



CASA PUEBLITO

CASA PUEBLITO Fall 2015 | Number 567



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CASA - PUEBLITO'S ORGANIC FARMING PROJECT TEACHES FARMERS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Meet Porfirio, an organic farmer on one of our biointensive family gardens in the UCA Tierra y Agua cooperative. Porfirio lives with his wife and two children in the Aguas Agrias community near Granada.

In Nicaragua, many people work as day labourers on coffee and sugar cane plantations. The average family income in this region is \$110US each month. Employment on farms is precarious, and many farmers face health problems and lack access to basic necessities like food and water.

Porfirio is lucky to work his own land, and sell the plantains he

grows to make money for his family. He has worked hard to ensure he never has to work for a large farm, and says his dream is to never have to.

“ I want all members of the community to live with enough food and that all their needs be met.”

Casa – Pueblito has been partnered with the UCA Tierra y Agua cooperative for 8 years, and works to implement sustainable farming techniques and training.

Porfirio was a participant in one of our biointensive agricultural training programs last year, and has returned again this year for a refresher course. With his newfound knowledge and training he was able to start a vegetable garden on his land where he grows tomatoes,

green peppers and cucumbers.

Through his participation in the project, Porfirio learned of the dangers of pesticide use in large-scale farming to both people and the environment. He is passionate about organic gardening and ensuring the health and safety of his family and community by growing pesticide-free produce to eat and sell.

Farmers in the UCA Tierra Y Agua communities are now able to grow their own safe and healthy produce, which means they no longer have to make the commute into the nearest town for food. This allows participants to focus more of their time on providing for themselves and their communities.

Porfirio says, “I want all members of the community to live well with enough food and that all their needs be met. I want them to be happy without needing to beg anyone to hire them for the day.” He takes pride in his gardens, and hopes to show others in the community the benefits of organic farming.





Sinéad at her internship in La Granadilla, practicing safe, organic growing techniques by spraying organic fertilizer she helped to produce with the community members.

INTERN DISPATCH

SINÉAD DUNPHY

Hi, my name is Sinéad Dunphy. I am currently completing my second year of studies at the University of Toronto, and have embarked on an internship with Casa – Pueblito and the organization’s partner in Granada, UCA Tierra y Agua.

I have always had a passion for learning about other countries, peoples and cultures, about the global North-South relationship and grassroots development work. This internship has given me the opportunity to immerse myself in Nicaraguan culture and community, and I have the privilege of living with and learning from the people of the community of La Granadilla. I have also had the chance to participate in a relatively new agro-ecological project that the community of La Granadilla and UCA Tierra y Agua have created to promote food, environmental security and sustainability.

I have been living with my welcoming host family in the community of La Granadilla. It is part of the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, UCA Tierra Y Agua, which promotes self-sufficiency and agricultural and environmental sustainability and security.

Casa – Pueblito is supporting the construction of a number of family and community gardens in the cooperative communities, all of which are created and maintained using new agro-ecological techniques. “Agro-ecological” simply means that the gardens are being created and

maintained in ways which respect and take advantage of natural ecological processes.

This project is important for a number of reasons. It is building and strengthening environmental consciousness at the community level and it is encouraging self-sufficiency and greater food security.

Over the past couple of weeks I have been working with men and members of La Granadilla’s youth group on these gardens. While participating in this work I have definitely gained a new appreciation for food and a richer understanding of the vast amount of work that goes into its production.

Donya Reina, the mother in my house, is a strong woman who has been teaching me how to cook some classic Nicaraguan dishes and how to make the soap that she and Isabel, another woman in the community, sell in Granada.

Leo, her 15 year old son and the leader of the youth group here, patiently and jokingly puts up with my incessant questions about the Spanish language. He introduced me to the community and to the work I have been doing here. He has little free time, as he works Monday to Friday with his father in Managua while attending school on Saturdays. Also in the house are Leo’s four sisters Maria, Adrianna, Veronica and Daniella. The hospitality of this family has made me feel like I have a second home here in Nicaragua.

Recently I had the chance to talk to Donya Reina about her experiences with hosting volunteers in the past, as I had wondered about the burden this placed on families here. She told me she likes having visiting students live with her because she enjoys interacting with people from all over the world. She likes to share her life with new people and learn from each of them. Although she encourages volunteers to see all of Nicaragua, she wishes they would spend more time in the community.

She also shared that hosting visiting students provides her family with a bit of extra money which enables her to buy things she wouldn’t normally buy, like enough watermelon for breakfast every morning or a piglet. Piglets act as an investment for people here as they can be sold when they’re fully grown for more money during hard times. Donya Reina’s insight about hosting volunteers, like myself, has given me the drive to continue working with community members on this important project.

I have had the opportunity to get very involved with the organic farming here in Nicaragua, and I understand just how crucial this work is to the prosperity of this community and other like it. **Check out the News section of Casa – Pueblito’s new website for more updates from myself and another intern in Nicaragua.**

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR INTERN SINÉAD



Above, each garden has between 3 and 5 plots that measure 8 metres by 120cm. Intern Sinéad was able to watch and assist one morning in the creation of 5L of *binadre*, or organic fertilizer, a process which took 3 hours of labour on the part of 6 people, and then 5 more hours of patience as they waited for it to collect.



Above, a community member waters crops at the UCA Tierra y Agua cooperative in La Granadilla.

YORK-GLENDON GLOBAL ISSUES GROUP VISITS AGUAS AGRIAS IN GRANADA

Casa - Pueblito had the pleasure of hosting yet another Global Education delegation from May 1st to May 13th of this year. This group, consisting of 12 York-Glendon University students, came to Nicaragua to visit the community of Aguas Agrias in Granada.

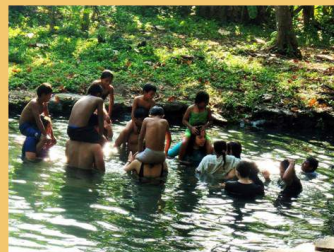
Aguas Agrias is an agricultural and rural tourism cooperative that is member of the UCA Tierra Y Agua, a union of

ecological gardens in the cooperative member's lands in order to provide access to healthy and organically grown food that is free of pesticides and artificial fertilizers.

Through these techniques, community members will be eating healthy food made using organic material from the land. Community members will also see a cost benefit, as local farmers will be able to stop buying expensive pesticides.

The York Glendon delegation participated in the community by helping set up an organic garden behind the communal house, which hosts a free lunch program and after school activities for the children of the community. The garden will grow healthy organic food for the cooperative's members and their children. Many of these children work with their families in farming, and some are also able to study at the local primary school full-time or part-time.

The York Glendon group helped till the land and set up gardens, where community members will soon start planting crops. Cooperative members taught the delegates how to prepare the land using various farming tools. The delegation also



took part in educational conferences and workshops where they learned about the history of the community and the land struggles that cooperative members faced in order to find a home in Granada.

After 13 days in Nicaragua, the York Glendon Global Issues Group left the country with enriched knowledge and new connections. Intercultural exchanges such as these serve to impact not only delegates who gain a new understanding of global issues, but also local Nicaraguan people find new understandings of other cultures.



8 agricultural and rural tourism cooperatives and long time community partner of Casa - Pueblito. This year's community project is aimed at creating agro-

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MISHA BAUDISCH-MCCABE

SECRETARY

Misha Baudisch-McCabe, a Project Officer with War Child, has been acting as the Secretary of Casa – Pueblito's Board of Directors since our amalgamation earlier this year. Misha has been on the board since 2012, however her involvement with the organization traces back to its roots. "My family has long been involved with Casa and its past incarnation as Trucks to



Nicaragua." She shares the organizations values, including solidarity, social justice and compassion, and has twice travelled to Nicaragua through Casa – Pueblito. She is proud of our grassroots, community-driven approach to development and our rich history of resilience in the face of struggle. In her spare time Misha knits, plays many sports and is currently busy planning her wedding and a backpacking trip through Cuba for later this year. Having crossed the globe in her travels, she says she one day hopes to make it back to Nicaragua.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

We've recently launched our brand new website. Have a look at www.casapueblito.org!