

# HORIZONS OF FRIENDSHIP

# Horizons

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2018

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO END POVERTY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

## Protecting Human Rights in the South



Young women in Nicaragua are empowered to advocate for their rights.

The news has been filled with images of families torn apart at the US/Mexico border and the shattering impact this has on parents and their children. Escalating violence in Central America has families fleeing extortion, gang violence and death threats.

Violence, climate change, deep levels of poverty and lack of educational and employment opportunities are all factors pushing people to migrate, not just to the US, but to Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico. The dramatic increase in unaccompanied minors and families making this trek is a sign of the desperation they feel.

At the bottom of these issues is a distinct disregard for the human rights of the people of Central America and Mexico. The right to life, liberty and personal security, to own property and to a fair public hearing are violated on a daily basis throughout the region.

At Horizons, our work respects the essential worth of each individual and their right to a life of dignity, where basic needs are met and families can safely raise their children. Our partners develop innovative, community-based initiatives that tackle the underlying human rights' issues and work to create positive, sustainable change.

One example is in El Salvador where life is extremely insecure, especially for kids. The region has the highest

homicide rate for youth under 19 in the world. Our partner ACUDESBAL (the Intercommunity Association of Communities of Lower Lempa) is addressing some of the conditions contributing to this violence.

Gang recruitment targets children as young as eight years of age, so ACUDESBAL is providing positive, safe spaces for youth with activities in soccer, dance, music, art and leadership. These efforts reinforce positive attitudes among young people and help to create peace and change at the individual and community level (see *Rocío's story at right*).

In Honduras, our new partner Las Chonas (the Women's Movement for Peace) defends human rights, democracy and peace. They are addressing the rising rates of violence against women by teaching female university students about the roots of discrimination and women's rights. The students also learn about the important role they play, as young professionals, in promoting human rights and preventing violence against women.

MEC (the Marie Elena Cuadra Working and Unemployed Women's Movement), Horizons' partner in Nicaragua,

understands the importance of building capacity in the younger generation. They educate young women workers in Nicaragua's "maquiladora" sector (free trade zone) to better defend their labour and economic rights. Better economic security means the women can stay in their communities instead of migrating.

These are just some of the many ways your support is helping Horizons and our partners uphold basic human rights for families and communities in the south.

### Peace Through the Arts



ACUDESBAL's arts projects have a dramatic impact on gang violence. Here's what 10-year old Rocío has to say:

“ Before it was very dangerous to go outside and my mom didn't let us play in the park. We'd hide under our beds in fear when we heard the gunshots of police fighting with gangs outside.

Since this project began it has changed my life and the lives of others. I have learned to play guitar, and sing, and am part of a choir. A variety of activities in the park bring people of all ages from other communities.

It makes me really happy to know that everything is much more peaceful. I don't know what our lives would have been without this project. ”

**PLUS! 2017 Annual Report**



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# Film Tackles Sexuality



Odilia Ambrocio is the co-star of the film, *Cha'Om Taq Be*, which focuses on healthy sexuality and decision-making among adolescents.

**When asked what it's like** to star in a movie, 14-year-old Odilia Ambrocio giggles shyly. "It's special to share such positive messages with other girls and boys my age," she says just before the movie's premiere screening. "Talking about sexuality, abuse, and the choices that impact the rest of your life isn't always easy."

Odilia is the reserved, confident co-star of the Horizons-funded educational short film, *Cha'Om Taq Be*, which is K'iche' for *Chosen Paths*. The film is one of the many

innovative communication tools being used in our Guatemalan Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: Transforming Indigenous Lives (MNCH) project. From videos and print materials to a full-length hip hop album, our partner PIES de Occidente is working hard to reach Maya K'iche' adolescents in Tonicapán with positive, culturally pertinent sexual and reproductive health and rights messages.

Produced in late 2017, the film features an outstanding amateur cast from a junior high school in Momostenango, Tonicapán's largest municipality. To date, it has been shown to hundreds of adolescents inside and outside the school setting. Viewable with English subtitles on YouTube, the film addresses some serious issues facing many young Guatemalans, particularly girls: early pregnancy and marriage, sexual abuse and violence.

Indeed, the numbers paint a troubling picture. A recent Guatemalan national survey

revealed that:

- 8% of young female respondents experienced violence at home, which increased to 11% when they moved in with a partner or got married
- 27% of adolescent males and 10% of adolescent females ages 15-17 indicated that when a female says 'no' to sex, she really means 'yes'
- 20% of Guatemala's adolescent girls ages 15-19 had children or were pregnant in 2014-15
- babies born to mothers under age 20 and living in poverty are 50% more likely to be stillborn, premature and malnourished
- the maternal death rate for mothers ages 10-14 is 31% higher than for all mothers.

As the movie credits roll, the film receives a standing ovation from the audience. Odilia says, "I know so many young girls who go through what you see in the film. It's heartbreaking. I guess I'm just really proud to be a messenger for healthy sexuality and decision-making among my peers."



Antonia Buch (left) prepares a Maya prayer to open the workshop at the 2018 OPSEU Indigenous Conference.

## Special Encounters

**Verónica Mazariegos and Antonia Buch** came to Canada in June to share their experiences as part of the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) project's ongoing knowledge exchanges between Canada and Guatemala. Verónica is a trainer supporting the Guatemalan government's Indigenous Maya midwives training program, and Antonia, a traditional midwife, spiritual guide and activist. Over the course of their visit, the women:

- met Horizons' staff and supporters at its Annual General Meeting. Antonia also led a Maya ceremony to honour the life of Horizons' founder Father Tim Coughlin (*see Passages on page 4.*)
- spoke to health practitioners at Markham Stouffville Hospital about the plight of Indigenous Maya women and children and their efforts to improve health outcomes
- shared traditional Maya midwifery practices with First Nations members at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- presented workshops on the role of traditional midwives (comadronas) at the 2018 OPSEU Indigenous Conference

"Our visit was full of special encounters," says Antonia. "I will forever remember meeting our Indigenous brothers and sisters in Canada with whom we share similar challenges. Our visit helped raise awareness of the importance of improving Indigenous women and children's health back home, as well as build solidarity between Indigenous peoples in the north and south."

# Keeping the Wisdom Alive

**“The old wisdom is being forgotten,”** says Choy Carigo, a Ngöbe Indigenous leader in Panama. “If we forget the words of our ancestors we will be walking blind. We can’t walk through what we don’t know.”

Across Central America, economic, cultural and social pressures threaten the traditional knowledge and practices of Indigenous people; they are at risk of being lost forever as the gap widens between younger generations and their elders. This knowledge is vital to Indigenous peoples’ cultural identity and wellbeing, and through its partners in the south, Horizons is supporting its protection.

ACUN (Ngöbe Cultural Action), Horizons’ long-standing partner in Panama, is hard at work on a new project to keep Ngöbe traditional wisdom alive. ACUN will reach both Ngöbe Indigenous leaders and keepers of Ngöbe culture, including storytellers and singers, to preserve knowledge about traditional food, environmental stewardship and oral history. Leaders will be trained on Indigenous laws, and singers and storytellers will pass on cultural practices through songs, stories and booklets to Ngöbe youth, while mobilizing the community to protect a local waterfall.

In Costa Rica’s South Pacific coast, the



Traditional knowledge and cultural practices will be passed on to Indigenous Ngöbe youth in Panama to promote their wellbeing.

traditional farming, fishing and animal husbandry of the Indigenous Teribe people have been strained by the state’s decision to alter woods and rivers in favour of large-scale farmland and pastures. This, added to economic hardship and the encroachment of non-Indigenous people on Teribe land, poses challenges to the food sovereignty and cultural practices of Teribe communities along the Térraba River.

Horizons’ new partner, Mujeres Mano de

Tigre Orcuo-Dbön (Tiger Hand Women), a women-led organization working to reverse the loss of natural resources and ancestral knowledge, is also leading a project to preserve Indigenous knowledge and practices. Tiger Hand Women is working with families in the Térraba region to reclaim traditional fishing practices, create an orchard to protect native seeds and improve infrastructure for traditional animal husbandry.

## Migrant Workers: Help is Here



**Hot summer days bring a lot of hardship** for migrant workers in Northumberland County. “Working 12-hour days pruning apple trees in the hot weather is tough,” says one migrant worker from Jamaica. “But we do it for our families – our children – who are back home depending on us to put food on the table, and clothes on their backs.”

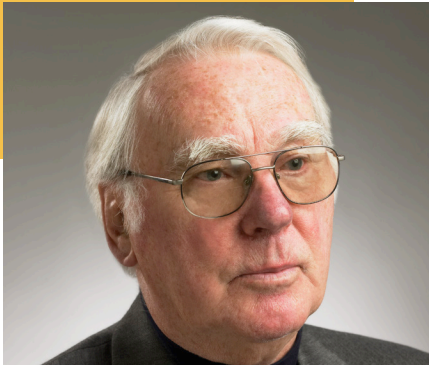
For this migrant worker, and thousands of others across Ontario, 2018 has been the most difficult farming season to date due to the grueling heat waves that persist. “Our goal is to make the migrant workers’ stay here in Northumberland County as comfortable and easy as possible,” says Daniel Quesada, Horizons’ Community Outreach Officer. “We do this in a variety of ways.”

From our office in Cobourg, Nurse Practitioner Lydia Rybenko provides health checkups, sound health expertise, and medications for migrant workers coping with the unforgiving physical toll of daily farm work. Community Legal Worker Teresa Williams keeps a close eye on immigration issues, labour disputes as well as payroll and tax issues that may affect the workers.

“This year, we’ve placed a greater emphasis on donating used clothes and hats, food, and personal hygiene products to workers in need,” says Daniel. “We’re also giving out used children’s clothing to workers who will take it home to their children.” (Those who wish to donate goods directly to the migrant worker program can drop off items on the 2nd floor of Horizons’ Cobourg office.)

Northumberland County’s migrant workers can count on Horizons and its partners and volunteers for support, friendship and solidarity.

# Mourning Father Tim



**On June 7th, 2018**, Horizons of Friendship founder Father Tim Coughlan passed away at the age of 93. With the help of David and Christine Stewart, Father Tim founded Horizons after the trio returned from a humanitarian trip to Honduras in 1972. Father Tim served as Executive Director in the 90s, and as a Board Member until the day he passed away.

“Father Tim will be remembered as a great man whose legacy will live on through the work and partners Horizons supports,” says Patricia Rebolledo, Horizons’ Executive Director. “We extend our deepest sympathies to Father Tim’s sister, Jean, and his many nieces and nephews. We will continue to work towards Father Tim’s vision and mission of greater social justice in Central America & Mexico.”

## Founder’s Award



Horizons board member Garnet Ward (left) presents the Founder’s Award to James Clarke.

Every year, **Horizons of Friendship** selects one person and one organization to receive the annual Founder’s Award in recognition of their volunteerism and leadership.

This year, the Founder’s Award goes to former Justice James Clarke for his long-time involvement with Covenant House of Toronto, Plan International Canada, Chalice, Michael House, and many other organizations. Mr. Clarke has made significant contributions to Canada’s justice system, as well as enhancing human rights abroad.

Our organizational recipient this year is AFEDES (the Women’s Association for the Development of Sacatepéquez), a Guatemalan organization that helps women reach their economic goals and fully participate in Guatemalan society. AFEDES also contributes to the conservation and protection of the Mayan textile art of Indigenous women of Guatemala.

HORIZONS OF FRIENDSHIP

# Horizons

**Join us for an eye-opening adventure in:**

## Costa Rica/Panama

February 4-17, 2019

Step out of time for 14 days and discover the people, culture and traditions of this region.

Meet the women and men who are driving positive change in their communities.

And see firsthand how the projects you support through Horizons are improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

**For more information:**  
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 Sarah Giddings, 905 372-5483 x10



**I want to help Horizons empower people in Central America and Mexico.**

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