

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

We wish all our readers a Happy New Year and all the best for 2015!

The new year kicked off to a busy start for the whole organization with plenty of activity in all departments. The volunteer department was especially busy with several groups arriving during these two months, as well as the usual run of individual volunteers to be placed in projects in Quito or Cuenca and all around the country.

The Spanish school had a more gradual start with the first couple of weeks after the New Year being fairly quiet and then picking up as more people started to travel after the winter holidays. We were struggling to fit all the students in to classes in both schools, as well as to cater to those students who had chosen one of our "Study and Travel" programs.

The foundation was also very busy with various activities. Principal among these was the preparation of a report on the 5th semester of activities for the pro-

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ject co-funded with the Inter American Foundation. Our field team came to Quito to help collate all the reports and statistics and produce the graphs and diagrams for the written report. You can find a copy of this (in Spanish) here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/news.php>

You can read about the other activities of the Yanapuma Foundation on the following pages.

Lastly, we have also been busy launching our new travel agency – True Ecuador Travel. With this we can offer the full range of tourism services to our students, interns and volunteers, and create packages for universities, high-schools, and other organizations that are interested in educational travel programs, study abroad, service learning, etc. The new website is here: <http://true-ecuador-travel.org>



Students visit the glacier on Cotopaxi Volcano

Weekend Excursions . . .

Yanapuma Spanish Schools offer a range of exciting weekend excursions on Saturdays and Sundays. You can view the calendar online here: <http://www.yanapumaspanish.org/wp/quito-calendar/>

In Quito there are day trips to Cotopaxi Volcano (above), Otavalo market, Pappallacta hot springs, Pasachoa Nature Reserve, Quilotoa crater lake, Mindo cloud forest, and Guagua Pichincha Volcano, while in Cuenca there are regular excursions to Cajas National Park, Gualaceo and Chordeleg, Ingapirca and Cañari communities.

These excursions are run by professional companies with licenced guides and transport, ensuring the maximum safety and enjoyment for our students and volunteers on their weekends.

After a week of studying Spanish for 4 hours per day, many of our students are ready to take off for the weekend on an adventure in the amazing countryside that surrounds Quito and Cuenca!



The Edible Forest!

As part of our ongoing foundation project work with the Tsa'chila culture we have begun to investigate the concept of the "Bosque Comestible" or edible forest and measure its applicability to the Tsa'chila situation. We have observed that the vegetable gardens that we have been developing with around 50 families are having a limited success due to several factors, including the difficult climate with heavy tropical rains, ravaging ant populations, and the fact that the vegetable garden is more of a sierra and temperate climate concept.



The idea with the edible forest is to re-forest with a mixture of species that create a healthy environment with shade and timber trees along with species that have nutritional value to humans—fruits, nuts, seeds and edible leaves, so that there is always something in the forest to eat that will encourage a mixed and more nutritious diet.

Spanish School News . . .

The Spanish schools were both extremely busy during these first two months of the year, especially in Cuenca. We struggled to find enough spaces for students wanting to study individually and filled small-group classes in both schools. There were also students traveling with a teacher on some of our Study and Travel programs – visiting the Amazon rainforest, the Ruta del Sol and the Ruta de los Volcanes. We were happy to receive a group of medical students from Yeshiva University to learn Medical Spanish and volunteer in local clinics and hospitals.

New student coordinator for Cuenca Alicia McDermott writes *“In Cuenca we still have an abundance of students and happy teachers with full schedules. Our students come from various parts of the world, giving us an interesting cultural sharing experience during break times and after classes as well. Since January we’ve had students from USA, Canada, and the UK, as well as France, Switzerland, Norway, Hungary, Germany and Sweden. The age range is also varied and gives us lots of fun for communicating and sharing ideas as well! We also continue having fun and cross cultural learning through various food-centred activities.”*

We have been working for many months on documents for the Ministerio de Educación which has been going through a complete overhaul for the past two years. This has caused us considerable headache along with several of the other schools that are part of the AECEE association of Ecuadorian Spanish schools. In general the Ministerio is completely out of touch with the concept of Spanish classes for foreigners, being focused primarily on administering elementary and high school and vocational courses. They expect us to teach our students how to wash their hands after visiting the bathroom and such-like, and it would be quite comical except that it is also very frustrating!

We have been working with the other schools in the AECEE (<http://aecee.com>) on a system of quality control for all our schools. We all say we are the best – of course! But until now we have not had the proper tools for quantifying and qualifying our standards. Yanapuma worked with Academic Columbus in 2014 to establish the criteria and create the manual, and we will now start to evaluate each of our schools according to our standards prior to accepting any new school into the association.



Volunteer News . . .

As mentioned in the introduction, the volunteer department has been incredibly busy during these first two months with several groups arriving as well as individual volunteers for placements in various projects.

We were pleased to welcome a group of 34 volunteers from **the Leap** – split into two groups to carry out projects in the Kichwa community of Chilcapamba in the Andes, the Tsa’chila comuna Bua and on the Galapagos Islands.

We also welcomed a group of 19 architecture and construction students from **Eindhoven University** in Holland who spent a week at the Shuar community of Selvavida in the Amazon before traveling on the Ruta de los Volcanes for a week.

A group of 13 volunteers from **Pacific Discovery** arrived in February to work in a sierra community near Otavalo before traveling on to Sinchi Warmi in the Amazon and other travel around Ecuador including a trip to the Galapagos.

Another returning group came from **Thinking Beyond Borders**, 20 volunteers who spent a month in the Andes working on a reforestation project run by the Ecuadorian foundation Brethren y Unida.

A group of 11 high-school students from Utah that came to Ecuador for the first time from the organization **Realms of Inquiry** took Spanish classes with us in Quito as part of their exploration of Ecuador.

We were also delighted to welcome back a group from **Colège Edouard Montpetit** of Québec, Canada. This group of 14 youth spent a week working with the cacao growers of Bua, helping them with their cacao plantations. At the same time we also received a new group of students from the **Harvard Forum for International Development (HFID)**. This group of 6 students, working with us for the first time, spent 10 days in the comuna El Poste where they also worked with the cacao growers, getting to understand at firsthand what the processes of development are like for the Tsa’chila culture.

During these two months we also received 7 individual volunteers from various countries of the world.

In all during the first two months of 2015 we received 124 volunteers – a record for Yanapuma!



Donations News . . .

Our Christmas fundraiser this year raised a total of \$2360.00 for our scholarship fund. The \$25 Spanish school registration fee also contributes to this fund. For 2015 we will be sponsoring 14 youth to study at high school – 12 from Estero de Plátano and 2 from Bua supported by a donation from Colège Edouard Montpetit.

Staff and Interns News . . .

At the start of February volunteer coordinator Rachel Worthington left us to travel to Argentina with her boyfriend. We are grateful for all the hard work that she put in during her year with, not only in the volunteer department but also in lending a hand in the foundation. We wish her well in the future!

We were also happy to welcome Jesse MacArthur from the US to the school in Cuenca as a volunteer coordinator there. Student coordinator in Cuenca Alexandra Antkoviak left us, also to travel to Argentina with her boyfriend! We are grateful for all her hard work and wish her well in the future.



Alexandra was replaced by Alicia McDermott from Canada (left) who has been living in Cuenca with her Ecuadorian husband for two years already. Alicia has a degree in International Relations, Anthropology and Psychology, and will be coordinating the activities and programs of the students in Cuenca from now on.

Annual Report 2014

We have produced our annual written report for Fundación Yanapuma, and you can access it on our website here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/news.php>

The financial statement will be added once the annual accounts are approved later this year. Our accounts are not externally audited as we would rather spend the money directly on our project work! However, our principal project with the Inter American Foundation is audited by their appointed auditors every 6 months and as this project accounts for over 75% of our project work we feel this is a sufficient demonstration of our commitment to sustainable development in Ecuador. But please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about our foundation work.



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Project News . . .

The focus in the foundation for January was to compile a report for the Inter American Foundation on our activities during the 5th semester of our project to promote sustainable cacao production, create vegetable gardens and offer nutritional education among 4 Tsa'chila comunas.

After the departure of our project coordinator, Cecilia Vallejo, we gave more responsibility to the field team as part of a process of preparing them to be able to manage projects themselves. To this end, they were active in the preparation of the report, from carrying out surveys to compiling the results and writing up a report. Although they were initially very nervous about the prospect of taking on these tasks back in September, we offered them our full support and they have done an amazing job in developing their new skills in this area.

We have also continued to look for ways of printing the book that Alfonso Aguavil, founder of the Shinopi Bolón cultural center, wrote about his life and memories of the Tsa'chila way of life. The narrative is in Spanish. If anyone is interested in translating it into English then please get in touch!

We met with representatives from the Gobernación Provincial de Pichincha who are preparing materials on the Yumbo culture, now disappeared totally, who are believed to have shared some of their cultural traits and language with the Tsa'chila. We are waiting to hear if they will be able to fund the publication of the book.

During the past two months we have been delighted to receive so many volunteer groups whose direct contributions to our ongoing projects provide tangible support to these projects.

Meanwhile, in Estero de Plátano, Sam and Gabby have continued to provide support to the scholarship students, five of whom will be graduating at the end of this year. We will be replacing them with 5 new students, and Sam and Gabby have been supervising this process of selection – looking for good candidates with excellent grades, an interest in their community, and who come from particularly impoverished circumstances.

Sam and Gabby have also been busy lending a hand with the construction of a new playground for the children of Estero de Plátano (see photos below and on next page)



January—February Photo Gallery

