



Roots of Change Foundation Source de développement

18 Years of bringing hope to people in need



Fall 2023
Newsletter

El Portillo Community Heritage Project

Last December we visited the community of El Portillo to celebrate with them the official completion of a water distribution and well project.

At that time the community was starting to build a small community multi-use building. They were very eager and proud to show us the blueprints and to discuss why this building was so important to them.

We questioned the need for such a project when compared to what seemed to us as more fundamental needs like housing, latrines, healthcare, food security and production to mention a few.

But then, we were reminded of Father Denis' message, "it's the poor that know their needs and it is they that should prioritize them".

It may not make sense to us because we come from a very different reality.

Fast forward to February when I received an e-mail from the family that had billeted us asking if we could help them pay for the roof as they had already completed the walls.

Through FUNDACCO a new project was started in April to raise money for the completion of the roof. In short order we had raised more than enough to fulfill the request.

Cont'd on page 2

Thank You / Merci

The Annual Fundraiser was held June 10th and was a very festive occasion. We were happy to welcome about 80 guests. A colourful decor with a delicious and plentiful Central American inspired meal were chosen to reflect the joy of the people in Nicaragua.

The evening was a celebration of the success of the collaboration between Roots of Change and FUNDACCO. All who knew Padre Denis would attest to his gift of recognizing a special quality in each person that he met, and then nurture that quality for the needs of the poor. Cont'd on page 3

Empowering Students for Success



New back pack for everyone

Last year, the Roots of Change Foundation, in collaboration with our sister organization, FUNDACCO, launched a groundbreaking initiative - our very first backpack project. The mission was simple yet profound: to equip students from a humble community school in Los Chupaderos with the essential tools they need for a successful academic journey. As the school year kicked off in February, each student was provided with a backpack filled with essential school supplies.

We are thrilled to share that last year's project exceeded our expectations, and the impact was nothing short of transformative. The enthusiasm and support we received from all of you was phenomenal, and your generosity allowed us to make a real difference in the lives of these young learners. Cont'd on page 2

President's Message

As I write this message, it is Thanksgiving Day. News of war erupting in the Middle East is on all newscasts. I am so very thankful for the peace we enjoy in Canada and am keenly aware that all over the world many live daily with the threat of violence.

Very often violence erupts where there is poverty and suffering. We are all called to help our brethren in need so that, out of desperation, they are not compelled to exercise violence to alleviate their suffering.

I am very aware that this newsletter will be read by very generous donors who are doing their part to bring peace on earth by sustaining the work of FUNDACCO in Nicaragua. God Bless you for being a channel of His peace.

As we approach Christmas let us give ourselves the precious gift of almsgiving so that we may experience once again His peace



in the midst of so much turmoil all around us.

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Prosperous and Blessed New Year. God Bless.

En cette saison de Noël je profite de ce bulletin pour vous remercier de tout coeur pour votre générosité

durant toute l'année 2023. En effet votre générosité a comblé tout les besoin énoncés dans le budget de FUNDACCO et a financé quelques projets en surplus. Je suis toujours émerveillé par la générosité de la communauté francophone. L'entraide semble faire partie de notre code génétique. Les pauvres du Nicaragua vous en sommes reconnaissants.

Je vous souhaite à tous et chacun un Joyeux Noël et une Bonne et Heureuse Année

David Fréchette



By September, and one week after receiving the materials, the community had built the roof and their first rain free meeting was held in early September. More importantly, they now have a place to meet out of the sun during the long dry season.

Thank You to all the generous donors who trust that the poor know what is best for them and that coming together as a community to share their faith and aspirations is just as much a primary need as food and water.

God Bless. **David Fréchette**

Adult Men Mission Trip To Nicaragua



Ever wonder what it would be like to go on a humanitarian mission's trip?

Looking for ten adult men to join an 'All Men's' group travelling to Nicaragua April 21 -May 5, 2024

Please contact **Patrick at**
joepas62@gmail.com for more information



That's why, this year, we are back with an even more ambitious goal - to extend our reach and assist even more students.

For this year's project, we have chosen two deserving schools. Our first partner is situated in the Somotillo region, approximately 218 kilometers from the capital city, Managua. Known as "El Rodeito," this school serves 80 students ranging from pre-school to 6th grade, guided by a dedicated team of three teachers. Our second partner school is situated in the municipality of Cinco Pinos, within a close-knit community called "El Nancital," after which the school is named. This school has 76 students and 4 teachers.

The impact of this project extends far beyond the tangible supplies we provide; it's about creating an environment where these students can thrive and reach their full potential.

Join us in our mission to support education, empower students, and shape a brighter future for Nicaragua. Your contributions and support will make a world of difference. Together, we can make this year's Backpack Project even more successful and transformative than the last.

To be part of this journey and make a difference in these students' lives, we invite you to get involved and contribute to our mission. Your support enables us to reach more students, provide better resources, and build a brighter future for these communities. Visit our website at www.rofc.ca to get involved or make a donation. Every contribution, big or small, makes a significant impact. Together, we empower young minds and create a better tomorrow. Thank you for your support!

St. Albert Farmers' Market



Members of the Roots of Change Board set up a tent at the St. Albert Farmers' Market on August 5th and on October 7th to meet the public and spread the word about our mission to help the poor in Nicaragua.

We were blessed with 2 beautiful sun-filled days and met many people who were interested in the work we do.

Webinar

As a Board, we are concerned about the long-term future of FUNDACCO and our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua.

How can we ensure that funding to maintain the services and projects will continue even if we are no longer able to contribute? Please join us for a quick 20-minute webinar that will show how our Endowment Funds can address this concern and to learn how accessible they are.

Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023

Time: 7:00 pm

Registration: Send an email to info@rootsofchange.ca indicating your interest in attending the webinar. Once you have registered, we will send you a link to the webinar.

Overwhelming Response from Scholarship Donors

It was about the middle of September when I learned that we didn't have sufficient funds in our Scholarship Fund to continue supporting current scholarship recipients for the 2024 academic year which begins in February.

I am sure that students would have been devastated if they had not been able to continue in their programs.

An appeal was sent out to our Scholarship donors and the response was very humbling. With their contributions we will be able to continue to support 15 students and still have enough to support several new students.

Contributions will now be accepted for the 2025 academic year. We need to have a budget for FUNDACCO for October each year so that they can make the necessary arrangements with students to begin their programs in February.

A great big thank you to all our scholarship donors for giving hope to these students.

I ask God's blessing on each of you and the students as well.

John Schile (Coordinator of the Fund for Higher Education)

~Project Update!~

La Carreta Community School Electrical



The schools' 6 classrooms and an academic management room have now had access to electricity since August. Teachers, representatives from the community, and FUNDACCO celebrate the completion of the project.

~Project Update!~
Santa Fe Community Church
of Cinco Pinos



The small existing chapel is in very poor condition for celebrating the word of God. Members of the community contributed time, labour, and finances to initiate improvements.

Funding provided by a group in Trochu, Alberta will complete plaster of the outside and inside walls, installation of a ceramic floor, and the electrical system for the building.

Thank You / Merci Cont'd from page 1

In particular we featured Harol Osmany Andrade, Pedro Rafael Cortez, and Luis Enrique Cruz Mora, who Father encouraged to pursue an education, then mentored them to follow in his footsteps helping the people who seek ideas to find ways to improve their lives. Each of these men provided a touching testimonial of how Father chose them then helped them become successful in their endeavours for FUNDACCO and the people of Nicaragua.

Our newest project, The Backpack Project was highlighted due to its success and in the hope that new schools might take up the challenge. A short but touching film of the children of Los Chupaderos School receiving their backpacks with supplies was presented and enjoyed by all.

The organizing committee (John Schile, Raymonde Schile, Lucille Damer, Charla Leblanc and Danielle Nobert) thanks the many volunteers who helped make the evening a success. The ongoing support of the Holy Family Parish, The Knights of Columbus and the Squires is key to the evening's success and an incredible blessing. To all the attendees and donors, your generosity is very appreciated.

Truly, Father Denis believed that "the poor should be seen, not as a problem, but as a people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone" (Saint John Paul II). Together we continue to make this dream a reality. In the words of the Roots of Change President, David Fréchette, "what a great gift we receive, when we open our hearts and wallets to help our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua find and sustain hope for a better tomorrow."

We hope to see next year! Lucille Damer

Living the Legacy Part 2 - Pedro Rafael Pérez Cortez



In 1994 when I was 11 years old, we had a neighbor named María Hernández. She always celebrated the Immaculate Virgin Mary on Dec. 7, a popular religious celebration in Nicaragua called La Purísima.

I asked her to invite Father Denis to sing to the Virgin Mary on that occasion. My three friends and I went to the Father's house to invite him to celebrate La Purísima with us and he happily accepted the invitation with only one condition: that we were the ones who came to pick him up and to accompany him to the celebration. We all lived in the same neighborhood and so it was easy for us to do.

In January 1996 when I was 12 years old, I had the opportunity to participate as a student in the first Summer Program in the month of January, a project directed by Father Denis and held in the communal house of the Edgar Lang neighbourhood.

In February of the same year, Father Denis walked to where I was sitting outside my house. He invited me to participate in the youth group and to take the training that began in March so that I could be an animator of the summer program. I accepted instantly.

As I started participating in the youth group, I began to get closer to Father Denis.

In order to help my mother financially, I asked him for a job. He refused to help me in this way, saying that I was too young to have a job but he decided to support me with a scholarship for a technical course in automotive mechanics for 12 months.

When I finished my course, I got a job in a small mechanical workshop.

I was happy to work there as I was learning new skills. Soon, the owner of the shop defaulted on my pay so I decided to quit that job. Because of my close relationship with Father Denis, I mentioned to him what had happened to me. He decided to help me support my family with a small project of running a mini-bookstore.

From that date on, I had a strong friendship with Father Denis. In 2004, I accompanied him to Guatemala to participate in a Latin American meeting of the Church. Cont'd on page 4



Danielle Nobert-Halvorsen

We are pleased to introduce Danielle Nobert-Halvorsen to the Roots of Change Board of Directors. Father Denis Hébert is Danielle's great uncle. Danielle studied International Development at the University of Ottawa with a curriculum that included four co-op work placements, one of which was an unpaid volunteer placement in Nicaragua in the winter of 2016.

You can view Danielle's experiences in Nicaragua by checking out her travel blog at <https://danielleabroadblog.wordpress.com/>.

Danielle tells us that she has always dreamed of experiencing Father Denis' work and walking in his shoes. Her responsibilities on the board will include the development of a 3-month volunteer placement program so that other individuals from Canada can experience Father Denis' great work. Stay tuned for more information as this program unfolds.

Welcome to the board Danielle!

In 2005 Father Denis invited me and two other companions to participate in the formation of what is now FUNDACCO. Since then, and until his passing, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Father Denis in different ways, going to meetings with different groups that carried out projects, a part of his work. Above all, I was the person who attended to his health needs such as accompanying him as he recovered from his surgeries. I was also able to accompany him on his trips to Canada, Peru and Costa Rica.

In 2009, Father Denis delegated me as coordinator of the Educational Development Project for Children and Adolescents. My responsibility in this project was, and still is, the continuity of Father's work, who always saw the need for education and recreation for the children of our poor neighborhoods. I am so fortunate! First, I was a student of the program and now I am the coordinator of it, working with FUNDACCO, the legacy of Father Denis.

I am very grateful to God for having been part of the work that Father Denis carried out in Nicaragua until the day of his death on April 14, 2015.

He is the godfather of my children, Joseph and Mateo, and I am very grateful to God for the love and affection he gave my children, my wife, Maria Teresa, and myself.

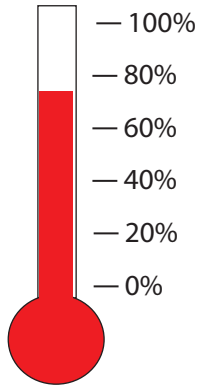
~Project Update!~
Father Denis Pre-School - Los Lomitás



During a delegation visit to Nicaragua late in 2022, an individual recognized the advantage that an iPad or other make of tablet would be for the teachers and students at this small school, and provided funding for the purchase.

Fundraising Goal
2023

\$140,000



Donations to Oct 31

\$106,318

76% of Goal

A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our **Mission of Hope**

La Carreta – Improvements to the Water Extraction & Distribution System

The existing well in this small community met the requirements for the installation of a submersible water pump and the associated distribution piping system to supply water to the homes of 35 families.

The project was funded by a single donation from a couple who have traveled to Nicaragua a number of times and are huge supporters of Father Denis' mission and the work of FUNDACCO. As with many community projects funded through Roots of Change and managed by FUNDACCO, the beneficiary families supply time and labour during the installation to offset project costs.

On completion of the project, a management committee made up of members of the community, are responsible for maintaining the new system. Beneficiaries pay a small fee which covers the cost of electricity and repairs.

Upon completion, as in all infrastructure projects managed by FUNDACCO, follow-up meetings over the course of a year are scheduled with the committee to address any of their concerns and to check on the operation of the system.



Existing community water supply - hand pump.

For more information www.rootsofchange.ca

Please help by supporting this ministry of hope

2022-23 Board of Directors

Officers:

President - David Fréchette
Vice President - Rod Valdes
Secretary - Lucille Damer
Treasurer - Mel Kammerer
Project Administrator - Ken Handford
Donations - Jocelyne Durocher

Directors:

John Schile - Scholarships
Angy Spiller - Delegations
Danielle Nobert-Halvorsen
Lloyd Arcand
Charla LeBlanc

Would you like to get involved or have a talent to share?

We are always looking for people who would like to help us in our **Mission of Hope** for the Nicaraguan people.

If interested, contact us at info@rootsofchange.ca to learn more about how to get involved.

The goal for our 2023 campaign is \$140,000.

The estimated cost of printing and mailing 3 publications per year is \$2,400.

For information contact Jocelyne Durocher at 780.405.8084

PayPal Giving Fund

PayPal Giving Fund Canada provides a method to make a credit card donation that eliminates the fees the Foundation would normally be charged which is between 2-3% of the donation - and every penny counts! Search for "PayPal Giving Fund" in your browser, click on 'Donate Here' then search for Roots of Change Foundation.

PayPal Giving Fund Canada will provide a Charitable Donation Receipt for your donation and we will be notified once it is processed.

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