

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION:

Ñukanchik Yachay School (Kichwa for “Our Wisdom”) is located in Cebadas, a rural town in Guamate Canton and the Chimborazo Province of Ecuador. The school was created with the technical and pedagogical help of FUIDE (Indigenous Foundation for Development) and with the local evangelical indigenous church “Belén de Cebadas.” As of 2004, Belén Evangelical also became a sister member in the Andean Anabaptist Congress. The school began as a pilot project and initiated with the agreement to use the extra rooms of the Belén Church (unused Sunday school classrooms). These two organizations helped to start Ñukanchik Yachay; however, neither group helps to fund the project. Instead, Ñukanchik is a non-profit school that functions with a little help from parents (monthly fees); the majority of assistance comes from outside financial sources with supporters who believe in and value education.

Ñukanchik Yachay School is a private, primarily indigenous, church-based school that strives to be a trilingual, intercultural, and alternative elementary school. In public schools, indigenous children are often not valued or respected. Many teachers in the public schools are not interested in giving a good education; they only travel to and from Cebadas every day and are often only present to justify their salary. Consequently, an enormous amount of children in these school systems learn very little, are very shy and timid, and develop a low self-esteem.

At Ñukanchik Yachay, the children develop strong self-esteem and communication skills. Most of the students arrive knowing Kichwa and Spanish fairly well. These two languages are developed further, while adding basic English, recognizing that this is an important language in the Americas. In addition to receiving three languages, the children are also given the opportunity to learn basic computer skills. Also, a special class known as “Agricultural Education” which includes subjects like carpentry, basic construction, electricity, and artisan skills is offered to the upper grades, recognizing that many children need to know these skills to survive and find work in the future. The school also has terrain where the students work to grow vegetables to supplement the foods served for lunch. All of these aspects help to give the students a quality, alternative education in relation to other schools in the surrounding area.

In 1999, the school started with 15 children in a preschool class, and functioned for 2 years as a preschool. In the following years, the number of students grew and grades were added to accommodate the students passing to higher grades (a grade being added each year). Now in this 2004-2005 school year, the school has 125 students in grades preschool thru 6th grade. Thus in just 4 years, the school has 7 grade levels (going beyond the initial vision or hope!). Ñukanchik Yachay’s long-term goal is to add a grade each year until the 10th grade. CEC Ñukanchik Yachay did not previously own its buildings or classrooms (being located in the Belén Church). However, in January of 2005, the school began the process of organizing and constructing a new school: new, larger classrooms, courts, playgrounds and adequate spaces of recreation. The academic school calendar is from September to July, but the teachers report in the middle of August to organize and plan the new academic year as well as register students.

There is a very strong interest in learning English. Some classes have been taught, but with the assistance of a native speaker, Nukanchik would like to develop further classes for their staffs, as well as interested children, youth, and adults in the community.

The school asked for a volunteer to teach English to all grade levels and to help with enrichment activities for all students. This can involve teaching songs, arts and crafts, educational games, leading devotionals and many other possibilities depending upon the interests and skills of the worker. This worker will be accountable to the director of the school who is an indigenous woman from Cebadas. She and the team of indigenous teachers bring high ideals to their work as they seek to strengthen their children and communities.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION:

Cebadas is a rural community with the majority of the population being Kichwa indigenous. The people dedicate their work to agriculture and dairy cows, and there is a small scale of artisans and a few small businesses (mainly bread bakeries and general stores). No one has a guaranteed salary and those that take products and sell them in the cities are poorly paid. In general, the population is poor and the majority of families have decided to migrate to the large cities to look for work and a sustainable income for their families. The climate is at times cold and other times very pleasant. The dry season is a bit warmer and windy from April to October. The rainy season is a bit cooler with occasional rainfall more common from November to March.

The city of Riobamba is located one hour and forty-five to 2 hours by bus from Cebadas. It is a large urban center with population estimates around 150,000 habitants. The FUIDE (Indigenous Foundation for Development) office is located in Riobamba and the organization serves indigenous churches and communities throughout the region. The climate is pleasant with moderate temperatures most of the year. Medical services of reasonable quality, communication services (like postal services, e-mail and telephone), as well as other needs can be met in Riobamba.

In the capital city of Quito, Iglesia Cristiana Menonita is located. César Moya and Patricia Urueña began this new church in 1999, and since then it has grown to be a small body of believers. They will be on leave for the 2004-2005 year. However, Liliana Ocampo, a missionary from Colombia, is the coordinator of the pastoral team at the church. The congregation always loves visitors, and Liliana would appreciate any type of assistance with worship, when workers visit Quito. Also, rooms are available to stay at the church while in the city (just communicate with Liliana prior!).

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