



FROM FARMERS' GARDENS AND FIELDS IN NICARAGUA

Daniel Paredes and I have just taken three wonderful trips to the rural communities where we are continuing our agroecological and gender-transformative programming: Jiñocuao (Somotillo), Santa Julia (El Crucero), and La Calera (Santa Teresa). Farmers are dealing with the effects of the climate crisis by looking to old and new practices to sustain the health of their crops, families and communities.



Focus group with farmers in Jiñocuao

We learned that some farmers lost the crops they planted in the first planting season (“primera”) this year and had still not planted for the second season (“prostrera”) because of the lack of rain. One farmer we visited lost his crop because it suddenly rained too heavily after a very long dry spell. Producers received the seeds Casa – Pueblito provided and were looking forward to a few rainy days so they could finally plant them or transplant seedlings.

Other farmers were using the inputs they received from us this year and the technologies they had learned in the previous project for fertilizer and pest control. We heard about some ancestral practices that farmers had learned from previous generations. One farmer was taught by his parents to plant according to the phases of the moon and another learned from his grandmother how to forecast showers by reading signs in the moon and sky.

In focus groups, community members and leaders shared their desire to learn more about agroecological techniques and implement them, their need for access to water or inputs to improve production, their concern for action at the community level to decrease youth emigration, and the relevance of changing attitudes and behaviours for increased gender equality at home.

Nadine Jubb

Nadine Jubb
Country Director

Distributing bean seeds in Santa Julia



Using hoses to irrigate a plantain crop in La Calera



A TALE OF TWO FUNDERS

BY BILL HEFFERNAN CO-FOUNDER/VP

What does an International Volunteer organization in Edmonton have in common with a Mexican Restaurant and Catering business in Toronto? At first glance it would seem not much at all, but dig a little deeper and you will find two amazing stories of long-time support and solidarity with Casa-Pueblito and its community partners, its mission and its employees.

Volunteer International Christian Services (VICS) was founded in 1971 under the direction of the Spiritan Father's and has sent many hundreds of Canadians overseas for 2 year placements in developing countries and supported many more in-country cooperants. In 1992 when the Casa Canadiense project was conceived VICS became our very first partner. Without the pioneering and rebellious spirit of then Director Dermot Doran followed by the caring, nurturing support of Father Bob Colburn we never would have made it through the first two decades.

And now for the past decade or so Joyce de Gooijer, a former co-operant herself, has been tremendous in her support of our Country Directors with a first-hand sensibility to their personal needs in an oft demanding role. And she has made it a point to visit each and everyone of them in Nicaragua during their respective tenures.



Joyce de Gooijer with a dance group from Hogar Luceros del Amanecer (Campaña)

Current Casa - Pueblito Country Director Nadine Jubb shares:

"Since I started with Casa - Pueblito, Joyce has demonstrated her genuine care and concern about my wellbeing as a person and VICS co-operant, as well as that of Casa - Pueblito and our partners. When we visited another VICS partner last year, Hogar Luceros del Amanecer, the students' and staff's outpouring of gratitude showed how much they treasured VICS, and Joyce in particular."

We could not be where we are today without the heartfelt moral, spiritual and material support that we have received from day one from VICS and the three tremendous directors that we have been blessed to have partnered and collaborated with. Sadly, after 51 years of operation, VICS must close its doors and is in the process of shutting down. Even as they do so they have continued to support Casa - Pueblito and we are grateful for our long-term relationship in International Solidarity with them.



Dermot Doran, Joyce de Gooijer, and Bob Colburn

Fast forward to College Street Toronto, where 28 years ago we were introduced to Donnie Blais and his Mexican Restaurant, Rancho Relaxo. Now one of the leading caterers in the GTA, he had to be talked into his very first foray into catering: our Annual Brunch and Auction. He has been our caterer ever since, generously slashing his prices for our events. Not only that, he caters our very popular House Concerts events that over the



Donnie Blais of Rancho Relaxo

years have generated tens of thousands of dollars. Coupled with his generosity and his seriously reduced catering bills these contributions would add up to over \$50,000.

And that support goes along way in Nicaragua and helps sustain us here in Canada. And the food is sumptuously delicious.

So let's raise a Rancho Relaxo Margarita in a toast to Donnie, Dermot, Bob and Joyce as we celebrate the tremendous contributions to Casa - Pueblito made by VICS and Rancho Relaxo.

Muchas Gracias...y por favor, otra margarita!

AN UPDATE FROM EL TRIUNFO SCHOOL: AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

BY KEN MCGUFFIN, BOARD MEMBER

August 20, 2023

Dear friends,

Last month, students, parents, teachers and friends gathered at the school we are supporting in the community of El Triunfo in Guatemala to celebrate a remarkable achievement: the 15th anniversary of the school. Since its founding in 2008, hundreds of students from El Triunfo and the neighbouring communities of La Fey, El Mirador, El Progreso, and El Adelantro have come to the school to study, to learn, and to have fun. Many of these students would not have pursued formal education beyond grade six without the school. Graduates have gone to high school and been able to pursue "professional" careers, which don't involve working in the fields or staying at home.

Over the past fifteen years your financial support have paid the salaries for the director and the teachers, bought computers for the lab on three different occasions, built a second floor with three classrooms and a new computer lab, as well as countless other items such as desks, blackboards, laptops, school supplies, and more.

While your financial support has kept the school doors open, your moral support has kept me going. I want to thank you for both.



The girls' soccer team



This year the anniversary returned to its usual in-person three-day festival. On day one the “Senoritas” of the school were elected followed by cultural activities including traditional dance performances on day two. The anniversary wrapped up with soccer tournament on the last day with both the girls and boys teams taking home the first place trophies over teams from two other schools.

On my visits to the school, I was pleased to notice that the building was back in a good state of repair. Broken windows in the classrooms were fixed and a new bright blue paint job was in the process of being finished. In addition to taking part in the festivities, I was also able to meet with the school and community leaders and get caught up on the paperwork. Thank you for your continued and valued support; the running of the school is not possible without it.



El Triunfo School with new windows and blue paint

“INTERWEAVING COMMUNITIES”: SOLIDARITY AMONG CASA - PUEBLITO PARTNERS

BY NADINE JUBB, COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Our partners contribute to Casa – Pueblito’s vision and mission by furthering community development and social justice among themselves. They exchange experiences and learning among each other in ways that extend and even improve their programs and our support.

One type of exchange are staff visits to learn more about the programs each organization provides. Hogar Luceros del Amanecer has done exchanges with two other Casa partners, Christine King Cooperative and Huellas de Paz, and many others.

Some exchanges involve providing services to community members. The Christine King Cooperative has travelled to several communities, including Jiñocuaao, to provide natural medicine services (a program Casa contributed to last year). In some communities they also provide some training to local health-care professionals.



Christine King Cooperative provides alternative health care services to Jiñocuaao community members



Marlene Rivera, sewing instructor at Huellas de Paz, during an exchange with Hogar Luceros del Amanecer

Other types of exchanges are short-term and more technical. Huellas de Paz received technical advice on setting up a library from a previous Casa partner, Centro Cultural Batahola Norte (CCBN). Since then, they have shared the library program with other Casa – Pueblito partners.

Our partners highlighted several keys to success.

- » Testimonies from community members of how they have benefited can be very moving.
- » Be very honest and open, speak from the heart and be willing to discuss difficulties.
- » Gladys Ruiz (Christine King Cooperative, Esteli): speaking in plain language helps to build trust and a long-lasting relationship.
- » Julio Huete (Jiñocuaao): share your values.
- » Jaime Torres (Huellas de Paz, Acahualinca, Managua) and Sebastian Laguna (Hogar Luceros del Amanecer, Camoapa): exchange with organizations that have similar programs or work with similar sectors of the population but in different regions.

They spoke so highly about the results of these exchanges and how impressed they were with the work of the organizations. One of the benefits has been to better serve their own communities by improving their existing programs or adding new ones.

The visits strengthen the organizations as well. The trips serve as an incentive for staff and youth leadership building. Jaime Torres said that their youth leaders ask him about their next opportunity to “recharge their batteries.” Gladys Ruiz says that she knows when they have had a positive impact when community members ask when they will return to provide more services. She also spoke about how she has learned so much on a personal level.

Sebastián Laguna spoke about the importance of innovation and organizations being dynamic so that they can grow and provide more and better services. “If one thing doesn’t work, we want to learn something else.” Our partners pointed out that the exchanges lead to ongoing communication about many topics, from specific programs, services or strategies to administrative issues. These exchanges contribute to greater sustainability and partnership.

One important lesson from our partners’ experiences is the spiral of increased cooperation. After the Christine King Cooperative provided a chat on healthy eating and eating less processed foods, many people in Jiñocuaao approached Julio about growing vegetables and beans (farmers traditionally plant grains in this area). The two other communities in the agroecology and gender-transformative project – La Calera and the Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative – shared their seeds. After harvesting their crops, Jiñocuaao farmers will return seeds to all three community seed banks. Julio expressed that, “we felt their presence and solidarity through the seeds. Casa – Pueblito has a national dimension that is interweaving communities.”



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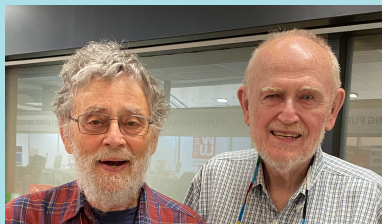
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**MAKE A DIFFERENCE
HELP FUNDRAISE TO
SUPPORT COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

CIBC

Authors, Harry Smaller (L) and
Mike O'Sullivan (R)



COMINGS AND GOINGS

We would like to welcome to our office in Toronto, former volunteer Romi Fischer-Schmidt, in their role of Communications and Design Assistant before they head off to Guatemala in January.

Also a big welcome back to Marnie Saunders, former board member, returning to us in the role of General Administrator for at least the next 6 months. Marnie brings over four decades worth of administrative project coordination experience and leadership to the office with a strong knowledge of every facet of what we do.

We are sad to announce that our Co-ordinator of Administration and Donor Relations Nuria Jimenez will be moving on to pursue other interests and some personal education interests. At the same time though we are very happy for her and wish her all the best, and thank her profusely for all that she did for us in the office and at events.

We also say good-bye to board member Amilcar Kraudie who served us in so many special ways in his tenure on the board, who has joined another International Solidarity organization, which often takes him out of the country. We wish him well.

Walter González is no longer our accountant in Managua. We are grateful to him for stepping in at a moment's notice after the unexpected death of Elizabeth Guillen, Casa's bookkeeper for over 20 years. We thank Walter for his service and wish him the very best.

We welcome Ruth Corea Castillo as our new accountant. Ruth has considerable experience working with projects and organizations funded by international cooperation. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting. She is already making a great contribution to our team and partners.

We welcome Marianne Whitaker, retired teacher-librarian and former student delegation leader from St. Augustine Secondary School to our Board. Marianne's infectious positive energy and her broad and diverse skill set are a welcome addition to our team. Welcome aboard Marianne!

CASA - PUEBLITO 2023 GREY CUP FESTIVAL PARTY & FUNDRAISER

Casa - Pueblito is bringing back its popular Grey Cup Festival Party after the rude interruption of the COVID related shut-downs

TO TAKE PLACE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19TH IN TORONTO

Date: Sunday November 19th

Where: Shoxs Saloon & Sports Bar
2827 Dundas West (at Keele)

Time: Doors and Seating at 5pm

Game Time: 6pm

Plenty of Green P Parking behind,

Metered Street Parking in Front

Easy access on TTC

Wheelchair accessible- first floor washrooms

Cost : \$25, includes:

*complimentary bowl of chili

* a \$20 tax receipt

* Central Big Screen

* 10 Surround TV's

* 30 Door Prizes worth over \$750 with entry

* 20 Silent Auction items available from \$25-\$250 in value

* a \$10 Square Board Draw- \$500 in prizes to the winners

Only 60 seats available by reservation - Act Now- first come, first served. Don't get shut out. To those unable to attend due to distance, geography or simply other plans that day, why not be a part of it by purchasing a " ticket in absence" for \$25 and receiving your \$25 tax receipt. It's all going to the same great cause, the continued support of our grass roots projects in some of the poorest yet proudest communities in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Buy your tickets or make a donation through Canada Helps
(receive your tax receipt as soon as the event ticket is purchased or donation is made)

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/casa-pueblito/events/grey-cup-festival-party-fundraiser/>
OR

You may reserve a ticket for pick up at the door by e-mailing
info@casapueblito.org or phoning the office at 416-642-5781.
These purchases can only be paid by cash at point of entry.

Casa Canadiense founder Harry Smaller and long-time board member Michael O'Sullivan have recently published a book that was largely based on the Casa Canadiense experience of facilitating student trips to Nicaragua for many years. The book, *Decolonizing International Service Learning*, examines the student learning experience practiced by Casa and concludes that Casa did it right by generating solidarity rather than reinforcing neocolonial "helping the poor" imperatives often associated with such visits. To order the book go to the following link and cite Discount Code 72325 for a 25% discount on the price if you order it prior to December 31. Order online at <https://brill.com/display/title/64968>