

THE SERI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Objective

We created a program of scholarships to allow young Comcáac advanced educational opportunity. Although we worked with some students (both successfully and unsuccessfully) to obtain admission to programs (university, trade school, private secondary school, and language classes) we also wanted to support those that had already received academic scholarships to afford all of the incidental expenses that can make it impossible for people from poor communities to complete their educations even with financial aid.

Goals

- Encouraging young Comcáac to obtain skills necessary for community self-determination.
- Facilitating relationships with other indigenous groups pursuing higher education.
- Building community credentials with the Mexican business community, government groups and agencies.
- Developing individual's leadership skills and creating peer expectations within the community
- Planting eager and ambitious Comcáac in the education system to bring the value of the Comcáac traditions and values to the attention of a broad cross-section of the Mexican educational community and to encourage relationships with other young indigenous leaders in Mexico.

Process

We began a series of meetings in both communities with elected officials, elders and young people immediately after receiving funding in which we offered assistance for many different programs: university, trade school, technical school, short-term, long term, and any other programs that might serve an individual's desire to benefit of the community.

We asked anyone that was interested to contact one of several community contacts or myself directly. We also began to solicit individuals about specific programs we thought they might be interested in.

Candidates

During the year we identified 11 potential candidates:

- **Servando Monroy** was unable to finalize the support promised by Tecnológico de Monterrey. Servando is highly qualified and was accepted to CESUS after the end of the TCF Grant term and we were able to help him in a limited way with other funding
- **Moises Mendez Romero**, newly elected Governor suggested that he would like to attend law school. Citing conflicts of interest we declined
- Two Comcáac elementary school teachers from Punta Cheuca are driving 600km every weekend to attend classes in Guaymas to receive their teaching credentials. We failed to make this connection but we will pursue it in the coming grant cycle.
- **Rogelio Herrera** has taught basic computer courses in the past and was asked to design specialized courses for three individuals in accounting, video editing and website creation. He wanted desktop computers that could be used in the future to train other students. We wanted to provide laptop computers the trainees would keep. Rogelio also knew that parents of non-selected individuals would apply pressure on him to provide training for their kids. We discussed with the elected Governor the possibility of running a joint program for a larger student base but in the end they were unable to allocate funds for the project. We are still trying to figure out a way for this to have real significance.
- **Socrates Ramon Perez** was approached about funding to complete Law School but he did not respond with a statement of need. We will continue to follow Socrates' progress.
- **Leonel Pereles** is a first year Environmental Engineering student at Instituto Tecnológico de Sonora, Ciudad Obregon, Sonora, México. He received \$1500 for registration, room and board, and travel between Obregon and Desemboque. He was also given a \$1200 laptop computer.
- **Francisco Mellado Moreno**, a second year student at the University of Sonora received \$1500. This allowed him to become a dual major, adding the B.A. degree program in teaching English to his computer programming major. The money covered his registration, some of his board, books and a CAALE foreign language access card. Francisco is also studying Portuguese that fits well with our Mozambique operation, Bitonga Divers.
- **Mayra Estrella Astorga** received \$500USD for a full year English course at the Quick

Learning Linguistics Center in Hermosillo

- **Gabriela Molina Moreno** received \$500USD for the same English program
- **Adrianna Mellado Moreno** received \$600 for attendance at Preparatoria Por Cooperacion De Bahia de Kino that will allow her to attend the University of Sonora next year. It paid her full registration, books and materials. Adrianna wants to teach English and promote the Comcáac people.

Summary

Response to the program was slow to develop, but, as more candidates became involved, more requests for consideration were received. We feel that we are supporting strong future community leaders that intend to continue to work within the communities after completing their programs, We are also becoming more sensitive to some of the issues that have prevented other students from completing programs in the past. We have spoken with Comcáac that have dropped out of schools and some of our other global indigenous partners who have pursued higher education in their own communities.

We are in the process of organizing a support network within and outside the communities to provide an ongoing resource for continuing to encourage young people to pursue their educational goals and for those that have completed them to be successful in applying their skills within the communities.