

# Sombrilla

International Development Society



*fostering partnerships for community development*



## Annual Report 2012-2013

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## **Report from the Chair** – Submitted by Richard Heikkila

At the last Annual General Meeting, Sombrilla celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary! And during the past year, we have continued to build strong relationships with our partners in Latin America and to strengthen our ties to Albertans through our outreach and engagement work. Our volunteers and our Board of Directors have worked very hard to support our vision of fostering partnerships for community development. Together, we are dedicated to the Sombrilla mission of reducing poverty through building self-sustaining communities and enhancing quality of life with our Latin partners.

Sombrilla's main development project for the past two years has been the Yurac Yacu project in Peru. The first phase is now completed. It involved the construction of two buildings, which serve the community in many ways, from education to income generation. We are preparing for the second phase of the project, which involves the construction of an expedition services office. From there, local community members will serve as mountaineering tour leaders for tourists. Sarah, the project manager, has also worked very hard to share our successes in Yurac Yacu with the Edmonton community. Along with Jeff, our Board Secretary (and her husband), she has led two groups of students to visit the project. The excellent video presentation of the first trip by the students, moves me deeply each time I see it.

The Board of Directors are all very excited for our latest project. It involves in returning to work with our first project partners in Latin America in the Chajul region of north-central Guatemala. We first helped the communities in the area deal with the ongoing civil war in the late 1980s. In the early 2000s, Sombrilla engaged in two large health care projects. Our latest project continues these efforts by building an additional micro-pharmacy in another community and by providing training for staff and administration.

The Board members continue to strengthen and improve Sombrilla as an organization. Last fall, Board members had a very long one-day session on Policy Strategic Planning, which was facilitated by an employee from the Alberta government. Although still a work in progress, the plan provides valuable direction to each Board member, and is a good reference tool for the public. Sombrilla also revamped our website (thanks Ross Anderson) to make it easier to manage, and students at the U of A translated it into Spanish.

As always, Sombrilla participated in local events to engage with Albertans. We have travelled with our display to Just Christmas and Alberta Council for Global Cooperation AGM. We hosted two very successful and entertaining fundraisers, both involving delicious food and musicians or dancers. Thanks to all who were able to attend.

And many thanks to all of you who support Sombrilla and our ongoing work.

## Yurac Yacu Project Progress Report

2013 has been a very exciting year for Sombrilla as we wrapped up a very successful first project with our partner Andean Alliance in the community of Yurac Yacu, Peru. This was a two year project to build a community centre for the community, allowing them to expand their employment options with tourism centered jobs and businesses, as well as providing a home for educational and community development programming. By the time we started our partnership with Andean Alliance they had been able to build the first room of the modular community centre. This room housed the preschool class. Over the past two years Sombrilla has funded the addition of three more rooms, as well as main floor and rooftop terraces adding still more space. Sombrilla funding provided a large multipurpose room now housing computers with internet connections, a library and community programming. With a donation from the Monsignor Irwin Foundation we were able to provide audiovisual and computer equipment to make the room functional.



Next we added a kitchen and washroom allowing the opening of the Yurac Yacu café. The Yurac Yacu café is the first income generating part of the project. The café at present is open on weekends and provides lunches and information about the area for people who come up from the city to spend the day in the mountains. The café is run by a board

comprised of community members and hires other community members as cooks and servers. As well as providing employment for the community the profits from the café will eventually be used to run and maintain the community centre.

Each room of the community centre is put to use as soon as it is completed. In 2012 the multi-use room made it possible to offer summer school classes

for the children of the community during their long holiday break from Christmas to the end of February holidays. The room is also used for community meetings, is open daily allowing community members to access the computers, internet and library, and is used for events such as community meetings and movie nights. We provide computer training and several young adults have been hired to run the centre during opening hours.

The next phase of the project will include the building of an expedition services office where tourists will be able to contract local people as guides, cooks and donkey drivers for their trips into the mountains. This will also generate profits that will help to run the centre in the future.



In a separate project with Andean Alliance, Sombrilla supports the Yurac Yacu preschool, providing funds to pay the teacher each month and to provide materials such as books and toys for the children. In December the preschool graduated it's first class of six-year-olds who were ready to enter grade one. We are very happy to be able to say the children are all doing well in public school.

## **Guatemala Public Health Project Progress Report**

Sombrilla was founded in 1987 to provide assistance to the communities of the Chajul region of north-central Guatemala. The country was in an extended civil war and indigenous communities faced horrendous human rights violations. Sombrilla was involved in several projects dealing with building communities and



improving internal relationships. After the war ended, Sombrilla developed two large health care projects with support from the Canadian International Development Agency and the Alberta government.

In the past few years, Sombrilla was involved in projects in other Latin American countries. However, we wanted to return to Chajul. In 2011, Board member Stephanie Garcia visited the community and met with our past associates in ADIM (Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de

Multiservicios), a registered NGO in Guatemala. Discussions ensued regarding community needs, which in due course led to the submission to Sombrilla in 2012 of an application for a new project. That project contributes to our Public Health Care projects in the early 2000s. One of its main focuses of ADIM is the development and operation of micro-pharmacies in several communities in the Chajul region. The ADIM work is in support of the Program for the Accessibility to Medication from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW). The goal is to provide medication at a fair price to traditionally neglected communities. These micro-pharmacies have been really successful and have helped thousands of families in the area.

ADIM wants to expand the pharmacies program to two additional communities that do not presently have access to local pharmacies. These new communities are not in the traditional area served by ADIM, therefore new physical infrastructure and staff training is needed. Sombrilla will also provide support to ADIM to improve the administration, management and accountability of their existing six micro-pharmacies in the Chajul region. The original budget for Sombrilla was for around \$44,000. In July 2013, Sombrilla received a grant from the Alberta Community Development Initiative for \$8000. While we are very grateful for this support from the province, the amount is much smaller than we had hoped so it was decided that we would split the project into two phases so that we could get started right away. Funds are presently available for one new micro-pharmacy and some staff training and the project is now underway. Sombrilla will continue to fundraise in support of a second micro-pharmacy and additional staff training and infrastructure needs.

## **Tierra Colorada Project Progress Report**

The Tierra Colorada Project is a partnership with a School in the western highlands of Guatemala. Three years ago Tierra Colorada Project Manager Paul Layte, undertook a large building project to add a second story to the very overcrowded school. That project was completed this year and has provided enough space for all the children to have a



classroom. We also improved and updated the washrooms kitchen space.

Inspired by the new space available in the school the teachers suggested trying to start a secondary school program to run in the afternoons. This was included as part of the project this year is now operating with two classes: Grade 7 and 8 and an enrollment of about 75 students. There are a large number of indigenous [Mayan] students from surrounding communities attending. This is very encouraging, as typically Mayan students don't attend school beyond the primary grades.

### **Youth to Youth Tour**



A part of Sombrilla's mandate is to engage the public in Alberta and to share with people the work we and other development organizations are doing in developing countries. For the past two years we have brought groups of students to visit our Yurac Yacu project as a part of that. This summer, for two weeks, ten high school students, five adults and a

three-year-old descended on the Yurac Yacu community for ten days of volunteering, meeting new friends and learning about our projects. Through the winter and spring the ten high school students raised money, planned and prepared for their adventure in Peru. The volunteer project they chose was to build a playground, using recycled tires, for the children of the community. It took a lot of sales of fair trade chocolate to raise the money needed for the project.

As well as providing a safe place for the preschoolers and other children to play the Albertan youth formed strong bonds with each other and with their counterparts in Yurac Yacu. Several of them have been helping us this year with presentations to the public and volunteering at events.



Our thanks to Anand, Arnika, Cameron, Daverin, Emma, Erin, Maddie, Montana, Sam and Tajj for making the trip such a success for everyone.

## **Board of Directors 2012-2013**

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And each of our many individual donors and supporters.