



UNIVERSITY
OF
HEIDELBERG
UNIVERSITY OF EXCELLENCE



INSTITUTO DE LA PREHISTORIA DE AMÉRICA (INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN PREHISTORY)

Since 1999, we have been developing an Underwater Archaeology project supported by the INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, foremost institution in education and conservation of historic and archaeological sites in the country), focused on Understanding;

Where did the first group of humans in America come from? When did they arrive to the Yucatan Peninsula? How did they look like? How did they survive? How were the ecosystems back then?



Strangely, the caves and Cenotes from the Yucatan Peninsula are giving us fundamental facts to come close to these and other questions.



The answers are linked to such vital information, as the one that can help us understand the role humans play in the climate change our planet is facing.

For thousands of years humans and animals used hundreds of miles of dry caves.

All the bones they left inside were trapped in time as water levels rose at the end of the last Ice Age, flooding all the caves and tunnels they had available for thousands of years.





The research on more than 20 underwater sites, in Yucatan and in Quintana Roo, throughout more than 15 years, has given us a wide collection of human skeletons from the Early Terminal Pleistocene Holocene, of the southeast of Mexico and America. This period is known as “The End of the Ice Age”.

Likewise, the findings of extinct mega fauna composed of giant sloths, camels, horses, elephants, saber tooth, (Gomphotheres) and giant armadillos (Glyptodonts) allow us to predict that what we know now as a jungle, 10,000 years ago were in fact grasslands and dry steppes, with isolated forests.

Thanks to these discoveries, we have been able to replicate some of the extinct mega fauna that inhabited the Yucatan Peninsula, even a full replica of a human of the Ice Age.

One of our goals is to take these discoveries and show them to the World, especially the people of the Yucatan, were only 20 years ago it was believed there could not be any evidence that had survived from the Ice Age.

In an amazing effort between companies and institutions like: IPA Instituto para la Prehistoria de América (Playa del Carmen), Museo del Desierto (Saltillo, Coahuila), UWE (Playa del Carmen), Grupo Xcaret (Playa del Carmen), Ejido Jacinto Paat (Cenote Dos Ojos), we have created the first community-scientific museum dedicated to cenotes.





The results of our research has been published in the best scientific magazines like Paleoamerican Odyssey, Nature, Human Evolution or Current Research in Pleistocene, among others.

Our field seasons are sponsored by our team, and we have had the help of companies like Discovery Channel, London BBC, National Geographic, Spiegel TV and other companies from France, Japan and Germany.



(http://www.nativoexpedition.com/HTML_v.03/Nativo%20page/Chanhol.html)

Our work enabled us to obtain the prestigious Rolex Award, in the category of exploration and discovery (the web page that describes our work is: <http://rolexawards.com/en/the-laureates/arturogonzalez-home.jsp>)

This project has succeeded thanks to people dedicated to exploration, education, research and conservation.

The results of this work have provided important updates to the official elementary and high school text books.

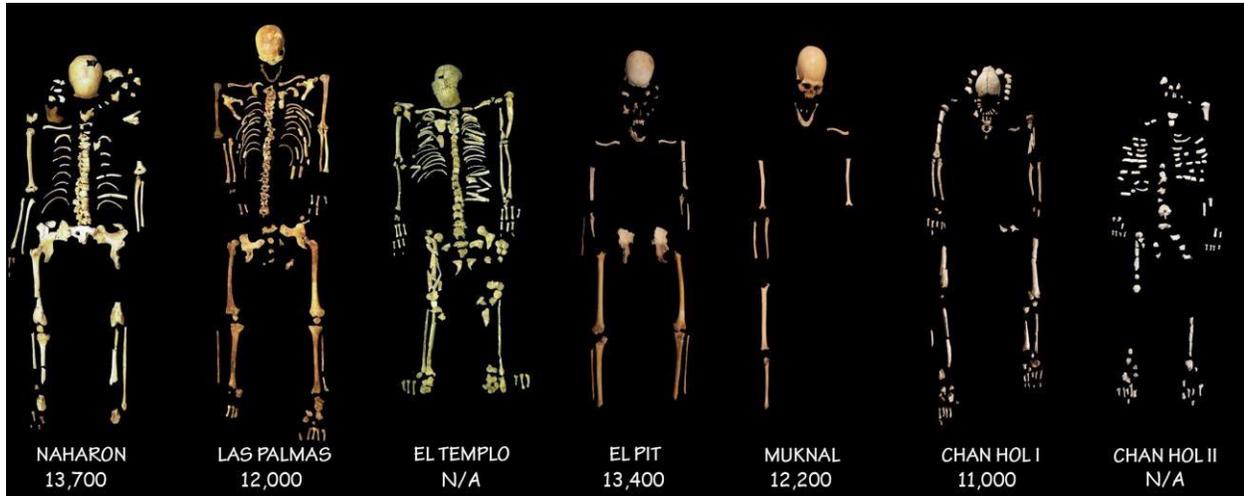
With the discovery and study of these human skeletons, new questions have aroused in the American Population Theories.



Relevant issues like conservation, climate change, extinction, education, exploration, land owners, etc., will lead us in a better understanding of the history of the Yucatan and the American Continent, and more importantly, they will guide next generations into the future.

HUMANS OF THE ICE AGE

During our project, we have studied 10 Human skeletons, some with up to 95% of their bones recovered, and all dating more than 8 thousand years old. The “Woman from Naharon” (named after the cave where She was found), is the oldest skeleton in America, dating to almost 14 thousand years.

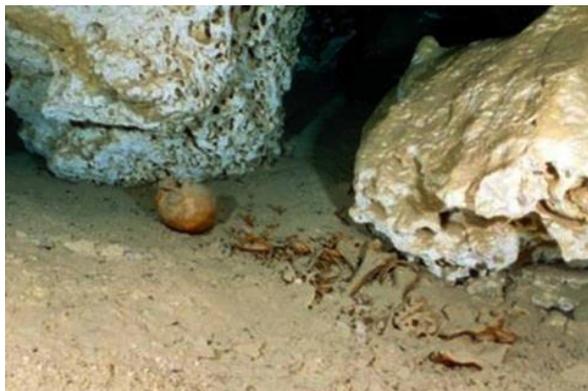


The Woman of Las Palmas

The “The Woman of Las Palmas” (named after the cave’s entrance where She was found), has the most complete face.

Discovered in the 90s by an American explorer, has been studied for more than a decade. It is a story of success of cooperation and collaboration between cave explorers, scientists, Mayan communities, etc.

A research and conservation process started, and is still going on today.





The skeleton was scanned, and a full resin computerized duplicate was made.

From this replica, the scan and the anthropological studies, a full size-real life, model was made by a specialized workshop in Paris, France.

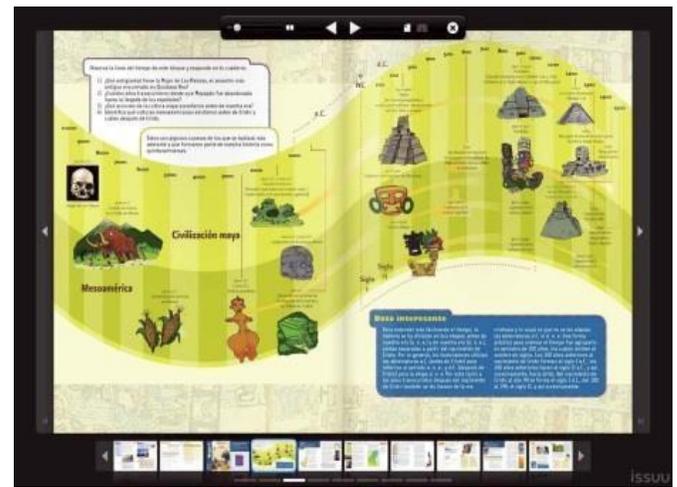
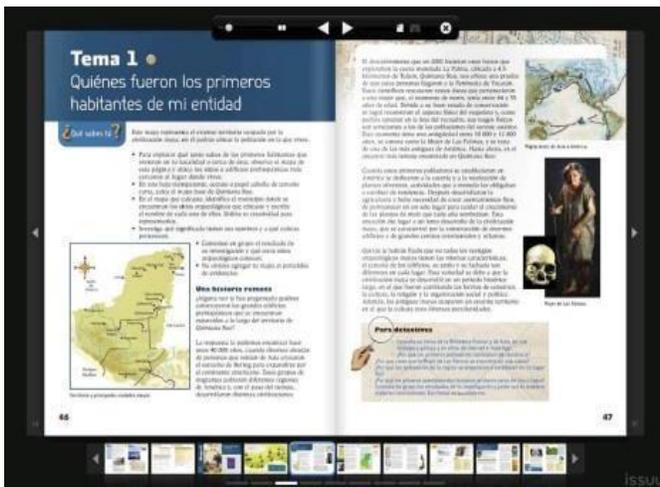
This model is in display at the Climate Change Museum in the city of Silao, Guanajuato, Mexico.



The history of the early settlement in the Americas is presently being re-written; first results are already changing official school books in the Country.

In 2010 a new edition of the official elementary text books was edited.

Now inside the third grade History Book, the story of “The Woman of Las Palmas” is being told.



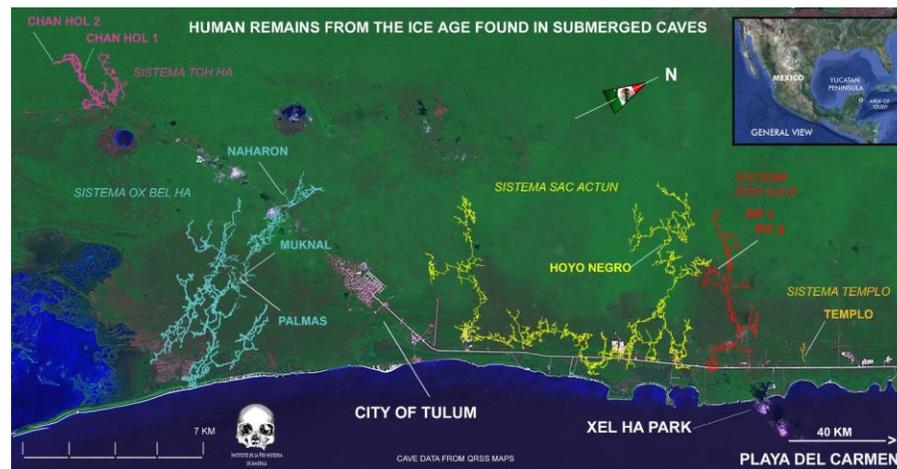
We invite you to write with us another chapter of the history about the peopling of the new world with these breath-taking discoveries.



DOS OJOS PARK PREHISTORY MUSEUM

In the year 2010 we began working with the Mayan community of Jacinto Pat, owners of Dos Ojos Park.

Underneath this Mayan community of 175 families, lies the second and third longest underwater cave systems in the World (Sac Actun and Dos Ojos systems), together with more than 300 km (200 miles) of explored caves.



In an amazing effort between individuals, cave divers, companies and institutions like: IPA Instituto para la Prehistoria de América (Playa del Carmen), Museo del Desierto (Saltillo, Coahuila), UWE (Playa del Carmen), Grupo Xcaret (Playa del Carmen), Ejido Jacinto Paat (Cenote Dos Ojos), we have created the first community-scientific museum dedicated to these discoveries.

This project has enabled us to share the results of these research with the rest of the World, especially the people of the Yucatan Peninsula.





Animals like elephants (gomphoteriums), horses, camels, saber tooth tigers, giant sloths, wolves, and more, used to roam the Yucatan Peninsula.

We have a full size reconstruction of the ancestor of the modern elephant, a mastodon of the Ice Age.

Skeletons of animals like the Glyptodont (giant armadillo) and Stegomastodon (ancient elephant).



In these caves, 10 human skeletons have been found, some more than 13 thousand years old, making them the oldest humans found in America! You will learn their stories here.

We will learn about the “Woman of Las Palmas”, how she was found, where she was found, and why it is the oldest funeral in America.

The visit to the museum includes a personal tour by one of our staff researchers, a perfect way to prepare our visitors for the amazing experience they will have in these amazing underground rivers, not only the longest in the World, but also the most beautiful.

With the first stage of our project in progress, we have been open to the public for only one year, and we have had the privilege of hosting more than 800 students from different elementary, high school and universities from the country, and even one high school from Canada.



With hundreds of caves to be explored, only the beginning of this story has been explored.



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Here are some links that show in more detail our work, results, and news:

<http://xdivers.wix.com/instituto-de-la-prehistoria-de-america>

<http://www.inah.gob.mx/index.php/especiales/4596-el-joven-de-chan-hol->

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/09/photogalleries/100917-oldestskelton-underwater-cave-science-pictures/#/ancient-10000-year-old-skeletonexcavation-measuring-bones_26216_600x450.jpg

http://www.nativoexpedition.com/HTML_v.03/Nativo%20page/Chanhol.html

http://www.rolexawards.com/profiles/associate_laureates/arturo_gonzalez/overview

<http://rolexawards.com/en/the-laureates/arturogonzalez-home.jsp>

http://www.nativoexpedition.com/HTML_v.03/Nativo%20page/Productos.html

http://issuu.com/sbasica/docs/ab-qroo-3-baja_20120914134021 pages 46 and 47

<http://rotativo.com.mx/estilos/miles-visitan-en-silao-exhibicion-sobre-cambio-climatico-yevolucion/38159/print/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrGURP1geyM>