

Artisan Assistance Project

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Project Summary: We will assist the local artisans to procure materials for folk art, education and quality control to ensure the art is marketable and assistance in selling the art.

Background: The Nivaculé have several traditional crafts they make from local materials and sell, primarily to the rare tourists. The two primary crafts unique to the Nivaculé people include carvings from Palo Santo wood and bags woven from locally grown fiber. Like other villages, Abundancia has several artisans, but earning a living is difficult.



Artisan is about the only occupation that can actually be done right in the village. Most Nivaculé earn money by traveling to farms for day labor, but for women with young children, this is not possible. These women need a way of earning money close to home and while caring for their families.

There are several roadblocks to creating and selling the crafts. First are materials. Palo Santo wood is not prevalent around Abundancia. A carver may spend an entire day walking several kilometers in search of Palo Santo wood. With time, local Palo Santo will become even more scarce. They do not have transportation so searching is done by foot or if lucky, with a bicycle. The second roadblock are proper tools. The weavers lack proper crochet hooks. The carvers use whatever old and worn out tools they can find. Palo Santo wood is very



dense and dulls tools very quickly. The third roadblock is quality of the folk art. Education in the techniques of weaving and carving are learned by trial and error. Some artisans are of course more skilled than others. In the past, visitors to Abundancia have purchased whatever is available simply to help the people. This has resulted in rushed and poor quality work, work that while meaningful to those who feel a connection with the village, is not marketable to general consumers. Finally, marketing the folk art is difficult. There are few tourists, and the local indigenous people and Mennonites are not really in the market for crafts. Particularly without transportation, the artisans cannot get their crafts to the people who would buy them.

Proposal: The Nivaclé Foundation will assist the artisans in overcoming each of these roadblocks in the following steps:

1. **Materials:** Elmer Funk has offered to give scraps of Palo Santo logs gleaned from his ranch about an hour and a half away. Javier Alcaraz will periodically take the carvers to this ranch and gather the Palo Santo.
2. **Tools:** During the November trip, we took two sets of carving tools to Abundancia and purchased a few carving knives in the Mennonite town. The tools are still inadequate, but a start. We have found some good quality tools that can be purchased and sent to Abundancia. The tools will not be given to an individual, but will be shared by the coop collectively. Crochet hooks will also be sent to the weavers.
3. **Education:** A room in the school has been designated as the Artisans Coop. This will offer a place for the weavers and carvers to work together, sharing skills and teaching others. Benjamin, one of the carvers, has offered his assistance in teaching younger people how to carve if they wish. Quality will be emphasized in all the crafts.
4. **Marketing:** This is the most important step. No matter how good the crafts are, if they cannot be seen by potential buyers, then their work is a waste of their time. Therefore, the Nivaclé Foundation will purchase all the craft items as long as they meet strict quality standards. Javier Alcaraz will travel to Abundancia monthly to purchase the items. The items will then be sold to missionaries or sent to the U.S. for the Foundation to sell. The money will be reinvested to the Artisans Coop. The price for goods has been set based upon what the items sell for locally and in Asuncion. This will guarantee an income to those who perfect the skill necessary to make beautiful works of art.



Cost:

1. Carving tools:	\$1000.00
2. Weaving tools:	\$ 100.00
3. Materials for one year:	\$ 200.00
4. Perpetual fund for craft purchases:	<u>\$1200.00</u>
Total Project Contribution	\$2500.00

How Can I Help? Individuals, families or others can contribute all or a portion of the costs of this critical project, which will allow families to earn a living and become self-reliant.

Note that all moneys donated to the Nivacle Foundation are used only as described in project proposals; there are no administrative, fund-raising or overhead costs. Donors are always given final (and where appropriate interim) reports, including written appreciation from the beneficiaries and photos of the ongoing or completed project. If interested in contributing to this (or other) project, please contact the project director (listed above).