

Pintag Amaru: Reconnecting Youth with Indigenous Stories through Arts-based Pedagogies
Ecuador
Clark University
Ilaria Fiorenza, Italy, Clark University
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Project Description

This project aims to reconnect Pintag (Ecuador) youth with ancestral knowledge through arts-based pedagogy to establish a sense of indigenous pride. As a community collective, the Ecuadorian organization Pintag Amaru focuses on reconnecting its community with indigenous stories, ways of knowing, and the Kichwa language. The organization is made up of community organizers, artists, environmental activists, and indigenous and mestizo farmers. I have had the privilege to work with two community members from Pintag's neighboring town, Quito, for the past year, doing a language learning exchange through conversations on social justice, using art-based teaching methods. Both community members have worked with Pintag Amaru on various projects and "mingas" (a practice similar to mutual aid) for many years now. This project was created and designed by Pintag Amaru and other community members. My appointed role is to provide the funds to buy materials to build a children's center in Pintag, help create and lead various workshops, and participate in the final project with Pintag community members.

Community Partner:

Pintag Amaru is an organization that aims to foster and promote indigenous culture, the Kichwa language, and their history through art and oral traditions. They also focus on preserving nature by increasing their permaculture knowledge and indigenous agricultural practices. Based in the agricultural community of Pintag, Ecuador, the organization has led multiple community projects, from resisting mining in their community, to seed banks and eco-tourism. They organize many "mingas", an Andean practice similar to mutual aid, that focuses on reclaiming and re-imagining marginalized, ancestral traditions of interdependent care. As their community has long been affected by the consequences of colonialism, they aim to reclaim their community from neoliberal exploitation. Through partnerships with their sister organizations, they strive to raise community consciousness on issues that affect their community. Pintag Amaru, years ago, recognized the need for a space where children and youth can access creative spaces with stories, art, and nature, independently run from government-based programs, which often ignore indigenous work and do not contribute to indigenous identity preservation and development.

Project Objectives:

The project is separated into three parts: 1. Create an educational space for children and youth by building a children's center, 2. Organize and facilitate a series of storytelling workshops that will use theater, dance, and language (Spanish, Kichwa, English) to creatively connect children and youth with indigenous stories, and 3. Perform what we create in the workshops for neighboring communities.

1. The Children's Center

My role:

- **Help with financial support for the project, including** the materials that will be used (wood, concrete, fittings, etc.) for the center, and the gym equipment that will be used to build a (rock-climbing wall in the center

Methods: Pintag Amaru will acquire the materials needed for the structure. The cost estimate was based on the previous "house" that was built, which functions as the organization's office. As Pintag Amaru and neighboring organizations have built structures in the form of "mingas" before, they already own some tools that will be needed and know where to buy any others. Their personal vehicles will be used to transport the materials and, in case a larger vehicle is needed for larger items, a local truck taxi agency can be contracted. The organization's members, who include architects, contractors, and construction workers, have experience building and maintaining a structure such as the one that will be built, and will design it according to their needs. Daniel Acosta, a leader of the organization, has been appointed as the point of contact for the project to ensure its success.

2. Organization and Facilitation of Workshops

My role:

- Participate in the creation of a syllabus with other community members
- Facilitate the dance, theater, and English parts of the workshops

Methods: Various members of the organization have offered to facilitate the workshops. Those in this team will meet monthly over Zoom to create a syllabus in preparation for the workshops. There will be more specific teams in charge of creating choreographies, choosing the stories/legends used, and organizing art projects such as the creation of puppets. There will be around 10 workshops over a five-week period. The stories chosen will address modern issues that connect to themes like colonization, racism, and the “shame” of speaking an indigenous language. The aim will be to uplift the indigenous identities of children and youth and understand the importance of their roots. In the past year that I have worked with two Quito community members, we have translated and analyzed various Ecuadorian stories and legends. As a Community, Youth, and Education major at Clark, I have worked on creating non-traditional methods of learning and teaching, specifically regarding language learning. I have also done theater in the past and have been in one of Clark’s dance groups for four years, where I have held the position of co-captain and have choreographed dances every year. These experiences and my fluency in Spanish will make me a qualified addition to this team.

3. Performance for Neighboring Communities

My Role:

- Help coordinate logistics for the performances
- Provide funding for materials (costumes, art material, posters, etc.) and travel to other communities

Methods:

The participants in the workshops will create a performance that will be presented to the communities of Pintag, Valencia and Santa Teresa. Personal vehicles will be used for transportation to the sites. Daniel Acosta has contacts in all three communities (as members of these communities have worked together) and will reach out to neighboring organizations to use their space and for publicity. As part of Clark’s Salsa Encendida, I have been Events Coordinator for two years; this will help me with the events’ organization.

Relevance to Peace and Prospect for Future Impact

Ecuador’s history of being colonized and exploited for its resources by Global North countries has stripped them not only of their land but also of their culture. Education materials have been Westernized and pedagogies follow Eurocentric methods. Companies such as Exxon have been oil drilling there for decades, perpetuating a cycle of systemic environmental racism. Generations, especially today’s youth, have lost their knowledge of Kichwa and of indigenous ways of knowing. This project connects to peace because it aims to reconnect and excite new generations about their identities through unconventional pedagogies. By building the children’s center, the community will have an autonomous, collective space that uses various arts, oral traditions, and other non-traditional pedagogies to allow the children and youth of Pintag to strengthen their ties to their identities. This is something that, due to globalization and Westernization, has not been possible in conventional educative spaces. Through the proposed series of workshops, children and youth will be able to learn from adults, and collectively will create a performance piece that revitalizes their history. By performing for neighboring communities, we are sharing knowledge and inspiring others, and hope that this will strengthen Pintag Amaru’s educational partnerships with other organizations. Each project objective aims to strengthen the community’s ties to their indigenous history and create a more sustainable means of education in the Pintag community. The project ties to the future goals of the organization to prepare youth to become activists and protectors of their land, promote indigenous education, and create a generation that is proud of their roots. Pintag Amaru strives to be a model for neighboring communities who are not engaged in this type of work. Through the workshops, they hope to inspire and motivate more youth to become involved in critical thinking and activism. The workshops will be a trial, with the hope of becoming a regular offering to the Pintag neighboring communities. This project is an opportunity for Pintag Amaru to expand their possibilities and achieve those goals.