

Matiox

News about the Association of Indigenous Women for Holistic Development (AMIDI)

Adult Education

In 2016, as part of their ongoing study of best organic practices for growing and harvesting coffee, the members of AMIDI built a long, outdoor germination bed on the grounds of the AMIDI community center. In it they planted 15,000 coffee beans. After 60 days the sprouting began. In anticipation of transferring the young plants into individual containers, all 50 AMIDI members and some of the scholarship recipients made their own potting soil. Using the local, rich volcanic soil as the basis for the mix, they added organic material to improve moisture retention and amend the soil. A volunteer agronomist who specializes in coffee was on hand to supervise the project.

The women take turns caring for the seedlings. Because the rainy season has passed, they need to water the 15,000 seedlings. A special donation has been given to connect the plant nursery *(continued)*



AMIDI members filling small plastic bags with homemade potting soil for coffee seedlings.

Matiox, pronounced ma-ti-osh, is a Kakchiquel Mayan word that means “thank you”. Kakchiquel Mayan is the language spoken by our scholarship students, and the sentiment is theirs.

Adult Education continued...

with the village's existing water system that is located 5 minutes by foot from the seedlings.

Several years ago the members of AMIDI began a series of medicinal herb classes to promote plant-based healing and strengthen their ties to the wisdom of their grandparents. Their first project was to create an herb garden on the grounds of the AMIDI community center and to take turns caring for it.

The women have now established organic herb gardens at their homes and have learned various processing techniques. Some herbs are dried in a large sun-powered dryer located at the community center. Others are used fresh, while some are fermented, then developed into medicine. The members know how to produce medicinal tinctures and creams as well as teas that cure a wide range of ailments including coughs, muscle aches, skin ailments, and intestinal illnesses. These products are for home consumption.

Adult students display medicinal herbs and medicines.



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Inside a Student's Folder

To encourage and evaluate progress, the AMIDI Scholarship Committee maintains a manila folder for each student. Typically the contents include the student's grades and receipts for financial aid disbursements. When the students gather periodically to learn about their culture and explore community issues, they often engage in writing/drawing activities. The completed projects go into their folders. At one gathering the students drew self portraits. The high school student who created the drawing in this photo clearly honored her Mayan roots in her rendition of the traditional handwoven blouse, *huipil*. She carefully included design elements that mirror details in the *huipiles* worn locally by girls and women. Although it was not part of the assignment, she added a word bubble expressing gratitude for her scholarship: "Thank you Ana Maria (the leader of the scholarship program) for your help."

At the next gathering of the scholarship recipients the students will divide into three groups according to age. Each group will travel by foot in the forested mountains surrounding their homes. The focus of the field trip will be finding local plants that have medicinal or other practical uses and identifying areas in need of conservation. Over the years students have been involved in reforestation projects around their village. This is part of the community service that is required of each student who receives a scholarship.



A scholarship recipient's self portrait.

A Song Written for the Donors

At the annual celebration to honor the donors, the AMIDI members wrote and sang a short, rhythmic song to express their feelings and show their gratitude. At the beginning of the presentation two members sang the song in their clear soprano voices. On the second round the scholarship recipients sang along with them. Then the parents joined the singing in a low volume rendition. Finally everyone filled the community center with good cheer as they sang with gusto. Below is a translation of their song.

In the Association AMIDI
The dove always sings.
In her song she always repeats
That our American donors
Will always be our friends.

Gourds

Archeological evidence documents that gourds have been used as bottles for over 9,000 years in Mesoamerica. With a minimal amount of processing, gourds that grew on trees were turned into containers for both storing and transporting liquids and solids. They pre-date the invention of pottery and the cultivation of gourds for eating that grow on vines.

Gourds still have their place in the everyday life of the Mayans. In the photograph, scholarship recipient Josue David Castro Tomas awaits his turn to participate in a skit about Mayan agricultural traditions at an AMIDI celebration honoring donors. He is carrying a gourd that contains water, a common practice used by farmers to this day. The hour glass shape is an ideal canteen since a circle of rope can be cinched around the gourd's narrow center and draped over the farmer's shoulder. The stopper is made of a dried corn cob. Although containers for liquids are now available in other materials such as plastic and metal, the farmers prefer the taste of water carried in a gourd.

Gourds come in a variety of shapes suitable for a variety of uses. Round gourds, cut in half, serve as scoops for uncooked grains and for storing items such as thread for weaving. Other gourds are cut into the shapes of spoons and ladles.



Scholarship recipient Josue David Castro Tomas carries a gourd containing water.

Accounting

Fundraising in 2016 was successful thanks to the generosity of the donors. The donations totaled \$20,514.02. The AMIDI women and their families send their heartfelt gratitude.

The Matiox newsletter is written and produced by Marilee Wingert, Barbara Bowman, Bill Bowman, and Anya Glenn. No donations to AMIDI are used to fund this newsletter.

Visit Facebook under AMIDI: Mayan Women Who Farm and Weave.

To Make a Donation

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the AMIDI scholarship fund, please make your check payable to Slow Food Sonoma County, a 501(c)3 non-profit that manages the funds at no cost. Please send the check to:

Slow Food Sonoma County North
P.O. Box 1494
Healdsburg, CA 95448

Or visit www.amidiguatemala.org
to donate via Paypal.