

A co-operatively run NGO driven by the enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers to promote sustainable development in marginalized communities throughout Ecuador and to promote Cultural Exchange for mutual benefit in our increasingly globalized world

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

The New Year finds us well installed in our new school and offices for the foundation in the historic center of Quito, and busy busy busy in the school in Cuenca.

The year 2014 will be a seminal year for the Spanish school as we complete the process of adoption of a curriculum based on the Cervantes Institute and using the Common European Framework of Reference for language level evaluation. This is accompanied by training for the teachers in these systems that will unify all the teaching that takes place in Yanapuma Spanish School.

It is an unfortunate fact that the great majority of Spanish teaching in Latin America is very “flojo” or unstructured, with most schools simply putting a student with a teacher who is pretty much free to teach as they like, without any structure, evaluation or record-keeping. Yanapuma is determined to compete with the best schools in Spain, where the level of professionalism of the schools is generally much higher. It is for that reason that 67% of American students who are serious about learning Spanish go to Spain to study.

As members of the AECEE, the association of the best Spanish schools in Ecuador, we are working on our systems of evaluation of each school in

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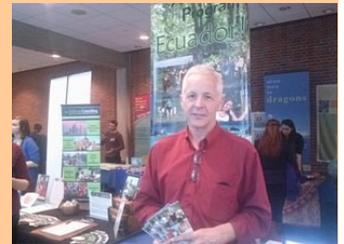
order to ensure the highest standards for Spanish students studying in Ecuador. We are also working with the municipality of Quito to receive their quality standard seal of approval.

The volunteer department has had a particularly busy start to 2014 with several large groups of volunteers arriving from the North America and Europe. We currently only have one coordinator, but a new face will be joining us soon to help in the further development of this department. We continue to develop our Gap Year programs with our own Global Awareness Program (GAP-Ecuador). You can read more about this inside.

Yanapuma Foundation has also been busy these first two months of 2014. On January 11 we finished the first 18 months of our project funded by the Inter American Foundation. The process of handing over much of the responsibility for the project to the Tsa’chila continues, empowering them to be the agents of their own change and development. Volunteer groups have been working in Tsa’chila comunas on various projects that you can read about inside.

GAP-Ecuador

In January, our executive director attended a series of Gap Year fairs on the east coast of the US to promote the Spanish School and our own Global Awareness program, as well as promoting our Medical Spanish and other Spanish school programs. Despite the intense cold and snow – unknown here in Ecuador except on the tops of the volcanos! – the trip was a success and we look forward to receiving students and volunteers from US organizations and universities in the future.



Carnaval in Ecuador!

The weekend of 1-2 March is Carnaval in Ecuador, with special events and parades in many cities and small pueblos across the country. Students from the Cuenca school will be travelling to the pueblito of Kushiwaira in Azuay province to take part in the traditional celebrations and festivities there.



Yanapuma wins “Best Spanish School in Cuenca” award!



We are delighted to report that on 14 of February Yanapuma Spanish School won the award for the best Spanish school in Cuenca run by the GringoTree website. Visitors to the website voted for the best Spanish school among many other categories of services offered in Cuenca. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and teachers there who deserve a huge THANK YOU from all of us!

<http://www.gringopost.com/>



A birthday surprise for founder Elizabeth Garófalo (blue dress)–. A Mariachi band at the school to sing Happy Birthday!

Spanish School News . . .

Our Spanish School in Quito has had an average start to the year. In fact, we are quite happy at this time to not be deluged with students as we work to complete the processes of professional development for the school.

As noted on the front page, the standards tend to be fairly lax in Latin America in general, and the teachers tend to be used to doing their own thing rather than following a set system and syllabus. All that is definitively finished at Yanapuma as we move towards an integrated system of curriculum, evaluation and record-keeping, that is comparable to anything available from schools in Spain.



In contrast to Quito, the school in Cuenca has continued to be full and we have had to turn away quite a number of students who have arrived at the last minute. There were a total of 41 students studying with us in Cuenca during January and February. We have been sending teachers from Quito to teach there if we have any available.

The mix of students in Cuenca is more skewed towards the older, retired American population of Cuenca, especially in the afternoons. But there have been a good number of young students in the mornings too.

Some students have combined their Spanish studies with volunteering in one of several different projects around Cuenca (see photo page).

Pictured below are the staff and teachers enjoying a toast in the kitchen of the Cuenca Spanish School.



Volunteer News . . .

The volunteer department has been staffed valiantly by Cristina these last two months, working on her own until our newly-hired coordinator will arrive in March. We have received 4 groups, two from the **Leap UK**, one from **Thinking Beyond Borders** from the US, and one from the **Colège Edouard Montpetit** from Canada. Volunteer group leader Fenner Hoell has been helping to keep things on track, along with additional group leaders **Maria-José Arellano**, **Aimee St. Germain** and **Samuel Schlesinger**. We are grateful for all their hard work and dedication these two months!

The group from Canada returned for the 5th year running to work with the cacao farmers of the Tsa'chila comuna of Bua. Their annual return has been a huge help in keeping the momentum going with the farmers who in general are not used to thinking long-term, something that is required with cacao which takes 3 years or more to begin producing results. In addition they left us with a donation to start a scholarship program in Bua, similar to that which we are carrying out in Estero de Plátano on the Pacific coast.

The group from **Thinking Beyond Borders** arrived in January as part of their round-the-world gap year experience, to spend a month living with Tsa'chila families in Bua and planting out 8000 saplings that were grown by the members of the Shinopi Bolón cultural group in Bua. **Megan Tan**, who was studying Spanish at Universidad San Francisco, made a video that followed one of the TBB volunteers through her experience with the Tsa'chila. You can view the final cut of the video that was presented to us in January here: http://www.yanapuma.org/videos/30_nights_like_home_640x360.mp4



The groups from the **Leap UK** carried out projects with the Tsa'chila in the comunas of Bua and Peripa, as well as working on community projects in the Andean community of Chilcapamba. They also spend 3 weeks working on conservation, rooting out invasive species and replanting native species on the island of San Cristóbal in the Galapagos Islands.

In addition to these volunteer groups we received a number of individual volunteers who worked on projects with our partner organizations in Quito and around the country, taking part in projects in conservation, health clinics, teaching, child-care, animal rescue, community development, tourism and environmental education.

Project News . . .

Tsa'chila Projects

In addition to the work carried out by the volunteer groups cited in the section on volunteering, we continued with the project funded by the **Inter American Foundation**. All 26,000 cacao plants are now well established on the more than 70 farms that are participating in the project. In addition we have sown Valencia orange saplings alongside the cacao to provide light shade to the cacao and to provide an additional income and source of nutrition.

We also continue with the 83 family vegetable gardens established on farms in four Tsa'chila comunas. The process of teaching the families to grow vegetables is having overall positive results, although acceptance varies with some families having dropped out while others have joined in. The aim is to improve family diet and nutrition through providing assistance and training in incorporating vegetables into the daily diet and teaching about nutrition. Again, the overall result is positive, although the learning varies between families. However, we are confident that as we progress with the project and continue to provide assistance, the learning and incorporation of vegetables into the daily diet will improve.

We are also happy to be able to report that for a second time we have given the responsibility directly to the Tsa'chila of the Shinopi Bolón cultural center to grow 8000 saplings of local varieties for planting out in a reforestation project. Alfonso Aguavil, the director of the center, took charge of organizing everything and we are delighted to be able to work with confidence directly with them, entrusting them to gather the local seeds, sow and maintain the plants until they are ready for planting out with a group of volunteers. These 8000 are summed with 8000 that we planted out in October of last year.

Estero de Plátano

Union College interns **Andrew Viñales** and **Jacqui Smith** continue to do an excellent job working with the "becados," the 13 adolescents who are receiving scholarships to study at high school in the nearby towns of Tonchigwe and Atacames. They also work in the local school and with the various community groups, such as the women's group, community bank, and community council.

We are in the process of organizing a visit for the becados to Quito at the end of the academic year. We are also looking to buy more books for the library and replace the projector that they use for movie nights in the village.



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Richard Couedel in Bua

We were delighted to welcome sociologist Richard Couedel from France to begin working on a project of cultural memory with the Tsa'chila.

We have long been concerned that the memories, and the richness of the detail of the Tsa'chila culture, is disappearing as the older members of the community die. At the start of last year, Alfonso Aguavil, director of the Shinopi Bolón cultural group finally said he was ready to start writing his life history and memory of Tsa'chila life.

Alfonso was born into the traditional Tsa'chila lifestyle of hunter-gatherer in the 1950s, and has lived through the abrupt transitions of the last 60 years. We have been searching for a suitably-qualified individual to take on the task of helping Alfonso to record his life story and knowledge, to create a permanent record for the Tsa'chila people. So we were happy when Richard came along, interested in taking up this challenge.

Right now, Richard is working without any reward and Yanapuma is covering his food and lodging in the comuna. But we are seeking funding to enable him to continue the work for up to two years.

Minga Peru in Ecuador!

We were delighted to receive **Eliana Elias**, director of **Minga Peru**, a Peruvian NGO working with indigenous women, along with **Jennifer Wilson** from the US. Their visit, at the end of January, to the Tsa'chila comunas to establish links between their groups, especially the women, and to film a Tsa'chila ritual were organized by **Cecilia Vallejo**, our projects coordinator.

We welcome this kind of collaboration and thank them for their efforts in benefit of the Tsa'chila culture, and we look forward to more contact in the future!

You can learn more about Minga Peru from their website: <http://www.mingaperu.org/>

Donation News . . .

Bridget Dougherty, a student at the Cuenca school donated \$30 to the work of the foundation.

Maria Marone from Holland donated \$350 for a scholarship.

Victoria Rolfe donated \$350 to our scholarship fund.

Our annual appeal for our scholarship fund raised a total of \$2468. Together with the funds raised from our \$25 registration fee for the Spanish school we will have enough funds to support 15 disadvantaged youth to study at high school this year.

The **Colège Edouard Montpetit** of Canada donated \$578 to start a scholarship program in the Tsa'chila comuna Bua.

Thomas Ferrell from the US donated \$500 to our funds.

January and February Photo Gallery

