the Matsigenka communities of the area. The doctors at the Camisea healthpost, which serves six indigenous communities with a total population of over 2,000 people, confided to us that they had been basically out of many essential medicines for close to a month.

One of the major recommendations that will be included in the General Office of Epidemiology report, and which Cabeceras prioritized, is for the Ministry of Health to devote greater resources to the Urubamba River Valley. We hope that the Ministry of Health will feel obligated to act on these recommendations because of the international attention focused on the Camisea region as a consequence of the Camisea gas project. In the interim, Cabeceras will continue to strive to help fill the healthcare gap in the region. We will deliver another set of medical supplies when we pass through Urubamba River Valley in December of this year.

Iquito Language Documentation Project

Between June and August of this past summer, Lev Michael and Chris Beier led the 2003 phase of the multi-year project to document Iquito, which, with only 26 remaining speakers, is one of the most highly endangered languages of the Peruvian Amazon. With a team comprised of four other linguists and an ethnomusicologist, we made tremendous progress in the preparation of an Iquito-Spanish bilingual dictionary, a collection of oral history and traditional narratives, a grammar, and pedagogical materials for the bilingual school. By the end of the summer, we produced over 500 pages of high-quality language documentation.

Cabeceras' supporters will be pleased to know that their support in 2002 was instrumental in obtaining two grants specifically to finance work on the Iquito Language Documentation Project: one from the Endangered Language Fund, based at Yale University, and another from the Endangered Languages Documentation

Programme, based in London. In both cases, the fact that the Iquito Project was already in progress and showing results was very important in obtaining these grants. The Iquito project is now fully funded through 2006, allowing Cabeceras to use its own funds for other important projects. Those interested in additional details can visit www.iquito.org.

Omagua Language Survey Project

In September and October of this year, Cabeceras carried out a pilot survey to determine the number of remaining speakers of Omagua. The Omagua language was once the most widely spoken language in the Amazon Basin, with perhaps as many as 1.5 million speakers. Unfortunately for the speakers of Omagua, because they lived on the main Amazon itself, they bore the greatest brunt of the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the Amazon Basin. Omagua is now virtually extinct, with perhaps as few as ten speakers scattered in various communities along the Amazon River.

In 2002, we obtained information from Gabel Sotil, our regional government contact in Iquitos, about the possible location of a small number of Omagua speakers. The regional government is admirably concerned about the survival of the indigenous languages of the region, and because of the reputation Cabeceras has earned from the Iquito Language Documentation Project, requested that Cabeceras investigate the Omagua language situation.

An exciting aspect of this pilot study is that the fieldwork was carried out by Catherine Clark, Cabeceras' new fieldworker. Catherine spent three weeks in and around the town of San Joaquin de Omaguas, which lies several hours downriver of Iquitos on the Amazon, where she found four speakers of Omagua, all between 73 and 80 years old. Catherine discussed issues of language revitalization and cultural identity with these speakers and other community members and also collected basic linguistic data.

On the basis of this information, we are considering an emergency research project to record the last speakers of this historically important language in the brief time that remains.

Cabeceras' plans for 2004

Chris Beier and Lev Michael will be returning to Peru in late November 2003 for almost two years of fieldwork.

This will include a considerable quantity of research for their dissertations, and will also allow them an opportunity to advance Cabeceras' projects – especially in the Camisea Nanti communities, where they will be spending the majority of their time. Although communication with Chris and Lev will be limited during their time in Peru, they will write when possible to keep everyone apprised of developments.



The whole Iquito Project team took part in San Antonio's celebration of Peruvian Independence Day on July 28, 2003. Pictured (left to right) are Kathryn Metz, Lynda de Jong, Lev Michael, Hermenegildo Diaz, Ema Llona, Mark Brown, I-wen Lai, Edinson Huamancayo, Jaime Pacaya, Felipe Panduro, Hilter Panduro, and Celso Soria.

Catherine Clark will soon begin a long-term project to monitor the evolving contact situation involving the Mashco-Piro, a nomadic indigenous group that lives in southeastern Peru near the Peru-Brazil border. Supporters with good memories will recall that Lev and Chris began this monitoring work in 1998, but have been unable to devote to it the attention it deserves, due to our commitments in other areas of Peru. Experience has shown us that much of the difficulties and suffering experienced by indigenous groups in early stages of contact with outsiders results from those outsiders believing they can act with impunity, due to the remoteness and isolation of the situation. Our intention is to focus a strong light on the actions of such outsiders, so that exploitative and harmful actions can not continue to pass unnoticed.

Organizational Changes

While Chris Beier is in Peru, Robin Gerrow, new board member and deputy secretary and treasurer, will take over Cabeceras' essential accounting and organizational functions. Robin can be reached at our new mailing address or at rsgerrow@swbell.net. Thanks Robin!

Cabeceras Aid Project will be moving its principal offices upon Chris and Lev's departure for Peru in November. Please note our new address and phone number:

Cabeceras Aid Project
1503 Romeria St.
Austin, TX 78757
512-434-6406

Heartfelt thanks

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all our supporters for partnering with us in the important work of partnering with Peruvian Amazonian communities in defending their languages, cultures, health, and lands. In addition to each of our supporters who have given generously to fund our work, we would like to thank the following individuals for other forms of support:

- **Lj Keogh** and **Raistlin Majere** of **WebHost Works.Net**, for hosting the www.cabeceras.org and www.iquito.org websites.
- **Cathy Rohter**, for giving us a safe and comfortable place to stay every time we pass through Lima.
- **Gabel Sotil**, Cabeceras' liaison in Iquitos, for all of his tireless efforts, both personal and professional, on behalf of Cabeceras' projects.
- **Margo Minogue Heyl** and **Tony Woodbury**, members of Cabeceras' board, for all of their time and commitment to fostering Cabeceras' core goals.

Financial update

Cabeceras' supporters will be pleased to know that our organization's total operating costs for 2003 were less than 2% of our budget (just bank fees and postage), meaning that 98% of all donations went directly to helping indigenous communities of the Peruvian Amazon. And if you earmark your gift for a specific field project, 100% of it will be used for that project.

We welcome your financial support for any or all of the projects that we have discussed in this update, at:

Cabeceras Aid Project
1503 Romeria St.
Austin, TX 78757

Thank you for your ongoing support!