

COMMUNITY NEWS/EVENTS

Nancy Ruiz, tribal member, understood the challenges of the map making project: retracing the footsteps of 1875

BY DON DECKER,
YAN News

Nancy Ruiz who is employed with the Nation's EPA department full time, participated in the 17-day mapping project walking from Clarkdale to old San Carlos that began on December 1.

Ms. Ruiz is a graduate of South Verde High School (Class of 2013) and is the daughter of Esther Sanchez of Camp Verde and Lorenzo Ruiz. She is majoring in environmental studies and completing her studies at Yavapai College with a minor in Social Science on a part time basis.

Ms. Ruiz volunteered to participate in the mapping of the pathway to old San Carlos joining a core group of walkers composed of Everett Phillips, chief technician from Compass Data, Jordan Lewis, YAN member and cultural specialist, Fred Sanchez, YAN member and senior member of the walking team. There were other members of the Nation who participated on the walk on a limited basis during the 17-day walk.

Ms. Ruiz, who is physically fit, videotaped her crew during the long walk using a high tech Go-Pro video camera that documented certain segments of the mapping project. Asked if she had any doubts about her participation in mapping project, she said that the second day of her climbing up the 6,000 feet Hackberry Mountain located east of Camp Verde, tested her mental and physical stamina.

"There were some parts where I felt like I couldn't make it or I didn't know what I was going to do if I couldn't make it," she said.

The mapping crew had left earlier that day on December 4th, from a departure point east of Camp Verde at a private retreat place that belonged to the City of Camp Verde. The walking crew had breakfast there before walking into their 17-day walk.

Ms. Ruiz and her team had walked all day and into the night up the ridge along the left side of Hackberry Mountain which took them 13 hours.

She recalls that day when nightfall approached and they were near the top of the mountain.

"At the end of the day, as a team, we kept our spirits up. We told each other we have to get through this because those before us made it and they also were here with us. I think that kind of

helped us keep our spirits up."

But the darkening night and the rugged pathway littered with large rocks, trees and the dips and the canyons made the downhill hike into the Needle Point area time consuming.

"That's when the anxieties set in. Once the sun started to set the reality of the trip started to set in for us. I started to get really nervous because I realized I had forgotten my headlamp. So, it really started to kick in that this wasn't going to be easy," said Ms. Ruiz about their ascent into the Needle Point area that night.

As the night wore on, there wasn't any question about the exact arrival point as Mr. Phillips had a high tech mapping device which designated the precise location of the walkers going up the darken pathway. Later that night, the crew was able to see a burning campfire down below the mountain where community members were awaiting their arrival.

After 12 days of hiking the rough terrain of central Arizona mountain country, Ms. Ruiz arrived at the dirt road entrance way to the final 6 miles into old San Carlos on December 16.

A personal recollection of the long walk

By Nancy Ruiz

The end of the trail felt like a happy ending to a sad story. We had done it! We had actually walked all of those miles and we were finally about to finish. By this point all of my blisters and aches felt so minor compared to what we had experienced in the beginning.

Our bodies grew tougher and we were all so relieved to be finishing. Overall, the experience was one that I will never forget. I did this walk for myself, my family (the Walnut Clan), and most importantly, all of my people; the children, elders and those who are physically incapable.

I feel so proud to be a part of the Yavapai-Apache people.

There was a point in the hike right before I left the trail I believe it was after we got out of the Fossil Creek area and leaving Pine that really put my body to the test.

It was the first day that we had to carry all of our camp stuff on our backs. I remember waking up that morning and my body was aching from the

last few days of intense up hills. As we packed up our tents, stoves, food, sleeping bags/pads, and all other survival items that we needed, I realized that my bag was extremely heavy. I started to get the feeling of anxiety that I had felt but this time we hadn't even started walking yet.

The only thing about that day's hike was that once we got onto the Arizona Trail, there would be no way for a van or other vehicle to reach us. About 5 miles in, my legs began to hurt so bad and the weight of my bag felt like someone had added an additional 200 pounds!

I immediately developed thoughts of regret; this was when I started to get angry at myself for thinking that I had it in me to actually go on this hike. I couldn't believe what I had gotten myself into. The entire time I wanted to cry because the pain in my legs started to become overwhelming. I kept pushing on. I noticed that Fred Sanchez was feeling the same as me and he didn't complain or give up. It was truly inspiring because if he could do it, so could I.

The entire time Jordan talked to me and kept me focused on the trail and distracted from my thoughts of quitting. He let me use the Garmin (GPS device) so that I could see we only had a few more miles left (I underestimated. We still had about 6 miles).

I remember thinking to myself that those who walked before me didn't have all of this fancy equipment or shoes cut out for the rough terrain, yet the ones that could go on, did without complaints of blisters or aches because their lives depended on it. It was a powerful feeling. I had felt as if there was something guiding me the entire time and as much as I wanted to give up, I just couldn't. I am the product of my people's survival. By the time we got to L&H Ranch, my legs were shaky, my body was drained and I knew if I had to walk any longer I wouldn't have made it. That day was the day I left the trail.



Nancy Ruiz of YAN takes photo of mapmakers in Fossil Creek



Nancy Ruiz and Jordan Lewis make new entries on their diaries.



Nancy Ruiz next to Needle Rock on Fossil Creek Road preparing for the day's walk into Fossil Creek Canyon.. Photo by YAN News

PRESERVATION

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Apache Nation to walk the total distance from Camp Verde to old San Carlos for mapping the entire trail.

There were some pre-planning meetings held between Mr. Phillips and Mr. Horner according to Ms. Piner. This included planning for the various segments of the long walk, identifying camping spots along the way, and working out the segments weeks in advance.

"We thought it would take 18 days and Everett (Phillips) thought it would take longer and ended up at our destination in 17 days," said Ms. Piner proudly.

Using a GIS template, the data base viewer can accommodate story maps, traditional wild plant foods, photos of springs and waterways, locations of where clans lived and other entailed data with photographs.

Ask whether the new experience with identifying the old trail to old San Carlos was accurate or not, Ms. Piner said that it was close to the original one. And much of the current research on the old trail was based on a book written by a Dr. Corbusier, a U.S. Cavalry surgeon who kept a diary of that long fateful walk in 1875.

"I think we learned a lot along the way. Once we got into the mountains, some of the documentation (Dr. Corbusier's notes and U.S. Cavalry notes) couldn't have

been right—some of it didn't make any sense. For example, we wanted to know why they killed the cattle early. The reason was because the cattle couldn't have made it over Hackberry Mountain," said Mrs. Piner in reference to the crew's own experience of having to climb through the thickets and wilderness of the trek up Hackberry Mountain which impeded travel.

In addition, a new scenario developed during the recent long trek where the map makers had to adjust their path along the way because of private property owners who posted warning signs along the way that prevented the mapmakers from taking short cuts along the intended path to old San Carlos.

Ms. Piner also accounted for an incident which occurred south of Payson in the wilderness area were mapmakers Everett Phillips and Jordan Lewis were confronted with vigilante type of individuals who were confrontational in a menacing way. Mr. Phillips and Mr. Lewis managed to evade them after the two devious appearing individuals re-appeared that evening in the same location but by then, the map walkers had gone several miles into the thicket of the desert in total darkness.

Mr. Vincent Randall, Apache culture director, said that early discussions were held before the mapping activity about the original 1875 trail with Mrs. Piner and

Scott Woods, a retired U.S. Forest Service archeologist who has extensive knowledge of the area being investigated. The only adjustment made was that the original trail inside of Fossil Creek ascended straight up the east side of the cliff (between Irving and the location of the old school house) and up to Hard Scrabble Mesa. The modern trail blazers from the Nation instead walked up the bladed road from inside of Fossil Creek to the top and bypassing Strawberry on the right by 2 miles.

From there, the trail from the Strawberry area headed straight to Baby Doll Ranch area (15 miles west of present day Payson) into Rye through Jake's Corner across Roosevelt Lake. On the east side of Roosevelt Lake, the mapping crew made some slight deviations in their approach to the high summit east of Roosevelt Lake by making some switch-back turns to ascend the mountain before dropping into the Wheatfields area (using the highway for the pathway), then into Globe and to Rice (former name of new San Carlos) then to old San Carlos.

Other offerings of the department

Stop in Ms. Piner department and there are stacks of videos, printed vocabulary books, video recording devices, several computers, a sound booth for recording of voices, endless drawers filled with years of voice record-

ings and DVDs of events.

The forte of Ms. Piner's department is having community members come in and record their voices and family photographs. This digital story telling has been the mainstay of the Preservation and Technology department for the last 10 years since its inception.

"We're still doing story telling. My goals to have everyone who went on this trip (mapmaking trek) to do a digital story telling about the trip. Then, we'll have a whole collection of individual stories on how it felt to be on this trip," said Ms. Piner.

The biggest project that Ms. Piner has undertaken to date was taking an inventory of all the artifacts of the Nation collected by the culture center that is stored in the vault. "Chris Coder (Nation archeologist) and I worked over 5 years to catalogue them and put them into a data base. That was a big project," said Ms. Piner.

Another area of development is devising the language learning program using telephone applications so that the Nation's members can easily retrieve the lessons. "Language learning is huge here. I see my job as helping to facilitate language learning in every way that I can, whether that's making books or place names on the maps for telephone applications," she said.

Other main goals of the long walk is to complete the final map and get the

route generated so that it can be followed in the future with a GPS locator.

"In the future, tribal members can take the youth on the trail to teach them survival skills and how to live in this world and out in the wild or to live in a natural way and hopefully save them from treacherous things that happen to youth," said Ms. Piner.

Credentials

Ms. Piner has a scholarly background with several degrees that qualifies her for the assignment of mapping the old Yavapai-Apache trail of 1875 and conducting cultural preservation for the Nation. She received her Masters in Anthropology from Northern Arizona University, a Bachelors in Museum Studies and an Associate of Arts Degree from Yavapai College.

"I don't study people, I work with people and that's what I do here and I get to work with my colleagues," said Ms. Piner about her work in the Preservation and Technology.

Benefits to the walkers

"The crew was learning along the way. Everyone brought something different to this. Everett Phillips (with Compass Data, map surveyor) was knowledgeable and yet he learned a lot along the way. He had never been worked with Native Americans before and having accomplished this will make a huge difference in his life," Ms. Piner said about the primary consultant Everett

Phillips from Compass Data who walked the entire trail recording the necessary map GIS coordinates to estimate the approximate location of the 1875 trail.

Ms. Piner was especially proud of Jordan Lewis and Nancy Ruiz who are Nation's members.

"Jordan is very young and impressionable and I think it's going to make a huge difference in his life. The same for Nancy," said Ms. Piner.

In addition, council member of the Nation, Annette Mendez and elder Katherine Marquez, former director of the Yavapai culture department for the Nation joined in the long walk as well.

"Annette Mendez was there who is trained as a hiker and a runner who added a lot and Katherine who had a lot of knowledge," added Ms. Piner.

Then there were others from the Nation much older such as Fred Sanchez, former vice chairman of the Nation who was "wise in the way of the wilderness and added to the group," said Ms. Piner.

Mr. Sanchez had difficulty with an old injury on his ankle but he persisted in the long walk as he made his way into old San Carlos on December 17 all the way from the Verde Valley.

Other adult marchers included Damon and Monica Marquez, Ron Juan, Troy Kaska and Don Decker with video photography.