



## "YACHUYAJ WO GARDEN PROJECT"

### APRIL - MARCH 2018 REPORT

Salta, 04/05/2018

Dear Friends and Family,

This is a short summary of what's happening with the Garden project. Back in January I knew we would be in problems to finance our winter crops so I started a "Be a Wichi Garden Godparent" project. This went well with over 40 generous godparents got involved, supporting us with money for seeds, drip irrigation hoses, plastic for frost protection, etc.



Now we are in the middle of the growing process and this below is my report to the "godparents". I have to mention that the government has shortened their support for our project from the original end of November deadline to the 31st of July. This is something that we didn't expect so we now are throwing the nets, looking for support, to see how we can give continuity to what we have been doing these last 8-10 years. There is no poorest group than the wichi in the country. All health, education and work opportunities statistics show the huge gap between the "whiteman" and the Wichi Indian population. You can't be blind to this fact so (although the national government is tightening the belt on all expenses) in theory I should gain support for this project that provides nutritious food and cash for these poor families.

Last week I have traveled to the 13 different communities and visited most of the over 40 gardens. It's important to mention that our way of working is with a team of wichi teachers that move on 5 motor bikes and are connected by cel phones. I travel with my truck and hoses, seeds, etc and all needed items for production.

In this report (that went to supporting "godparents") I have divided families according to the quality of their garden. These communities span some 200km of Chaco forest, down the old train lines from Embarcación fiscal Indian community to Capitán Page station (in honour of an Englishman who died going up the Pilcomayo river at the end of the XIX century) : These below are the better producers:



Fiscal



Reserva



Salim



Carboncito



Salim 2



Misión Chaqueña



Morillo



Pluma d Pato



Capitán Page  
Hickmann



NEW STARTERS: This group never have done intensive gardening before. They are families with less contact with the criollo society so they go slower and we have to be patient.



Carboncito



Misión Chaqueña



Morillo →

Hickmann ↘



↑Misión Chaqueña school. This garden is in this group because we have just started working with the school. Problem is the pigs that get in at night.

**PUSH GROUP:** This group we have to push so they get results. With many families the culture affects production as they believe in “destiny”. If things go wrong it had to be that way so I don’t move... There must be a spell on it, no way to fix things so instead of going to get help to get rid of the flies and pests that affect these crops they don’t react and lose the crop. In many cases we are losing but we are also learning much (ja! That’s positive thinking! But it’s true).



Reserva community



Reserva



Hickmann



Hickmann



Misión Chaqueña

**OUR FAULT GROUP:** Here either we didn’t spray on time or didn’t teach to use the black mulch plastic that is so good to control weeds and keep the soil humid. Here we learned a lot as many plants died because with this black plastic and too much water an ideal environment for fungus is created and plants have no protection for that.



Hickman



San Ignacio. This is land bought by the church in the 70's. Best decision ever.



San Ignacio and Misión Chaqueña. In many of these gardens we are now sowing pumpkin, beans and lettuce which have short term periods to harvest and that way we can skip the frosts that come in July.

**BAD GARDENER GROUP.** To be fair this group added our lack of visits with their tendency to drink. We would go and find the man of the house completely drunk. Mrs would come out of the house ashamed and say “Woknaj...” He’s drunk... I nearly lost my eye visiting one of these lots when at night I ran into a barbed wire that the wichi use to hang their clothes. You don’t need clothes clips with barbed wire!!





Pluma de Pato gardens.

**BAD FENCING GROUP:** These 2 lost their tomatoe plants because the pigs got in at night. Who is to blame? I would ask, the pig or the gardener? They knos the answer...

Morillo and Misión Chaqueña gardens.



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This chart clasifies the different gardens as to how they are evolving.

| COLOR<br>Excel | GROUP   | QUANT |
|----------------|---|-------|
|                | <u>GOING FINE</u>   | 12    |
|                | <u>NEW GARDENERS. HAVEN´T DONE IT BEFORE</u>                  | 9     |
|                | <u>PUSH GARDENS. WE HAVE TO VISIT AND PUSH BUT DOING FINE</u> | 9     |

|  |  |    |
|--|--|----|
|  | OUR FAULT. WE ARE SOWING OTHER CROPS NOW | 5  |
|  | NOT GOOD. DRINK AND LAZINESS             | 5  |
|  | PIGS ATE THE CROP. WE ARE SOWING AGAIN   | 2  |
|  | total                                    | 42 |

We are now sowing lettuce and beans to compensate the tomatoe gardens that have problems. These crops will get us to harvest before the July frosts.

As you can see we have a bit of everything... good medium and bad. What I know we do have is a big dose of gardening education in all the communities. Even if we have fauled we are learning a huge amount for next year's experience.

Today I had a meeting with the local minister of "First Infancy" who we relate to as our boss. The reason I asked to see him was that our project has been shortened till the 31st of July. After that we don't have support. The meeting went well and I think we have an alay there. We are one of the few NGO's that produce results so they want us to carry on. We'll see said the blind man...

Anyway, this is what's happening with us. Please pray that the Siwok team of wichi teachers and myself can carry on promoting food production with these needed people where half of the children are malnourished and there is a huge gap between criollo and indian statistics.

I would like to mention that Ivon, my wife has done a study on Aboriginal Health Policy in Canada, Australia and New Zeland. Those people do thing well and we should be copying them. Yesterday she gave a talk at the local university to future professionals which went very well. I mentioned this to the minister and suggested <ivon give the same talk to his team. Pray that this can be done as here there is nothing to compare with. EG: their aboriginal child mortality is 6,3% per 1000 and in our zone it's 24%. It shows you where you stand and ivites to pull your socks up.

God bless you all and thank you for your support!!  
Alec and family

PS: Bonus. Below my right hand man's son with newly harvested peppers.

