

## Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 43 Nov-Dec 2014

### Introduction

**From all of us at Yanapuma – We wish you a Happy Holiday Season!**

Another year has flown by and we have launched ourselves into 2015 with a bang! The year 2014 was a satisfying year overall for Yanapuma, with some successes, some not-quite successes, and lessons learned that will stand us in good stead for 2015 and beyond.

For the Spanish school 2014 was a year of change. We began a process of promoting ourselves via agencies, attending the ALPHE conference in London in August after being present at a Gap Year fair in the USA in February to promote our volunteer offerings alongside Spanish courses, and visiting universities and medical schools on the east coast to promote our medical Spanish and other language programs.

We are moving more towards developing small-group classes, especially in combination with other programs, such as volunteering and study abroad, and other more touristic activities for visitors to Ecuador. You can read about our biggest change on the right column!

The volunteer department has continued to grow during 2014, and we are confident that 2015 will see even more growth. In order to establish ourselves ever more solidly and increase our reliability we are introducing a new set of policies that include a child protection policy, an under-18s policy and other

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legal documents that bring us in line with established international standards.

We have continued to receive international volunteers and interns, individually and in groups from universities, gap year organizations, high-schools and other organizations throughout the year. These volunteers and interns allow us to achieve a vital part of our mission of promoting cultural exchange and providing assistance to the many local grass-roots projects that we partner with in Ecuador.

The year 2014 saw us complete two and a half years of our project co-funded with the Inter American Foundation. In that time we have sown over 26,000 cacao plants, created over 75 vegetable gardens for Tsa'chila families, and have provided workshops and training in nutrition and diet. In addition we have provided 13 scholarships to youth to study at high-school from disadvantaged communities with 5 of them graduating this year and starting to look at the possibility of going on to university!

You can read more about all these activities on the following pages.

### True Ecuador Travel!

Our biggest decision in 2014 was to set up a national travel agency. Rather than being a radical departure from our current activities, it is in fact a logical development. Over the years we have increasingly offered a full-spectrum service to visiting individuals and groups that includes arranging accommodation, flights, travel, Galapagos tours and the like, none of which activities really correspond to a no-profit NGO or a Spanish school.



Thus, we have created a new travel agency – True Ecuador Travel – as a limited company in Ecuador (*the name Yanapuma already having been taken by a construction company in the Amazon!*).

This new company will provide the legal framework for us to continue to expand our activities, focused on educational travel - designing and promoting combination programs of Spanish classes, study abroad and educational tours, and Galapagos and Amazon tours, in line with our continuing mission to fund Yanapuma Foundation's development work here in Ecuador.

### Yo Me Acuerdo

We were delighted to finally be able to offer for sale the memoirs of **Alfonso Aguavil** of the Tsa'chila comuna Bua. Alfonso was born into the traditional lifestyle of the Tsa'chila as hunter gatherers in the endless rain forests on the Pacific side of the Andes.

He experienced the dramatic and disorienting invasion by mestizos that destroyed the forest and the traditional Tsa'chila lifestyle. His account is a

#### Yo Me Acuerdo

Autobiografía de un joven Tsa'chila de la comuna de los Colónidos del Bua



Luis Alfonso Aguavil Cruzana

first-hand telling of their traditional life and its destruction.

The book was created with the help of **Richard Couedel**, a French sociologist who has spent 11 months living with the Tsa'chila, learning about their culture and working with Alfonso to record and order his memories into a book.

To learn more or to buy an electronic copy click here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/yo-me-acuerdo.php>

## Project News . . .

**Yanapuma Foundation** continued with the same projects during 2014 – principally the project with the Tsa’chila co-funded with the Inter American Foundation. Our 5<sup>th</sup> semester of this project terminates on January 11 and shortly after we will produce the semester report, including a summary of how much we have invested in the project so far.

Our field staff of 4 persons – **Rafael Machin and Wilson Calazacon** as cacao promoters and **Cristina Calazacon and Janeth Llanos** as promoters of the vegetable gardens and nutrition education – have continued to grow professionally while expanding the project and increasing the knowledge and skills of the Tsa’chila in these areas.

In November we were glad to be able to work with **Ana Deaconu**, a consultant in rural community development. She provided training to Janeth and Cristina in designing and giving workshops. Janeth and Cristina also developed materials for promoting the vegetable gardens and increasing knowledge of nutrition and dietary needs among the Tsa’chila.



Meanwhile, Wilson and Rafael have continued to work with the cacao growers of the four comunas – Bua, El Poste, Peripa and Los Naranjos. One of their achievements has been to elect a new promoter for each comuna who will continue to learn from them and be able to provide expert advice and help in each comuna.

Wilson and Rafael also organized a visit to a local farm and cacao cooperative –Garyth. Fifty-six Tsa’chila attended, learning about how this farm has developed its production of national cacao to a high level. The Tsa’chila were surprised at the amount this farm produces per hectare, and inspired to



continue with the promise of achieving the same in the future. As a foundation, we continue to look to the future and think about how we can help the Tsa’chila to take advantage of their iconic identity and presence to gain a reputation as cacao growers.

In Estero de Plátano, our hardy interns **Samantha Muratori and Gabriela Romero** from Union College have been doing an excellent job working with the scholarship recipients there. As the school year is drawing to a close it is very important that they keep their grades up, espe-



cially as five of them will be graduating this year and are interested in going on to study at university.

Meanwhile, our two scholarship students in Bua are also working hard. This is the first year that we have worked with students from Bua, and as we have no interns there as we do in Estero de Plátano we are paying one of the local teachers to work with them once a week and keep them on track.

### Donation News!

**We were pleased to receive the following donations for our Christmas Appeal to provide scholarships for the youth of Estero de Plátano and Bua to continue studying at high school.**

A donation of \$100 from **Stuart Smits**, and a donation of \$100 from **Bil Aulenbach**. **Bruce Ames** made a donation of \$50, as did **Michael Refshauge** and **Cliff Jones**. **Tom Ferrell** donated \$1000 and **Friederike Hoppe** donated \$60. **David Roy** donated \$200.

**We are grateful to all the above for their generous funding of our scholarship fund for 2015.**

**It is still not too late** to donate to our **Christmas Appeal** to fund our scholarship program for 2015. We will support up to 14 youth to study at high school from disadvantaged communities. To make a donation or to learn more, please click here:

<http://www.yanapuma.org/en/EdePScholarships.php>

## Spanish School News. . .

The year 2014 was a moderately successful year for Yanapuma Spanish School. Early in the year we took the decision that we were not going to follow our previous practice of filling up the school at any cost and having to find extra teachers to provide individual classes.

So overall numbers were static in comparison with 2013. Instead, we focused on preparing our teachers for the future and offering more group classes. Teachers began to teach courses as if they were group classes, despite perhaps only having one student in their class. But with the method established and the materials all prepared, they are now ready to forge ahead in 2015.

The school in Cuenca grew considerably in 2014, becoming well established. Many students chose to split their time between the school in Quito and the school in Cuenca, while others chose to study solely in Cuenca. The school has 4 full-time teachers, with other teachers traveling from Quito at peak times to cover the extra need.



In addition we have been training some retired high-school teachers from Cuenca who will be able to give classes on an occasional basis to round out their pensions, working especially with the retired American students there.

The school in Quito had fewer students than the previous year, but this was not seen as problematic, with our focus being on setting ourselves up for 2015 and beyond. The decision to move to our new premises in the historic center of Quito, which took place in November 2013, proved well taken as it offered a considerable saving in rent that offset any reduction in student numbers.



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Overall, we were able to move some way towards our goal of offering the majority of courses as small group classes, which reduces considerably the need for extra teachers and much simplifies the “human resources” part of the business, especially in light of the complicated and inflexible labor laws of Ecuador. With the creation of our travel agency, we will look increasingly towards offering Spanish classes as part of combination packages, reducing the need to continually promote the school in order to stay solvent.

## Volunteer News . . .

The last two months of the year are always a welcome quieter time for the volunteer coordinators. The last group left in mid-November, giving us 6 weeks of relative tranquility – a time to recover and set everything in order for the next arrivals.

And this year, January will be especially hectic with several groups arriving around the same time from the UK, the US, and Canada – almost a hundred volunteers in total.



So our three volunteer counselors/coordinators have been consolidating our partner projects and beginning to look ahead to the next year. We have added a new project – a botanical garden being developed in the Pacific lowlands, and have one or two more projects to visit and consider adding for next year.

The last group to leave in 2014 was a group from the **Leap UK**, who spent their last few weeks working on a conservation project at **Hacienda Tranquila** in the Galapagos Islands before a few days of well-earner R&R in the surf and party town of Montañita on the Pacific coast.



November and December Photo Gallery

