Supporting Conservation and Communities in the Peruvian Amazon

Overview of Activities in 2015
CACE had a productive year in Peru and supporting our partners at home. We:
- Hosted three major skill-sharing workshops with artisans in the Ampiyacu (see more)
- Produced instructional videos with veteran artisans explaining how they make popular handicrafts (see more)
- Supported 55 work parties in three villages to plant or maintain chambira palm trees used for making woven crafts
- Conducted surveys with 19 Ampiyacu artisans to assess their income, expenses, aspirations and craft-making potential
- Helped Ampiyacu artisan group representatives assess feasibility of opening their own store in Iquitos
- Co-created new models of woven ornaments with Jenaro Herrera artisans based on actual butterflies, dragonflies and bees
- Monitored the growth and survival of rosewood trees planted at Brillo Nuevo with Camino Verde in 2012 (see more)
- Surveyed copal trees and designed small basket projects with artisans at Maijuna village in the Napo region (see more)
- Launched second phase of studying recovery of resin lumps on copal trees harvested in Jenaro Herrera with help from 34tunate volunteer Tracy Stayton (see more).
- Analyzed copal resin oil samples at the Natural Products Lab at Cayetano Heredia University in Lima
- Developed craft marketing strategy with Penn State chapter of Students Consulting for Non-Profit Organizations
- Cooperated with two graduate student teams from the New School to improve monitoring and evaluation of our project
- Sold crafts at 30 art and music festivals, church events, house parties and shops in the U.S.
- Collaborate with students from Everett Program of Digital Tools for Social Innovation at Univ. of California at Santa Cruz to improve media marketing for crafts and essential oils
- Analyze resin composition from diverse copal species with Penn State University Dept. of Chemistry
- CACE celebrates 10 year anniversary

Coming up in 2016
- Sponsor new workshops to improve artisan craft-making and leadership skills
- Complete first Craft-Making DVD and Resource Manual for Ampiyacu artisans
- Join Robin van Loon (Camino Verde) and David Crow (Floracopeia) on the the Shift Network Plant Medicine Telesummit
- Harvest and distill first batch of leaves and branches of rosewood trees at Brillo Nuevo to produce essential oil
- Collaborate with family in Tamshiyacu to manage their rosewood trees planted in 2002
- Prepare management plans for copal resin harvest with Bora and Maijuna native communities
- Launch online Amazon Forest Store
- Expand sale of Amazon handicrafts at major music festivals
### Appreciations

I’d like to thank everyone who has supported our work this year with their precious time and funds. Major financial support has come from the Rufford Foundation, New England Biolabs Foundation, GlobalGiving Foundation, Cave Foundation, Sheri and Dayton Coles, James McDaniel, Leo Kusuda, Allan Thornton, Phil and Karen Yanak, Kat Alden and Bill Torretti, Patricia Shanley and Christopher Barr, and several generous anonymous donors. Thanks also to Patricia Shanley, Susan Danoff, Joy Vincent-Killian, GlobalGiving and the Environmental Investigation Agency for hosting Amazon craft sales in their homes and offices.

### Stories from the field

#### Ines – the laughing and feisty artisan from Brillo Nuevo - July 27, 2015

I first became aware of Ines during my second visit to the Bora native community of Brillo Nuevo in 2009 because she was enthusiastic about everything. When we first tried to make incense candles from copal resin, she immediately got her hands blackened with the burnt sticky stuff and suggested they might look nice in the half-shells of macambo fruit pods. She pulled me aside, though, and said, “You know these are really pretty ugly.” I said, “I know,” and she burst out laughing.

Ines is a quintessential artisan from the Peruvian Amazon. She said, “I live by selling bags and hammocks made from chambira palm that I cultivate in my fields.” While meeting with artisans in a Brillo Nuevo classroom to discuss weaving new products, Ines jumped at the chance to draw the wavy lines of a cascaíbel (tropical rattlesnake) on a blackboard as a design for a woven snake-pattern belt. She then welcomed me into her home while making the prototype on her hand-made loom with her two cats munching on a little fish in front. Ines’ voice stood out in the animated mélange of Spanish and Bora of artisans discussing their creations and her distinct laugh could mark her location more than a soccer field away.

Over the past six years, we have shared many adventures, triumphs and challenges with Ines. She showed us how she grew, collected, and prepared half a dozen plants used to dye chambira palm fiber various shades of yellow, orange, red and deep purple and then dyed my silvery hair black with roasted leaves from a huito tree. She has proudly showed us new styles of bags and guitar strap designs that she invented and readily shared these with her fellow artisans in skill-sharing workshops.

[See full story and photos](#)

#### Angelina and her family of artisans - September 26, 2015

Most artisans in Brillo Nuevo know how to make a basic bag from chambira palm fiber, but few families have as many dedicated and creative artisans as Angelina. While she laughs when sitting at ease with her family, her aura of reserved confidence has made her a well-respected artisan leader in her community. I appreciate that she has never been shy about creating and showing us one new design of woven belt, guitar strap and hot pad after another. She is unphased if we’re not keen on one and has always been willing to teach other artisans.

I have found Angelina weaving alone in the front room of her house on stilts overlooking the Yaguasyacu River, but she spends more time sitting in a circle of her or her married son’s home with her mother Ernestina and one or more of her daughters. No one including Ernestina seems to know exactly how old she is, but this 70+ year-old lady has lived in Brillo Nuevo for most of this village’s existence. She has been an enthusiastic participant in our project from the beginning, although her first belt was such a mish-mash of patterns, colors and widths that I worried she might not ever make something that we could sell. Yully and my attempts to speak with her directly in Spanish usually only produced quizzical looks and good-natured laughs, but we’ve learned that she can do great quality work when one of her relatives explains what’s needed to her in Bora. Ernestina’s fingers are still strong but her aged eyes do have their limits so her grand-daughter Rode now finishes up the fine details of her work.

[See full story and photos](#)
## Breakthroughs with three artisan communities - October 15, 2015

I have just returned to Iquitos after spending ten days visiting our native partner communities in the Ampiyacu River region. I’d like to share a few highlights of this trip that involved breakthroughs in two areas. We have had growing success helping artisans develop and market innovative handicrafts, but our efforts to catalyze significant reforestation of chambira palms used to make woven crafts has been frustratingly slow. While we have also promised to reinvest part of our craft sales in the US to support health, education and conservation needs in the communities, this social rebate program had unfortunately created more dissension than good works for several years.

While mentally prepared to confront the same resistance, I decided to at least try a fresh approach while meeting with our artisan partners in Brillo Nuevo. As they trickled in to our house at the far end of the village, they saw a written agenda posted on the wall. While noting the ambitious list included numerous updates and serious topics, they favorably noted that it also included slots for receiving certificates, donated clothing, and lunch. Since discussions of tough issues in previous meetings had sometimes produced more rancor than resolution, we also inserted a few cooperative games into the mix. These were a balloon race which generated lots of laughs and an energetic round of caimans and frogs which featured artisans (as the frogs) holding on to each other on sheets of paper (representing tree stumps in a river) so the hungry caiman (the Amazon version of an alligator) wouldn’t get them when he woke up.

The results of the meeting included new agreements regarding craft pricing, quality control, a household survey, and proposal for chambira reforestation.

See full story and photos

## Miguel, Celestina and Rosewood Trees in Tamshiyacu – November 8, 2015

One highlight of my recent trip to Peru was spending a day with Miguel and Celestina – a couple who live in Tamshiyacu, a small town that is about an hour and a half by Iquitos by speed boat. I first toured their farm a year ago when we were meeting families that had planted rosewood trees in a community development project around 2003.

They warmly greeted us in their home filled with their children, grandchildren and dogs. Other families in the area had either sold their land or sold the rights to their rosewood trees to a new company making essential oil. I was pleased that this senior citizen couple wanted to work with us to manage the rosewood trees they had left on their property.

The motorcar dropped us off at a tiny trail entering the woods on the other side of the road and promised to pick us up at the end of the day if we could reach him on his cell phone. After a half-hour hike, we reached Miguel and Celestina’s plot that they had legally acquired over twenty years ago. They had planted yucca (also known as cassava and manioc) as their main staple food. Pineapples, umari fruit, and Brazil nuts were their main commercial crops. They hoped that selling rosewood material could increase their modest income.

See full story and photos

## Artisans gather in Santa Lucia de Pro - December 8, 2015

Shortly after I got back from my most recent trip to Peru, our project manager Yully told me about a good kind of challenge she needed to deal with quickly. “Doctor, we were expecting about 20 to 25 artisans from Ampiyacu villages to come to our skill-sharing workshop this month, but fifty-five artisans have shown up.” While our work in three main villages was doing well, our repeated attempts to involve artisans from a few smaller communities including the workshop host Santa Lucia de Pro had not taken off. This workshop, however, finally seemed to ignite interest in this and four other smaller villages so Yully had to scramble to pull extra funds together in the remote Amazon town of Pebas to feed the large group of artisans and their small children.

We had contracted several veteran Bora artisans to show their groups how to make a few popular models of woven handicrafts with chambira palm fiber. Brillo Nuevo artisan Beder
carefully explained how to weave the complex “anaconda” pattern belt while Gisela worked with her group to make the multi-colored tight-weave “naca naca” (coral snake) pattern guitar strap. One teacher Rosa from Puca Urquillo said, “I’m here to share the things I know and inspire others to make their own hot pads. While I am a teacher, I also want to learn how to make the “anaconda” belt because I’m also a student and need to keep learning.”

I was particularly excited that master calabash carver Rider agreed to be a “professor” in this workshop. He used sharpened and scallop-ended nails embedded in a wooden handle to create scenarios of hummingbirds, monkeys, and snakes with individual personalities. Rider had earlier seemed reluctant to share the fine points of art, but he excitedly told me in October, “I can make a set of tools that I invented for everyone in my group so they can improve.”

See the full story with photos

Five Creative Ways to Support CACE

1. Become a regular donor to CACE
Visit our project page on GlobalGiving at www.AmazonAlive.net and choose Donate Monthly. We also welcome one-time or regular donations through the Network for Good. All regular donors receive our monthly update.

2. Support CACE on eBay for Charity
   A. Choose CACE as a non-profit to receive 10% or more of any item you sell on eBay.
   B. Buy items on eBay whose sellers will donate a portion of that sale to CACE.
   C. Donate to CACE through PayPal (no fee charged to CACE)

3. Support CACE with your purchases on Amazon Smile (charity giving side of Amazon.com).
   CACE will then receive 0.5% of your eligible purchases with no extra charge to you.

4. Support CACE through a CapitalOne credit card
   A. Log in to your CapitalOne account online. Navigate to Benefits, Rewards Summary, Charitable Donation, Donate Now and enter: Center for Amazon Community Ecology. Fill in your card information.
   B. Choose Donate. Fill in any amount you would like to donate directly to CACE.
   C. Select “Donate with my CapitalOne credit card rewards. Get balance and enter number of miles to donate to CACE. We will receive $10 for every 1,000 points.

5. Host a craft sale where you live, work, worship or volunteer
   CACE sells some crafts made by our partner artisans at fairs and festivals, but we love connecting directly with people in more personal settings. Please contact us if you can host or arrange an Amazon outreach event at your home, office, church, synagogue, or any place where you do community service. We can set up crafts for sale as well as offer presentations about our work.

New CACE mailing address
Please send regular correspondence, checks, or packages to us at:

Center for Amazon Community Ecology
19 Colonnade Way, Suite 117, #182
State College, PA 16803

Our phone and email contact information remain the same.
Telephone: 814-238-5148
Email: info@amazonecology.org

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