

# SOMBRILLA

Refugee Support Society



*fostering partnerships for social justice*



## ANNUAL REPORT

2010

## **Report from the Chair** by Sarah Cashmore

This year has been one of growth and optimism for Sombrilla as we work to build up our organization and continue to support our partners in Peru and Guatemala. Our board and volunteers have worked very hard to increase our capacity, to increase our knowledge and to increase our impact as we work with our partners to reduce poverty and improve their lives.

We have seen the Huayllacocha Water project come to a successful conclusion with clean water now being piped into the homes of the community. It is expected that this community will see a large reduction in water borne illnesses as a result of having the new water system.

It has been a big year for the Tierra Colorada project in Guatemala. Under the direction of Paul Layte and Nancy Cowle there has been a lot of work done on the school infrastructure. This work continues as more classrooms will be added to the school this year.

In July two board members, myself and Jeff Goldie travelled to Huaraz Peru to visit our partner organization Andean Alliance and to plan for our Yurac Yacu Community Centre project. We also met with the Yurac Yacu Community Directiva and conducted a needs survey. It was incredibly rewarding to spend time with the people of this community and we look forward to a long and productive partnership.

Once again Sombrilla has engaged with the public in many ways. With our display and brochures we have attended events such as the Stephen Lewis talk at the ACGC Annual General Meeting, Just Christmas, The Stand Against Poverty at the University of Alberta and Seedy Sunday. In Spring together with Keiskamma Canada we organized a gardening workshop and presented information about food security and gardening projects. We have partnered with a local Scout Troop who have volunteered at our events, and learned from us about how we work in partnerships to reduce poverty. We look forward to increasing our public engagement and to partnering with more youth.

### **Sombrilla's 2009-2010 Board of Directors**

Rick Berube, Member	Jeff Goldie, Secretary
Sarah Cashmore, President	Richard Heikkila, Member
Nancy Chisholm, Membership	Natashya Shewchuk, Chair- Public Engagement Committee
Jacque Devlin, Vice President	Tracy Tanasichuk, Treasurer
Stephanie Garcia Elbay, Member	Kirsten van der Meer, Chair-Project Committee

## Tierra Colorada Project, Guatemala

Project managers Paul Layte and Nancy Cowle have been working together with Sombrilla for the past 3 years to make improvements to the local school and to make biosand water filters available to the community. With matching funding from the Government of Alberta this year the priority has been to construct new classroom space to relieve crowding in the school. At first the plan was to buy some land and to partner with an organization that could build a new school.



Classrooms before construction

Nancy Cowle travelled to Tierra Colorada in May-June to look at buying some land but discovered several obstacles: lack of assurances of the appropriate legal paperwork for the land; a feeling of 'over-priced' land because of Canadian Funds; difficulty getting commitments from the Guatemala Government in a timely fashion and a lack of suitable land[soil conditions] for constructing a school on. Nancy reviewed the situation with the school staff and village residents. It was decided to proceed with adding second floor classrooms to the existing school and this work has already begun at one part of the school. Starting in June a local contractor was hired to construct



Wooden supports for new ceiling

a concrete ceiling over two existing classrooms and extended over the school's entrance-way as shown in these photos. Two new classrooms will be erected on top of this concrete surface with anticipated completion in October. Families in the community are each contributing 100 quetzels toward the costs. A local company has contributed 1500 cinder blocks.



Old Toilets

In addition to progress on the school expansion work has been completed on replacing the existing washroom facilities with flush toilets, urinal, sink and new doors installed on the washrooms. This has greatly enhanced the hygiene standards at the school. A new computer/laptop storage unit was constructed by a local welder and windows with bars have been installed in two classrooms to provide additional security for the laptop computers and other attractive items. The nearby medical/health center, motivated by our charitable



New Toilets

efforts, has contributed time & materials to improve the kitchen/cooking facilities at the school. Mothers in the community use these cooking facilities to provide a snack for all students three times per week.

The construction of biosand water filters will continue in 2011

## Peru Water Project

For the past five years Sombrilla in partnership with Peruvian NGO Centro de Medicina Andina has been working on this project to bring clean water into the homes of the residents of Huayllacocha Peru. Initially the people of this community had no access to clean water and were in fact using untreated ground water leading to concerns about waterborne disease.

In an earlier stage of the project completed in 2008 almost 10,000 native plants and trees were planted in the community in an attempt to conserve moisture. This part of the project was highly successful with an 80% survival rate of the plants in the first year.

The bringing of water into the community was delayed by over a year as we waited for the Peruvian Government to complete a dam that would allow us to access water from a lake. The dam was completed this spring and the water project was in place in the community by the end of summer. The water is piped into a storage and treatment facility in the village. The water is filtered and chlorinated then piped into the homes. Bringing water into the houses rather than to a communal tap reduces the likelihood of contamination of the water after it has been treated and we are expecting to see a large decrease in illnesses such as parasite infections, hepatitis typhoid and gastrointestinal illnesses. The increased water flow will also allow for irrigation of crops and greater capacity to raise animals leading to higher income levels.



The complete water treatment facility



Building the water treatment facility



Reforestation

## Yurac Yacu Project

The Yurac Yacu Project is still in the planning and fundraising stage but there has been plenty of progress this year. In July two board members Sarah Cashmore and Jeff Goldie visited the project. We entered into a formal partnership with Peruvian NGO Andean Alliance with the signing of an agency agreement and we met with the Community Directiva, a group of elected representatives of the Yurac Yacu community. We discussed with them the present and future needs of the community and asked them to brainstorm their vision for their community twenty years into the future. A report from this meeting is available on request. The information gathered will help Andean Alliance and Sombrilla to make long term plans for the projects.

The proposed project for the next year is to construct the Yurac Yacu Community Business Centre for Human Development. When complete this centre



will include space for community members to run small tourism related businesses such as a cafe and an expedition services office. There will be a library/learning centre with computers and internet connection, a meeting space for training and educational programs and community shows.

Construction of the Community Centre

The project will also support the supplemental education programs started by Andean Alliance about one year ago. The programs include a three morning a week play school program and two afternoons a week of programming for school aged children. These programs are free of charge and run by volunteers.



Diana Morris from Andean Alliance reads with the after school class

Andean Alliance has secured enough funding to start the community centre and this summer started construction on



Volunteer Andrea Kohut works with children in the preschool program

the first room which will house the educational programs. The

building is nearing completion and will be in use in November.

Sombrilla is presently raising money for the next stage of building. Our fundraising goal for the project this year is \$50,000 which will be enough to complete the library/learning centre and income generating space. Sombrilla is also supporting the preschool program and has recently send new toys and children's books for use in that program.



The first room of the community centre nears completion

## Public Engagement

An important element of the Sombrilla's work is to engage with the public here in Canada. The funds that support our projects all come from generous and committed Canadian's. Our job is to connect Canadians to the people of our partner communities. While we can't bring everyone with us to visit the projects we can bring home the stories of the people and communities we work with. We are trying to improve and diversify the ways in which we can connect Canadians with our projects. This year we have started an newsletter which will be published 3 times a annually. We have updated our website and are striving to keep it current. We are able to bring our display and speak face to face with the public at many events such as The Stand Against Poverty, Just Christmas and International Development Week, each year.

Our fundraising events also allow us to meet with people and spend time with them sharing news from our projects . This year we hosted an International Dinner and Silent Auction which was very well attended and introduced us to many new friends. Sombrilla partnered with Keiskamma Trust to organize a Beginning Gardening Workshop with Urban Farmer Ron Berezan. This was our fourth year putting on this event which allows us to talk to a group of people about food security in our projects.



Partnerships with youth are always rewarding and Sombrilla in the past year partnered with the 6th Edmonton Scouts who helped with the International Dinner and Just Christmas sale. We had the opportunity to meet with the Scouts to talk about the projects and how we can counter poverty in the world. Students from the Scona Pride group at Strathcona High School raised funds at a noon our event for Sombrilla. We hope to build on these relationships in the coming year.

## **Sombrilla thanks our major donors for their ongoing support**

The Government of Alberta

The Monsignor Irwin International Development Fund

The Ontario English Catholic Teacher's Association

### **And our local supporters**

Jill Thompson and Bruce Wright

The 6th Edmonton Scouts

Scona Pride