



"Yachuyaj Wo" End of Year Garden Report 2018

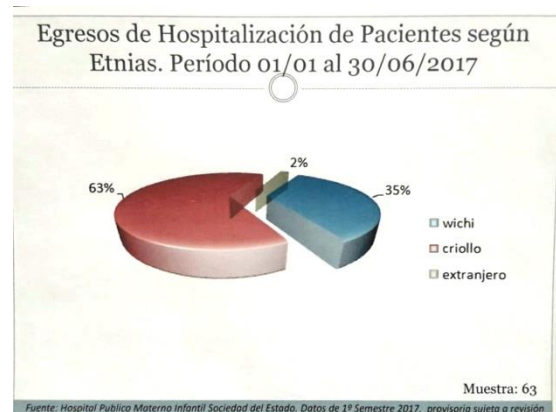


Looking from above.

In August 2019 it will be 40 years (!!) since I came to the Wichi Indian community of Mission Chaqueña to work with the local Church social programs.

Although my work for many years was to develop strategies to generate genuine income (Siwok Crafts) for the last 10 years it has been to provide better access to ground water and then to use this water to produce needed food with efficient use of water (drip irrigation). It's important to note that we work with hunter gatherers. Although they used to sow some maize and pumpkins in the forest most of the effort was short term. This short term feature that is part of their culture works against them in their development process because with very little they can be easily manipulated by local politicians.

Thus people are kept quiet with different sorts of handouts (food, money, roofing, etc). What they can't quieten is the shameful statistics that say that the Wichi have 3 to 4 times higher infant mortality that the average Argentine plus half of children in nutritional emergency. For example this chart at right taken in the Hospital Materno Infantil of Salta



(the best and newest service) that shows while the Wichi are 3% of the population they are 35% of all patients leaving the nutrition wing of the hospital. In all areas there are alarming numbers that show the same shameful inequities (school examination results, illiteracy, mother mortality, birth in the home, adolescent mothers, etc) between the Indian population and the local “criollo” society.

To round up the idea: I have nearly 40 years’ experience and I see it’s my time to lift up my hand and ask that these problems be tackled head on with long term objectives. Although we will carry on working with access to water and food generating activities this theme (closing the inequity gap) will be central in my work.

What’s happening now.

Our strategy to generate needed food by training local Wichi to do the agriculture teaching, in their own language at their own speed has shown positive results. We now have a team of Indians that ride their bikes and convince families to sow the summer crops (maize, pumpkins, etc) or winter cash crops (tomatoes, peppers, etc).



This strategy was supported by local and national authorities for nearly 2 years but with no explanation (other than cutting expenses) was stopped and finished at the end of last July. This lack of continuity is very negative for our work as our team, with all the experience gained, has had to do something else.



In April we started to put together a new project, funded by national government, but even knowing that the sowing season can’t wait, bureaucracy has been the winner. It’s unbelievable that with the shameful nutrition statistics (and a more logical government) somebody doesn’t hurry up this sort of project. Although officials say that all is ready, there is still no money for seeds, Wichi teachers or drip irrigation hoses.

What work we have done is due to our looking for support from other sources. Here Juan Herrera, one of our Misión Chaqueña teachers, showing produce at a Misión La Paz garden that we developed. This is thanks to support provided by a local commercial company.

What has kept us going is our involvement in access to water projects. We took the old technology of digging with “pala vizcacha” (spade with a sort of screw at the end) and (all with 100% wichi team) we have dug more than 40 wells. This has shown the way as to how you solve the water problem in a very large area and other national institutions (INTI, Pro Huerta, SAF, etc) and NGOs have adopted the system. It’s also interesting to note that some government institutions with no results come to our gardens when they have to show some concrete production!!



In the past 3 months we have finished 4 wells (1 in Misión Salim, 2 in Misión Chaqueña and 1 in Hickmann). Marcelino in photo above with daughter holding the hose with lovely clean water pouring out.

Salim:

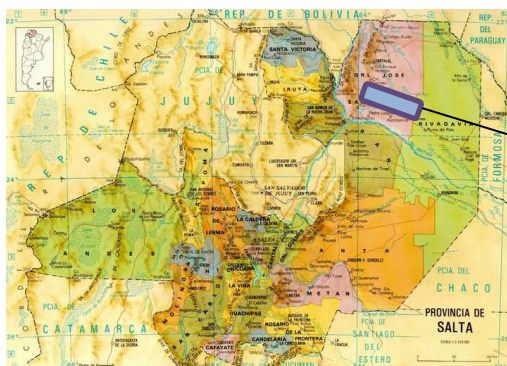
<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/1866003153525429/?type=3>

Misión Chaqueña:

<https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/1865936050198806/?type=3>

Hickmann:

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There is no reason why there should be lack of water in any of the communities on the northern side of the Bermejo river. According to Ing. Mendez from the University of Salta this area that starts in Embarcación and finishes in Pluma de Pato 100km x 30km holds the largest aquifer of the north of the country and the lands wisely bought by the Anglican Church’s social programme for the Wichi back in the ‘70s sit neatly over this huge pool of water. This is capital for the future of the communities and it sounds obvious that all young Wichi should be trained in schools about the efficient use of water for food and income generation. Sadly it’s not that way... One goes to the school and although they all have an “agriculture teacher” there is nothing to show. Once again a lot of money spent but badly spent.

Last year we were approved funds to buy our own mechanical drill. A church from Buenos Aires donated the 40 year plus old truck and slowly through generous donations we have been putting the equipment together (mud pump, house trailer, pipes, etc).



I could never take this responsibility on if I hadn't the support of Pastor José Cicka, who has many years of experience in drilling wells in the Chaco. Jose is an essential member of the team, legally retired but still enthusiastic and able for this sort of initiative. We have just finished our

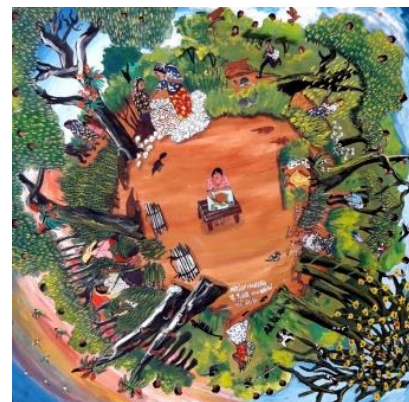
first 50 meter deep well in distant La Mora where we learned that it's much more difficult to drill deeper wells in the Chaco as all terrain differs. In this case we received support from Semillero de Futuro and my old university friends participated also putting up the funds to buy the pump. After New Year we are starting another deep well in Las Llanas community who now drink water where the cattle and pigs drink. They depend on water brought in a tank pulled by a tractor from by the nearest town. This dependency once again puts the Wichi in a place they can be manipulated and having their own pump not only will provide better health and income but also free the people from manipulation. Here their situation: <https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.siwok/videos/vb.100003472876345/1629156033876810/?type=3>

On another theme but related we are still promoting Wichi painting (24 year project) that generates needed income, protects

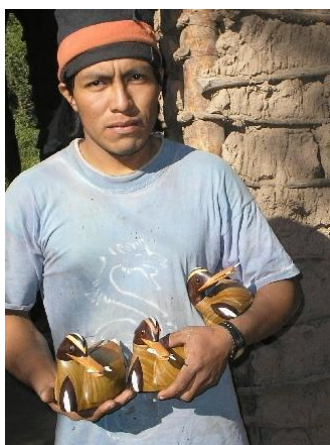


the forest and documents a way of life for future generations.

We need to find outlets so that the wheel of



sustainability keeps turning. We were able to send some to a friend in Texas and through doing that we learned how to do the paper work so that if there are interested clients out there we can surely send Wichi art to you. Even an exhibition of Wichi life could be organized through the pictures. There is now an exhibition we helped organize going at the Museo Arias Rengel here in Salta.



Siwok Crafts, the commercial outlet of our crafts in the UK, has ceased functioning which is sad, but that's reality for many craft initiatives. All must come from China I suppose!! ☺ We are very happy to say, though, that Philip and Rosemary Tadman have picked up the gauntlet and are still selling the crafts via Peridata Ltd, which is very good as the income generated by this trade is very valuable, plus the dignity and liberty it offers to all these people that live off hand-outs from the government. To contact Phil and Rosemary email sales@siwok.org.uk

CONCLUSIONS

1. Our project from the government, which provided some income for our wichi teachers and our family ended in July 2018. We made ends meet thanks to the different water projects we are involved in and our donor friends and family. We are very grateful to them all.
2. We plan to promote another "Apadrine una Huerta Wichi" (garden "godfather" initiative) that worked well in 2018, so that I can carry on receiving funds to promote food production through family agriculture.
3. We applied to the Church of Ireland Bishop's Appeal Fund (World Aid and Development Programme) and they accepted our proposal and will be supporting my work. We are very very grateful as a family for this support that permits me continuing doing my work. I can get funding for seeds and hoses but not for my stipend.
4. With this support I feel free to say what I have to say to authorities with regards to closing the gap between the Wichi population and the rest of society. This will be the most important task I can do at this time with 40 years of experience. Will they want to hear?
5. We have also received generous support from Siwok Crafts. It is being used for the water projects and the training of Wichi young.

6. We have had 48% inflation this year and the country, although on a more realistic road, is in a mess. The star that guides decisions from the government side is to spend less on everything except handouts to the base organizations so as to prevent social violence. Therefore they are thinking on the short term and my proposal for long term action and objectives will be difficult to obtain, but I seriously feel that this is what is needed for the better future of the downtrodden Wichi. Please pray that I can affect public policy in this sense.
7. This is a rich country, but has not been affected by the XVI century Reformation. Thus there is little critical thinking plus corruption, lack of justice and inequities abound. It's politically incorrect to say this but that's how I feel.
8. We are very grateful for your support, prayers and encouragement. We need all three to be able to confront and try to change some very deep problems for the people we serve. Big hug to all and muchas gracias!!

Alec Deane

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Bonus: some gardens now.

Misión Chaqueña



Pilcomayo:





Tierra Fiscal Embarcación

