



Local Artisans at Work

Letter From the Director

I left May 12, 2008 for Mongolia with seven Montana State University honors students who took the Great Expeditions course. During the Spring semester, they learned about Mongolian culture, history, and language. With help from my assistant trip leader, Christine Austin-Sommers, they initiated their projects. These included instruction in yoga and movement skills, as well as information on nutrition and local sources of vitamin C. All of these projects have been requested by local citizens.

On May 26, the 2008 Work Trip left for Mongolia as the Great Expeditions participants returned to the USA. The 10 citizens and students include a doctor, medical student, medical school professor, lab technician, several musicians, a landscape architecture student, an American Indian health educator who is a member of the Crow Nation, an environmental biologist and a BRI board member. A Mongolian doctor and medical student will also join us to work in the Darhad Valley along with a Mongolian moss botanist, an ecology instructor and two ecology interns. This continues the efforts of BioRegions International to foster learning partnerships between participants from the USA and Mongolia.

- *Cliff Montagne*

Education

We will continue to sponsor the **Art and Literature** contests in Renchinlumbe's school, which have helped the students renew pride in their unique culture. A book has been recently published by BioRegions celebrating some of the art and poems which will be available for sale in both English and Mongolian. The art students are still at a disadvantage with no computer access to learn digital art and design. The local student **music group** continues to give professional performances in both the Valley and in the provincial capital with our financial support. We continue to explore the possibilities of introducing **computer literacy** into the Renchinlumbe School which has no working computers. We are also exploring the possibilities for assisting **school dropouts**, who are usually students with special needs for whom the school cannot provide. We are designing an **ecological curriculum** which is in addition to the national lesson plan and are sponsoring an **Ecology Summer Field Trip** in the Darhad Valley for selected students and their teachers. This will be our 3rd year of funding two **Ger Schools** for children who are needed during winter migration by their herder families. The ex-school director teaches these students and they are given standardized tests at the end of the school year. This year, with a grant for a **Global Science Fair**, students will interact via a video internet conference in the Provincial capital with students from Montana and Mali, Africa about ecological concerns in their area.

Medicine and Health

We will sponsor the 4th annual **First Aid Training** for herding families with Mongolian instructors from the Khovsgol Provincial Capital. We are arranging for a Mongolian **dentist and**

eye doctor to conduct exams and do health assessments. We will distribute **donated prescription eyeglasses** from the NW Lions Club as well as **donated toothbrushes** and paste. Our medical team will continue basic **health screening tests**. There have been no services of this kind in the Darhad Valley since 1990, even with low cost socialized medicine. We will also fund a mobile clinic and do tests for parasites, STDs, and infectious diseases in cooperation with the local hospital staff. We want to begin cultivation of a **year round presence of BioRegions medicine and health activities**. We will provide funds for some salary and gas expenses for a



Participants in the Traditional Music Group

hospital doctor. These activities will be coordinated with BioRegions participants from the Mongolian University of Health Sciences. A book has been funded and published (only available in Mongolian at this time) titled "**Traditional Darhad Healing Medicines - Their Preparation and Use**". We work closely with the traditional medicine practitioners to help citizens learn about readily available native plants. As part of this effort, we are funding a **clinic to house traditional medicine healing** in the village of Ulaan Uul, located in the southern part of the Darhad Valley.

In 2008, a **comprehensive research and application program** will begin to learn about the relationships between health of soils, pastures, domestic animal herds, and people with the initial focus on parasites and brucellosis. This

project will be under the newly created **Montana State University BioRegions Institute**.

Traditional Skills and Knowledge

The 3rd annual **Darhad Blue Valley Awards** celebrating traditional arts will be held in Ulaan Uul this year. The **Artist and Artisan Apprenticeships** will also continue, ensuring that skills unique to this area are not lost. We are exploring a greater community role for these artists and craftspeople that continues year round. The **Traditional Music Group** has traveled throughout the Darhad Valley giving performances of the unique Darhad song. A woman from the Darhad, who participates in the Blue Valley Awards, was recently recognized by the government for her singing abilities. The book "**Children's Art of the Darhad**" has just been published by BRI. Another Renchinl-humbe School art and literature contest celebrating this unique culture will again be sponsored.

Environment

The initial **human parasite testing** will be conducted by our **2008 Medical Team** which includes doctors from the USA and Mongolia. This will begin the research into the connection between **pasture conditions and animal health**. Studies will continue with

"**salty plant**", termed "hujir", which is the main salt source for animals and humans in the Darhad. The **Renchinl-humbe Urban Forestry Nursery Project**, which involves transplanting small larch trees grown by local citizens is also to begin this summer. This is part of our **sustainable forestry project** that was started to address local concerns about timber resources, vital for survival in this harsh climate. We continue to sponsor a **Mongolian moss botanist** who is verifying moss species that are an early indicator of climate change. We are also sponsoring **Mongolian ecology students** to intern with BioRegions.

Upcoming Projects for 2009

The **National Geographic Conservation Trust grant** entitled "Enhancing Environmental and Cultural Stewardship in the Darhad Valley, Northern Mongolia" will involve studies and implementation next field season. There is also the possibility for a **study of the brucellosis bacteria** by scientists concerned with the incidence and the kind of bacteria found to be prevalent in animals and humans of the Darhad Valley. This study will be conducted by the **MSU BioRegions Institute**.

BioRegions International

BioRegions International works to empower the nomadic cultures of Mongolia to survive in a rapidly-changing world. We support holistic, locally-based projects promoting public health, education, environmental preservation, and sustainable economic development.

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