

## Cabeceras Aid Project Spring 2009 Update

### Hello friends!

It is a pleasure to send you this update and tell you about Cabeceras Aid Project's latest activities in Peruvian Amazonia. After a bit of organizational news, you'll read about our accomplishments in 2008 and our plans for 2009. Thank you for your interest in our work!

### Organizational news

Our organization experienced a big change in 2008, when Cabeceras' long-term fieldworkers and board members, Lev Michael and I, Chris Beier, relocated from Texas to California. I'm pleased to say that we moved because Lev began a new job as a professor of anthropological linguistics at UC Berkeley. While this is a wonderful turn of events overall, it also has required some adaptation on the part of Cabeceras – primarily having to do with our corporate structure, now that our organization will be active in two states (since Cabeceras won't break its ties with Texas). As Cabeceras' secretary and treasurer, I am taking the necessary steps to register Cabeceras in California as a "foreign corporation". So far, the greatest benefit of this move to Cabeceras is the number of new relationships Lev and I are establishing on Cabeceras' behalf. For example, Lev has already recruited several student linguists from Berkeley to work on language documentation projects this coming summer in Peru – more details below!

### Our current board of directors and officers

In January, the three-year terms of eight of Cabeceras' ten board members expired. At our 2008 annual meeting, the board agreed it was time to restructure our directors' terms, by staggering them, so that only three or four terms would expire per year. That is what we did in this year's election, and here are the results:



Robin Gerrow and me, Chris Beier, at the Gerrows' 'JungleFest' garden party on April 26, 2008



Delivering medical supplies to the doctor at the healthpost at the mouth of the Camisea River on July 16, 2008.

- Chris Beier, Cynthia Hansen, Lev Michael, and Linda Young, re-elected for three-year terms;
- Margo Minogue-Heyl, re-elected for a two-year term;
- Amanda King, elected for a two-year term (*Welcome to the board, Amanda!*);
- Joel Dippold and Roahn Wynar, re-elected for one-year terms.

This means that the terms of Joel, Roahn, and Robin Gerrow end in 2010; those of Margo, Amanda, and Tony Woodbury end in 2011; and those of Chris, Cynthia, Lev, and Linda end in 2012. If you're interested in serving on Cabeceras' board in the future, contact me!

Cabeceras' officers are: Lev Michael, President; Robin Gerrow, Vice President; and Chris Beier, Secretary and Treasurer; all three were elected to three-year terms that will end in 2011.

### Catching up a bit...

In 2008, Lev and I spent three months in Peru, from mid-May to mid-August, so this update focuses on Cabeceras' activities during that trip. You may have noticed that we didn't send out a full update like this one last spring as we typically do; this is because Lev and I didn't make a trip to Peru in 2007 – for the first time in 10 years! – and therefore Cabeceras had no "field reports" to share with you. As a result, in some of the reports that follow, you'll notice that we're bringing you up to date across a two-year gap.

In part because we didn't make a field trip in 2007, Cabeceras took the opportunity last spring to use some new fundraising strategies. April was our high point: that month, two of our board members hosted very successful (and fun!) fundraisers. First, Cynthia and Patrick Hansen hosted a reunion for participants in the Iquito Language Documentation Project (ILDLP), which raised \$810; then Robin and Tom Gerrow hosted a 'JungleFest' garden party, featuring live music from the local band Seu Jacinto, and raised \$1225. Thank you again to everyone who participated in these events!

## Our service to the Camisea Nanti communities

### • Donations of medical and material aid

As you may recall, Cabeceras was founded (in part) in order to more effectively assist the Nanti communities on the upper Camisea River in maintaining their wellbeing and self determination in the context of their new relationships with non-Nantis. A key aspect of Cabeceras' work has been to deliver annual donations of basic medical supplies and manufactured goods to these communities. We are certain that our deliveries of goods support these communities' ability to maintain their health and their economic independence from outsiders; we also believe that knowing they'll receive these things from us each year makes it easier for individual Nantis to resist pressures to involve themselves in exploitive relationships with outsiders who provide desired goods at extremely high labor costs. In 2008, Cabeceras again delivered basic medical aid and material aid – including blankets, clothing, and metal tools – to the Camisea Nanti communities. (By the way, we explained to them in advance that we wouldn't be able to visit in 2007, and brought extra large donations in both 2006 and 2008.)

In an unexpected turn of events, however, Lev and I weren't able to visit the Nanti communities in person in 2008, and the reason why is a painful irony. For many years, Cabeceras has been part of an effort to establish effective control over the boundaries of the national reserve in which the Nanti communities are located. The reserve was established by law in 1990 to provide protection to its vulnerable populations, including the Nantis, but for many years there was no enforcement of the law and therefore no real protection for its inhabitants. Finally, in recent years, the national government made an administrative body called INDEPA responsible for this and other reserves. So at long last, in 2008 Lev and I were able to make a formal request for official authorization to enter the reserve... and we were denied authorization. The reasons we were denied authorization were bureaucratic in nature but



By luck, Lev and I encountered two Nantis, Enkuriki and Marití, in Kirigueti, and they gave us news from the upper Camisea.



We crossed paths with Enkuriki and Marití at the home of Willy Prialé (right), the Matsigenka school teacher most recently assigned to Montetoni.

none the less real and unambiguous, so we found ourselves “locked out” of the reserve. Perhaps you can imagine the frustration we felt!

Lev and I did the best we could under the circumstances. In July, we traveled as far as Cashiriari, the Matsigenka community nearest to the boundary of the reserve, which is the point from which we always begin the final leg of the journey to Montetoni. Once there, we were able to send an old friend, Emilio Ankoró, to deliver Cabeceras' aid to the Nanti communities. The Matsigenka people of the upper Camisea region are not subject to the law of the reserve, and so INDEPA had no objections to our having Emilio deliver aid to the Nantis on Cabeceras' behalf.

Again this year, we are requesting authorization from INDEPA to enter the reserve and deliver aid to the Camisea Nanti communities, but there is no way for us to know in advance if we'll be successful this time. If we are not, we'll do what we did last year: travel to Cashiriari and request Emilio's help to deliver Cabeceras' aid to the Nanti communities. Our goal is to raise \$2500 for this project; if you'd like to support this project, please earmark your donation 'Nanti aid'.

### • Health conditions

It grieves me to report that the Camisea Nanti communities have suffered several devastating outbreaks of illness in the last few years. This is most painfully demonstrated by the many deaths of adults in the prime of life, as well as of more vulnerable infants and elderly people. The deterioration of basic health conditions on the upper Camisea River made our inability to visit last year even more difficult to accept.

These recent epidemics make it very clear to us that the incipient health care 'system' on the upper Camisea – and moreover, the Nanti people themselves – are still very vulnerable after (only) 20 years of extended contact with non-Nantis. It is also clear to us that Cabeceras' involvement has had a real positive impact on health

conditions in the past. Thus, all pain and frustration aside, Cabeceras will continue to do everything we can to address the challenges that the Nantis are facing; and Lev and I will keep struggling on behalf of our Nanti friends, as we've done from the beginning, with hope that things will once again change for the better.

#### • Communications

During our visit to the Camisea region last July, we discovered that the radio communications systems in *both* Montetoni and Marankejari had ceased to function. This is disheartening news because two-way radios have become a crucial means for monitoring and managing health conditions on the upper Camisea River. It is likely that the lack of functioning radios made the recent outbreaks of illness in Montetoni and Marankejari even worse.

To the best of our knowledge, no one has stepped forward to fix or replace the communications systems – understandably so, since doing so is both expensive and technically challenging. Gladly, Cabeceras' board has decided to provide a new radio system for Montetoni this year. We calculate that a new system will cost about \$1500; if you'd like to support this project specifically, please earmark your donation for 'radio'.

#### Urubamba River Valley Medical Aid

Cabeceras initiated the Urubamba River Valley Medical Aid project in 2003, in response to direct requests for donations of basic medical supplies from a number of communities in the lower Urubamba River valley.

Again in 2008, Lev and I delivered basic medical supplies to healthcare workers in eight small indigenous communities – six Matsigenka communities (Nueva Luz, Kirigueta, Camisea, Shivancoreni, Segakiato, and Cashiriari) and two Nanti communities (Marankejari and Montetoni). Because Cabeceras didn't visit the Urubamba River valley in 2007, we brought large donations to each community in 2006 and 2008.



Tekori making a radio call from Montetoni in 2005.



Melvy Ormaeche and Lev Michael making a 'house call' in Montetoni in 2003.

Cabeceras provides basic medical supplies to these communities for two reasons. First, because of their relatively inaccessible locations, these communities receive insufficient support and resources from the Peruvian Ministry of Health system. Second, a change in health conditions in any one of these communities often has a powerful impact on the health conditions in all the other communities in the region – including the most remote settlements – due to the chains of transmission of illness that happen through the extended social networks in the region. Cabeceras works to help local healthcare workers maintain the highest level of health and well-being possible in those places to which we *do* have access, in order to reduce the risk of epidemics in the more remote places to which we don't have access.

As usual, the healthcare workers we visited in each community were grateful to receive the supplies and asked us for our continued support. So again in 2009, Cabeceras will deliver medical kits to these eight communities. Our goal is to raise \$2500 for this project; if you'd like to support this project specifically, please earmark your donation for 'URVMA'.

#### Health networking on behalf of Peru's Voluntarily Isolated Indigenous Peoples

Back in 2003, Lev and I collaborated, on behalf of Cabeceras, with Peru's Office of Epidemiology (OGE) on a baseline health study in the Nanti community of Montetoni. That study resulted in the publication, by Peru's Ministry of Health, of an important report documenting the factors and consequences associated with the first years of extended contact between Nantis and non-Nantis on the upper Camisea River.

Because of the positive impact of that study, Cabeceras' colleague at OGE, Lic. Melvy Ormaeche, has proposed that we collaborate on a series of diagnostic field studies. These studies have two goals: first, to evaluate the resources and infrastructure presently available in various regions in Peru where voluntarily isolated indigenous peoples are most likely

to seek medical attention at some future point; and second, to concretely improve those resources and infrastructure *before* such a health emergency occurs. This collaborative project is both innovative and timely, as the threats to voluntarily isolated indigenous peoples are increasing, not diminishing, in Peru, due to the present government's aggressive agenda to exploit the natural resources in the areas inhabited by these peoples.

Melvy and I have identified eight areas in Peruvian Amazonia where an 'early contact' health emergency is very likely to occur, and we are presently developing a detailed plan for visiting the existing, evaluating, and reinforcing the health facilities in each area. Because of the relatively inaccessible locations of these sites, this project will be relatively costly, but it has the potential to prevent many deaths when a health emergency arises.

In light of the recent increase in deaths on the upper Camisea due to epidemics, Cabeceras' board has agreed that this project is of the highest priority in the next few years. We *must* find ways to be better prepared for health emergencies in the places they are most likely to happen, and working closely with OGE and the Ministry of Health is among the wisest strategies possible.

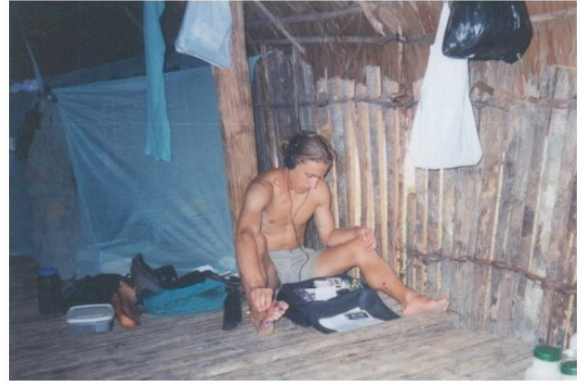
Margo and Bob Heyl have already pledged a significant contribution to this project, and I'd like to say "thank you" to them here and now. If you would like to support this project also, please earmark your donation for 'PIAV' (which stands for *Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento Voluntario*).

### **The Nathaniel Gerhart Scholarship Fund**

Shifting focus to a different facet of our activities, one of Cabeceras' most exciting recent undertakings is supporting and mentoring Peruvian Amazonian indigenous students as they continue their formal education.

In August 2007, Cabeceras established a scholarship fund in honor of Nathaniel Gerhart, a close friend and kindred spirit to me and Lev since our very first years working in Amazonia. The purpose of this memorial fund is to support indigenous individuals from small communities in Peruvian Amazonia as they continue their education, with the twin goals of enriching their home communities and their professional networks while they increase their personal knowledge and skills.

In 2008, Cabeceras began funding our first recipient, Alex Rodriguez Roque. Alex is a Bora man from Pucaurquillo in northeastern Loreto. Already an experienced teacher and principal, Alex is now studying law in Iquitos. His long-term professional goal is to work defending the civil rights of indigenous people and groups in the department of Loreto. Alex is a man of exceptional patience and integrity, and it is both a pleasure and an honor to work with him.



Nathaniel Gerhart working on bird species identifications in Montetoni in 1998.

While in Peru this year, I will seek out other promising applicants for such scholarships. Out of gratitude to my own mentors during my life's journey, I have made a personal commitment to Cabeceras' board to seek out, encourage, and mentor potential grantees in order to help them maximize their chances of success. If you'd like to support this scholarship fund, please earmark your donation for 'NGMF'.

### **Language Documentation Projects**

Turning now to another facet of our work, I'd like to tell you about Cabeceras' new and ongoing language documentation projects. All these projects have at their core the goal of documenting not only the language but also as much of the cultural, historical, and personal knowledge that speakers of endangered languages are willing to share with our fieldworkers. Cabeceras carries out these projects in order to support small communities' efforts to defend their unique histories and maintain their dignity in an ever more globalized world.

Since (gladly!) Lev and I are able to bring financial resources from other sources to most of these projects, Cabeceras' principal involvement is of two kinds: to provide political and logistical support; and to prepare and produce documentation materials for use by the communities themselves. The projects we're involved in are identified below by the name of the endangered language.

#### **• Muniche**

Last spring a young anthropologist contacted Lev to say he had met a few speakers of Muniche, a language said to have lost its last native speaker in about 1996. Excited by this news, we sent Karina Sullón (a Peruvian linguist and veteran of the ILDP) to investigate, and she found seven elderly people who had spoken the language fluently as children. So, first in June and then again in August/September, Karina began basic documentation work on Muniche. She worked with these seven people

as a group, and they developed an excellent rapport in co-remembering the language.

Building on Karina's work, this summer Lev, Karina, three student linguists, and I will continue documenting Muniche; and Cabeceras will then produce a set of basic language materials for the community.

#### • Vacacocho

Vacacocho, too, was thought, for decades, to be extinct. However, last June Lev followed a hunch and traveled up the Napo River in Loreto to where the last speakers of Vacacocho were known to have lived. Simply by asking questions and covering lots of ground, Lev succeeded in locating an elderly speaker of Vacacocho named Delia Andi. In addition to working with Lev on some basic language documentation, Delia told him of another more fluent speaker of Vacacocho living on the Momón River. So this year, I will seek out that other elderly speaker, and also continue basic documentation to work with Delia, after which Cabeceras will produce a set of basic language materials for the community.

#### • Maijuna

Back in 2006, Lev and I visited three of the four Maijuna communities in Loreto, to begin talking with them about doing a collaborative language documentation project. Happily, community members and leaders alike were enthusiastic about our offer. Since then we have maintained our connection to the communities through Michael Gilmore, an ethnoecologist who has worked with the Maijunas since 1999, and he assures us that enthusiasm about the project remains strong. We are especially looking forward to using and improving upon the strategies we developed in the Iquito project for team-based language work. Maijuna has about 100 speakers, some of whom are in their 20s, so we anticipate a different – and probably easier! – project with Maijuna than we have had with Iquito (see below).

The time has come for us to take the next steps with



That's me on the left, harvesting yuca with two Maijuna women, during our first visit in 2006.



Lev Michael and Jaime Pacaya Inuma working together on Iquito's complex pitch-accent system.

the Maijunas, so in July I'll accompany Michael Gilmore to the annual inter-community congress and begin working out an official agreement for a collaborative project. After taking that step, we can begin to seek research funding to carry out the intensive documentation phase of the project, which we hope to begin in 2010.

#### • Iquito

Since the major phase of research of the Iquito Language Documentation Project – and the project's funding from the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project in London – ended in December 2006, we have substantially scaled down our activities in the Iquito community of San Antonio. In June/July of 2008, Lev and I spent two weeks in San Antonio, mostly preparing the dictionary and the text collection for publication. As always, we greatly enjoyed working with the Iquito speakers who we have now known for eight years. This August, I will spend two more weeks in San Antonio to continue working on the Iquito text collection. At this point, Cabeceras' primary role in this project is to produce materials in and on Iquito for use by the community.

A few words on the broader impact of this project: several of the linguists who have done fieldwork on the ILDP team over the years are now actively bringing the scientific results of the ILDP to other scholars, convincingly illustrating the point that community-based documentation work on endangered languages produces good linguistic science.

#### • Andoa

Andoa is a sister language to Iquito and experts said Andoa's last speaker died in 1993. But in 2006, Lev and I met a French anthropologist who does research with Quichua people in a town called Andoas – and she told us she had met two elderly speakers of Andoa who were

willing to work on documenting their language! So this year, Lev and I will travel to Andoas, along with two student linguists, in order to begin basic documentation of Andoa. Happily, Lev won a grant for this research through UC Berkeley, so Cabeceras' role in this project will be to provide logistical and political support to the field team, and to produce materials for use by the ethnic Andoa community.

#### **Taking a glance at the bigger picture...**

Over the years since Cabeceras was founded in 1996, the size, kind, and number of our projects have grown, but every project we do is anchored in our organization's mission statement:

- to provide humanitarian aid to groups of indigenous people living in the Amazon Basin of South America. We provide aid in the form of materials (such as tools and medical supplies) and human assistance (such as health education) that will promote the continued health and self-sufficiency of these groups;

- to conduct anthropological research in collaboration with members of these groups to document their cultures and languages. The purpose of this

research is to create records of their history, culture, and language for the future benefit of these groups, and for the education of people outside these groups.

#### **Your financial support**

Cabeceras Aid Project relies on small contributions from individuals and organizations to fund the majority of our field projects. ***Remember, Cabeceras is an entirely volunteer-run organization, so 100% of your donation goes directly to our field projects!*** We welcome your financial support, via **check**, sent to:

Cabeceras Aid Project  
1303 Karen Avenue  
Austin TX 78757-3017

Or **online via credit card** at [www.cabeceras.org](http://www.cabeceras.org). Cabeceras Aid Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so your gift to us is tax deductible.

If you have any questions about Cabeceras' work, please contact me via email at [chris@cabeceras.org](mailto:chris@cabeceras.org) or via telephone at 510-932-5771.

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