

Title of Project: Documentary: The Owners, The Keepers and The Masters
Country: Argentina
Sponsoring: Trinity College
Designated Project Leader: Jose Ginocchio UWC Adriatic 16-18 (Argentinian)

The goal of this project was to utilize film as a tool to foster dialogue and intercultural understanding. We aimed to advocate for the human rights of indigenous people in northern Argentina.

The original idea of this project was based around the case of Lhaka Honhat V Argentina at the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights. Due to COVID-19 related complications (detailed below), however, the project was modified to approach the pressing and important issue of lack of intercultural healthcare, which severely afflicts the targeted communities. The adaptation emerged as an attempt to help in the mitigation strategy of the socio-sanitary emergency declared by the Salta government due to the deteriorating health situation in indigenous communities.

Responses to humanitarian situations with indigenous people must be conducted via appropriate protocols of consent and intercultural understanding. It is important that dialogue is undertaken as a formal process and that the voices of the beneficiaries are heard and amplified. In this sense, film becomes an excellent tool for fostering dialogue, creating feedback mechanisms, making an archive and ultimately improving mechanisms of response and accountability. Having worked previously in the area with humanitarian initiatives, I thought that serious dialogue was missing in the response mechanisms. Therefore, and considering the complications that arise with the pandemic, the team decided to approach the urgent issue of lack of intercultural healthcare and effective legislation for the communities.

| Quantitative Indicators Progress | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | Initial Expectations | Current Results |
| # Hours recorded | 12 | 34 |
| # Interviews Recorded | 11 | 27 |
| # Geographical Zones Covered | Only Lhaka Honhat Area | 3578 miles covered across the Salta Province |
| # Terabytes of Information Collected | Maximum expected 1 TB | More than 2 TB |
| # Signatures in Petition | 100 | No petition due to change in topic |

Qualitative progress:

-Improved access to information: A great qualitative progress towards the project's objective was the facilitation of judicial knowledge to the beneficiaries. Most of the interview subjects had excellent contributions to make to the topic and documentary, but many were not informed about legal procedures, protocols, legislations and protections to which they are entitled. The interaction with the beneficiaries provided a great opportunity to facilitate this information and mediate additional sessions with experts. For instance, as the student leader, I had the opportunity to speak on community radios to explain certain legislations and protections.

-Attention to pressing issue: The presence of the team in the area and the deliberate selection of interview subjects certainly preoccupied actors involved in the issue and brought a lot of attention to topics that seemed forgotten. The presence of the cameras stimulated conversations and important meetings that rarely happen in the quotidian.

-Learning and nuanced understanding: Exchanging opinions, speaking with experts and listening to the testimonies of community leaders greatly improved our understanding of the issue and the nuances around intercultural health in the area.

-Repercussion in mechanisms of response: The better understanding of the topic provided the grounds to promote better informed decision-making at non-governmental organization actions.

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Projected impact (After the documentary is finalized post-production):

-Legislative: The adaptation of the theme of the project was successful due to the strategic context in which there was a manifestation of will to fight in order to render the law 7856 of intercultural health operable. This can mean the actual implementation of the law; I expect that the relevant collection of diverse testimonies in the documentary will have a substantial influence in the legislation so it can contribute in providing the communities with better accessibility to intercultural accommodations and participation spaces.

-Media: There are many misconceptions and stereotypes in how the health state of the communities is presented in the media. I expect that the publication of this material will be very useful in deconstructing those misconceptions and presenting the root cause of the issue.

-Public: I expect that some of the testimonies and scenes that I was able to record will have repercussions in public opinion of the area, generating an increased interest in addressing the issues presented and advocating for the respect of indigenous rights.

COVID-19 Impact on the Project

The theme, location and interview subjects of the project suffered major changes due to the death of the long-time coordinator of Lhaka Honhat and pivotal point for the project Mr. Francisco Perez, who sadly passed away due to COVID-19. Mr. Perez was the contact that would mediate many of the interviews.

Once in Argentina, I initiated the process of free, prior and informed consent by sending the corresponding documents to the Center of Legal and Social Studies (legal representatives of the communities) as planned. I did not anticipate any issues with this process, however shortly after I started, I was informed that Mr. Perez was hospitalized and the legal representatives informed me that all the consent requests were delayed because of it. In spite of submitting the necessary documentation with the appropriate anticipation, the legal representatives of the communities were not able to respond given the unfortunate circumstances. For respect to the grieving and re-organization process I did not insist and respected the right to free, prior and informed consent of the communities comprised within Lhaka Honhat in accordance to the UNFAO guidelines. Because of this, I had to implement major changes to the initial plan. Only towards the end of the summer there was a new election and Mr. Perez daughter: Ms. Lunhaya Perez was chosen as the new coordinator of Lhaka Honhat. The unfortunate and unexpected death of Mr. Perez was hugely felt by all the people involved in the indigenous struggle. Mr. Perez was and still is one of the most respected and beloved Wichi chiefs in Northern Argentina.

Adaptation:

When I was informed that the consent processes were delayed, I started working with an indigenous attorney specialized in indigenous rights. With his help, I was able to understand the urgent necessity for the implementation of the law 7856 of Intercultural health. This law was proclaimed in 2014 but the State did not fulfill its duty of rendering it operable. With the guidance of the attorney and local NGO I crafted a script to address the issue and achieved substantial influence in the expedite implementation of the law. Thanks to this quick decision and the generous guidance and participation of experts I was able to complete a total of 27 interviews and several scenes that address this urgent situation. The project surpassed the initial budget projection due to these changes and had to be covered by our personal funds.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has not only been devastating in its fatality, but it has also deepened already existing inequalities like the unequal access to education and healthcare. The consequences of the pandemic will stretch for years to come to an extent that we still don't fully grasp. Even though this presents serious challenges to the execution of our initiatives it also confers increased relevance to these kinds of projects.

Through the Davis Projects for Peace fund, we can help, even just a little, to bridge the gap of these increasing inequalities. In our project we decided to address the long-standing issue of unequal access to healthcare for indigenous people, which only exacerbated with COVID-19. And while we are at great distance of providing scalable solutions, the project was an opportunity to put the issue on the table and seek justice, which is the first step for seeking peace.

– Jose Ginocchio (joseginocchio98@gmail.com)

There is this purposely created picture of indigenous communities that paints them as voiceless victims who endlessly need the help from the outsider. This project and all the interviews collected prove that those conceptions are very shallow, demonstrating what a strong voice the communities really have, even when they are actively being silenced by an unjust system.

– Micaela Borovinsky, (micaelaboro@hotmail.com)

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