

The 2010 Education Tour to PERU



May 2010

MINKA & CENFROCAFE

“Now when I think about why it is we commit our time and efforts to the movement, I see faces and smiles and the hardship of the lives of the people we met.” Stephanie Edwards

Participants (Image clockwise from left): Anna Luke – Tauranga, Shirley Montgomery – Nelson, Meaghan Kelly – Rotorua, Amie Young – TAI, Jonni-Rose Simpson – West City, Beverly Smith – Whangarei, Kusi Ruiz Velásquez – MINKA, Rosemary Koot – Palmerston North, Stephanie Edwards – Wellington, Michelia Ward – TAI, Dave Butler-Peck – Dunedin, Josee Bouchard – New Plymouth.

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About Minka

"Minka helps artisans move from near starvation to relative poverty"

Cecilia Granadino, Export Manager.

Minka was formed in 1978 and its name in Quechua means 'Cooperative'. Minka continues to work with only cooperatives due to their belief that people's strength comes from being organised. Across these cooperatives Minka works with 3,000 artisans and sells to 20 countries.

There are big divisions of wealth in Peru as well as corruption at every level. Life is very difficult for those living in poverty and without power.

Minka see the benefits of fair trade being social cohesion, stability, confidence, autonomy and dignity. They work with natural products and natural skills and are linking producers and consumers.

Producer groups

Minka works with three types of producer groups that they classify into A, B, and C categories. Fuller information is available in a Spanish document we received. Below is a summary of the categories.

Group A - There are 26 groups in this category including approx 2000 rural and indigenous producers

Cooperatives and democratic producer groups with more than 10 members each - supporting these groups is Minka's main aim for existing. Minka thinks it is really important to have statistics on payments to groups each month and the number of producers in groups to know how producers are benefiting from fair trade. Democratic groups are the only way to ensure payments get down to this level, to know how much the producers are benefitting from fair trade.

Group B - There are 25 groups in this category.

Small enterprises made up of few artisan workers from the same family or friends who are usually urban based. These groups have often arrived in Lima due to economical and political reasons, bringing friends and family to help setting up artisan warehouses. As opposed to a democratic group, they are harder to train due to their established hierarchy, and there is potential for someone in this position can become a 'trader' and exploit the workers. Minka works with these groups because of market demand for these products and because there is still a chance to help artisans within these groups, however it is not their reason for being.

Group C - Approx 25 individual workers are included in this category.

Individual workers who work at the Minka premises on casual contract in areas such as quality control, labelling, packing, etc. This work fluctuates according to orders.



Quality control work for alpaca products at Minka's premises in Lima

Handcrafts – a means not an end

Echoing Cecelia's comment above, Norma says, "We would never train new people in handcrafts because they are the problem not the solution." Norma believes that people will never be well off making handcrafts; she sees it as a last resort and something that only the poor get involved in.



Minka's offices, tourist accommodation, retail shop and dispatch centre

Minka staff from left: Cecilia, Arturo, Dina, Norma

Dave Butler-Peck (Trade Aid) and Cecelia in Minka's despatch area

Indigenous population

The official statistics on population numbers are incorrect due to discrimination leading to people not admitting to an indigenous identity. There is a high rural to urban migration, particularly to Lima which results in indigenous people changing their dress, their names and their language in order to fit in and not be subjected to discrimination.

This discrimination that occurs particularly in the urban settings and the resulting loss of culture is one of the reasons behind setting up the tourism programme. One of its aims is firmly on protecting the identity and culture of indigenous groups in Peru.

Artisans and income

Minka works with already established artisans who have established markets. On average they only purchase 20% of a family's production, with the remainder being sold in local markets.

The artisans sell to a range of different local markets but in general Minka pay 2 -10 times more than the local market for which they have to work hard to balance the cost of goods with the sale price overseas. The local prices leave artisans very vulnerable to exploitation for the other

80% of their production. This is one of the reasons why Minka works hard to provide them with good support structures in the form of cooperatives providing both social and financial support.

A common problem that artisans face that Minka aims to assist with is that they need to work every moment of their spare time to make a living. When they are not selling they are not making money. Providing artisans with a higher income means they can afford to stop producing and use the time to think, plan and take time to find some economical activities in their locations. By working together as a group they are also able to receive a higher income for larger orders.

Families

Both men and women head up the families. Families struggle to survive on agriculture alone so it is common for men to leave the communities to find work. Mining is a common way to earn extra income but it comes with bad conditions and is badly paid. Cecelia told our group that “the best case scenario from mining is that the men come back alive!” These jobs are seasonal so they return to the farm in between times.

There are two stages in an infant and child’s development when children are at risk of death. When they are being weaned and when they attend school for the first time. This is due to unclean food or water and from new diseases they haven’t built up immunity to. Because of this artisans will often wait to register the name of their children until they survive into childhood.

Schooling can be difficult for artisan families. Boys are sometimes sent to High School in the city with only potatoes as their sustenance and girls may be kept at home. Schooling is taught in Spanish so there is little chance to reinforce learning at home where only Quechua is spoken.

Financial

Minka need to receive sales of US\$500,000 per year to break even. Their highest year had sales of US\$800,000. Minka sell 30% of their product to Italy, 10% to Belgium and 10% to Japan. Their buyers are all FTOs except one private organisation in Brazil. The sales figures for 2009 are separated into crafts, food, tourism and into domestic and export sales. Total sales for 2009 locally were US\$46,601 and exports were US\$579,930. Total sales \$626,531. These were down on 2008 figures.

Minka has a producer support budget. This is approximately 10% proportion of the total budget. More than this is required but the current sales levels doesn’t allow for extra. Minka used to use external support for extra training that was required but now almost all the additional training Minka does is funded by The NZ Aid Programme. Trade Aid is the only organisation who distributes dividends. There used to be a few other organisations too but no longer. Producer training includes bringing producers to Lima to stay at Minka’s accommodation to spend one month training. We were told these artisans are always keen to see the beach and the zoo!

Business Development funds from the New Zealand Aid Programme have, amongst other projects, been spent by Minka on the tourism programme. Communities see this as important. Improving the tourist experience enhances their income gained from the programme and is a good supplementary income for the artisans. In Pukara there was a fence built using tourism funds to protect tourists from the large drop. There was also a seat constructed but it was built so that tourists would be sitting with their back to the million dollar view, a view the artisans have grown up with and hadn't considered it to be a feature of interest. The education tour also had a chance to walk the 250 steps built with NZAP funds on Taquille Island.

Minka believes that it is important to have statistics on payments to groups each month and the number of producers in groups to know how producers are benefitting from fair trade. Democratic groups are the only way to ensure payments get down to this level.

For their first 20 years Minka shared profits with artisans, but are not able to any longer. The government used to subsidise/pay 30% to exporters to be shared with producers. However many exporters never shared these profits. Minka says their fixed costs compared with other exporters is large because of social costs, yet realise they have to compete with them, and other fair trade organisations with lower social costs too.

A special project unique to Minka

Fifteen years ago there were many different coloured alpacas. Now 99% of them are white due to a monopoly the wool factories have over the production of the wool. Processing white wool cuts their dyeing costs and uses less labour. As a result the coloured alpacas are facing a diminishing chance at survival. There is now also trade in live alpacas for export so that foreign countries can process their own wool. Chinese factories are now selling alpaca products to European markets. Italy, England and Japan all import alpaca fibre. These alpacas are sold for a little at US \$20 in Peru but are worth up to \$50,000 by the time they are purchased by US farms. Minka see this development as a threat to the demand for Peruvian alpaca products. They have been protesting and advocating on behalf of alpaca diversity for many years, however their protests have been falling on deaf ears.



An Alpaca wool farmer with one of the rare brown alpacas
A herd of multi coloured alpacas

Cuyo Chico

Cuyo Chico is the village our group stayed in, which is close to a popular tourist spot called Pisac. Cuyo Chico split from a larger area called Cuyo Grande 35 years ago (chico meaning small, grande meaning large). Our group visited 3 Minka groups in Kuyochico: Kcanto, Pukara and Turumaki – the main product we buy from all three are Ocarinas (whistles).

These three artisan groups share the responsibility of hosting tour groups. Each time a tour group visits they rotate so that each artisan group receives income from their accommodation facilities. The artisan groups not providing accommodation are then responsible for providing the meals and services so as to also receive some of the benefit of the visit. This structure was chosen as most appropriate by the artisans themselves. Other Minka groups who receive tourists work in different ways depending on how they feel the situation works most equitably. Minka and the artisans were keen to be involved in tourism as a way to increase sales as well as create direct links between producer and consumer. The groups receive on average one large group and two or three small groups a year. A large group is considered to have more than 9 people and Traidcraft usually bring out two groups a year of this size. The smaller groups can have been 1 – 4 people in them and medium 5 – 8. Minka has worked for many years to strengthen the groups' organisation skills so they can handle receiving large sums of money from tourists.

General information about education in the area:

“Attending a public school in Peru ensures that you will stay in the same economic situation for your life.”

The Peruvian education system is considered the worst in the world (or South America) after only Haiti. The school hours are short due to the teachers in Cusco being not keen to work in the villages. Often they will turn up late morning on a Monday morning from Cusco and travel back Thursday afternoon so they get back to Cusco for the weekend meaning no school at all on Fridays. The government spends 3% of their revenue on education. In the community the children speak Quechua and in school, Spanish.

Kcanto Committee

“Being an artisan you need to be delicate and patient. Handcrafts are called so because it is art.” Vicente

We stayed with the Kcanto Committee for the only night we were in the area. The pronunciation of Kcanto being a Quechuan word is different to how it would be pronounced in English - the 'Kc' sound is a hard almost guttural sound. The President of the group is called Cesar Rodriguez. There are ten families in their association but only five are active when orders are low. The President is democratically elected by the group (association) and Cesar has only been the president for the past year. Marcellino is the treasurer and Eduardo the Secretary. Our accommodation was situated in the house of Vicente who was the President before Cesar.

Vicente has been the President of the areas farming community for the last two years for which the work load sounds demanding!

Kcanto has been working with Minka for 10 years producing ceramic products. We were shown the ceramic process from the raw clay through to the painting of the finished product and were able to shop at their 'market place' on the roof top of the studios.



Vicente's house and tourist rooms complete with artisan crafted walls
The Trade Aid Education tour group with some of Kcanto's members
Kcanto's members clockwise from top: Casimira, Isabel, Vicente (in front row), Cesar (in green), Giovanna and her daughters Gianni and Nayrut



An example of the beautifully decorative architecture in the Cuyo Chico area
A warm welcome with flower petals; Jonni Rose Simpson (Trade Aid) is welcomed by Isabel of Kcanto Committee
Meaghan Kelly welcomed by Isabel from the Kcanto Committee

Vicente showed us this process and his passion for both the products and for clay working was obvious. Besides selling to Minka the group also sell into the local market. They are fortunate that they live in an area where they have direct access to tourists as this provides less need to depend on middlemen or traders. It also means their infrastructure (water and electricity) is better than other artisan groups living further out. There are disadvantages too, as the government assesses them as to their need for free state services and due to their access to the tourist market are not eligible for services like free health care. This makes it essential for these artisans to access the tourist market and even more important for these tourists to be willing to

pay fair prices for their products such as those who come via Minka tours rather than in the local village of Pisac where the artisans are now competing with Chinese made product in the shops. Vicente and two other artisans have a shop in the village where they sell their products. These products, due to the low prices they fetch, are not the quality of those that are sold to Minka. The artisans cannot spend any time or money creating good quality well finished products because there is no market for anything except the cheapest products. This seemed to me a devastating situation for someone like Vicente who is so passionate about the skills and work involved and who treats his craft as an art.

Each artisan member has his own workshop for their own work for various markets. It is when they receive orders from Minka that they work together and run the process as a group. They share the order evenly and each person is responsible for a different part of the process.

It was noticed that there are many owl decorative items around and we were told that owls have a lot of power and represent the gods.

Ceramic process:

Vicente has a new workshop on his land that we were shown through. For each type of pottery a different type of clay is needed – depending on whether it is destined to be a string of beads, a whistle or a pot. Red, yellow, orange and black clay can be purchased in Pisac. The white clay comes from 70 kms away up in the mountains. There is no commercial trade in white clay as only the artisans know where to find it. They liken its colour to the snowy mountain caps. The perfect clay is called Coulin and cost 60 soles per 10kg.

The entire process from clay to product used to be done 100% by hand and was very labour intensive so Vicente has created small machines to help speed up and ease the process. He trained in car mechanics so has been able to build the machines himself. One of these is a mixing machine; another is a type of pump/compression machine to shape the clay into a long string with different moulds to attach to create a variety of shaped beads.

Beads were the first product that Vicente made when he was ten. He grew up around clay as his family were potters and he says he has always had a passion for it. His grandparents discovered a shakira necklace in ruins in the area, a necklace similar to what the Inca's wore and it was recognised as having potential for selling into the tourist market.

We watched the bead making process. Once the clay is mixed it gets filtered to remove the water and then it is dried. The drying period depends on the weather. When there is sunshine it will take three days, when raining and the clay has to dry undercover, it takes a week.



Vicente showing the education tour group the clay process
 The clay drying in racks under cover after mixing
 The clay drying on the roof in the sunshine

The clay is then chopped on a wooden base to make it pliable and it gets pushed into the tube of Vicente's hand made machine. By attaching a jack to the tube the clay gets squeezed through the tube and through a shaped end piece that dictates the final shape of the beads. There are dozens of differently shaped end parts which mean the beads are already shaped and just require slicing. The old process involved shaping each bead by hand. The long strings are then left to dry for approximately 30 minutes before having a piece of long thin metal pushed through it. It is then placed into a bead cutting machine that when pressed chops the clay down to the metal. The result is approximately one hundred beads neatly threaded on a metal spike. Further decorative detail is added by hand, or for the more decorative ones, hand stamps are used. These beads are then dried for three days before going into the kiln.



The handmade jack used to squeeze clay into a form perfect for cutting beads
 Threading the wire through the hollow tube of clay before cutting into beads
 Cutting the clay string with wire inside that holds the now fully formed round beads

The kiln - different clays have different properties and need different heats. Some fast burning some slow. Timber is used for running the kiln and used to be collected from the local area. Now however due to a shortage of timber in the area artisans have to pay for a license to harvest it as part of a drive for sustainability by the government (20 soles for 36kg). Vicente being the President of the farming community has helped set up a forestry project where they

plant trees to be continuously regenerated to provide a constant source of timber. Last year 5,000 trees were planted and already 3,000 more trees have been planted by May 2010. Climate change is considered as a serious issue by all the farmers. They say that farming and agriculture is changing due to changes in the weather.

The flame in the kiln goes from dark red to red to orange to yellow to a blue-ish white which is when the clay must be removed. Watching the temperature this way is important as the kiln is completely manual and has no timer or temperature settings. The beads can be coloured while in the kiln using natural colours such as dry animal urine or plants that are placed into a pot and inserted into the kiln while cooking.



Vicente showing us the kiln and describing the manual operation

Once the ceramics are removed from the kiln they are washed and dried and coloured. We saw beads being coloured for the local market place which were placed into a plastic bag containing paint and shaken around to completely submerge the beads. These colours are not non-toxic as the price they receive for them does not extend to more expensive paint. The paint used for Minka products is always non-toxic and environmentally friendly. Lacquer is applied in the same way to coat the beads when required.



Vicente with a bag of beads containing yellow paint, and drying beads around him

Kcanto artisan painting Ocarinas

Vicente showing us the natural paint made clay

Larger items have different coloured clays applied instead of paint. These colours are beautiful pale pastel colours and it is hard to believe that they come straight from the earth. This process recreates the process and colours the Incas used. The artisans would prefer not to use the toxic paints but consider they don't have any alternative due to pricing.



Edilberto Manotupa displaying the intricate plates he designs and hand paints
The rooftop sales table, reading for Trade Aid Education Tour participant purchases

We watched Edilberto Manotupa, a specialist painter and past president, painting pots. He uses a brush made of goat hair. Another handmade machine is used for turning the pots while painting. Edilberto creates the designs himself and says he can make two or three plates a day if he already has the design in his head, only one if it is a new design. The designs are incredibly detailed and complex.

Our home stay family: Vicente and Casimira

Staying with Vicente we had the chance to hear from him about his daily schedule and life. That morning he had been up at 6am visiting members of the farming community to tell them that they were to have clay put over their mud brick dwellings. This work is due to his position as President of the farming community. Last year he approximates that the work for the community took six months. He gathers with people to organise initiatives such as a mothers group, getting milk to children at school, water initiatives and is done in a voluntary capacity. He was surprised to hear that so many of our group were volunteers too and it appeared he didn't consider his work as 'voluntary' like we did.

This year has been tough for all three groups due to the landslides that occurred in January this year (2010). It has meant very few tourists to purchase products as well as deaths in the village (8 people died in Pisac) and problems with housing such as large cracks in the walls appearing. Last year the groups received one large tourist group and three small ones. This year we are the first to visit.

We had the opportunity the next morning before leaving to talk to Vicente's wife Casimira Oquerar Mayta (the first last name is her father's name, the second her mother's name) 31, Cesar's wife Giovanna (30) and Isabel (Giovanna's mother 53yrs). Isabel is a member of the committee. It was mainly Giovanna and Isabel we talked to.

Giovanna has three children, all girls. They are named Gianni (3), Nayrut (5), Milagros (8).



Meaghan Kelly (Trade Aid) playing knuckle bones with Gianni 3 years old (left) and Nayrut 5 years old.

We were keen to talk to the women about their lives since we had spent the previous day talking only to men. They told us that when couples get married they move out of the parents house. They will often live together before marriage as a trial, which is a tradition from the Inca's time. It can be difficult to afford the wedding party as they have to invite the whole community so this increases the time they live together before marrying. They have enough land for children to be able to move out from parents and the community will help build the houses. The houses are from natural materials so the community helping with labour makes this a cheap process. Many of the houses we saw in these villages were beautifully decorated with clay sculpted shapes on the outside. Giovanna told us if they can't afford a house, the couple will stay with the parents or rent.

Isabel doesn't speak Spanish only Quechan. She told us through two translations that customs have changed a lot. "We were very traditional and old fashioned and daughters had to marry any boy they talked to. I was working with a man and my parents made me move in with him. I was only 16 and had to look after his parents as well." She contrasts this to the way that Giovanna was able to move in with and marry the man she was in love with.

Isabel has six children. Her husband was in charge of the farm and this occupation kept him quite distant from the family which left most domestic affairs up to Isabel. As a result she was in charge of the general decisions about the house running and education for the children. Giovanna and Cesar both make the decisions in their household and want a good education for all their children. "Without the handcrafts we couldn't send all our children to school but now we can" they told us.

Giovanna left school one year before finishing high school as did Casimira. Both of them left to get married. Casimira said "it is the parents who push their children to go to school and it is the children who are often more interested in getting married." Neither of the girls were allowed to stay at school after getting married because of the attitude of the other students towards them.

We asked what changes they had experienced since starting with handcrafts, if any. Giovanna told us "our lives have improved in general. Not spending so much time on the farm. However

with more competition in the local market it is getting harder. When we receive an order from Minka things are good but we don't get many orders. Local sales are not good. Please make an order! Due to the collapsed bridge in Pisac there were no tourists at all for the first two months of this year."

The shops in Pisac sell crafts for a very low price and that is where all the tour buses stop but the buses don't come through Kcanto. They expressed an interest in learning how to get more tourists on a regular basis because the house is empty. "We have all this furniture but it's not being used." Minka provided money for two of the bedrooms and a bathroom.

Giovanna told us, "There are six families in the committee so Minka's orders are too low. With tourists, all the money gets split between the six families so when only one couple stays the income is very low. If we had more orders we would spend the extra income on better houses, food and clothing. With more income I would finish my house. There are walls needed and I would build a kitchen. Some group members are better off than others; some don't have good kitchens or a fridge so it is hard for them to keep meat."

"There is a health centre in town but not a hospital. Government workers visit here but because we are in a tourist area and working in handcrafts we cannot get free health care. It also costs much more to live here because prices are high for tourists. If we have serious health problems we have to go to Cusco to go to the hospital."

"We make different designs for the local market than for Minka so that our originality is not lost. We don't want people copying our designs and selling them at a lower price. The sellers in Pisac are not artisans they are resellers who buy low and sell high. But their high prices are still lower than that of the artisans. They price us out of the market."

We asked about their daily schedule and found out that between March and June during the sowing time the women get up at 2:30am to prepare breakfast for the men who get up at 3am. The men then go straight to the fields and the women make breakfast for the children and get them ready for school. Lunch is then prepared and taken to the fields for the men.



Casimira (left), Isabel (middle), Giovanna with baby, and Vicente with farewell presents for Trade Aid Housing and agriculture in the Kcanto neighbourhood, Cuyo Chico

Pukara Committee



The beautiful view which forms part of the tourism experience when guests stay at Pukara

The Pukara Committee and Trade Aid Education Tour Participants

The Pukara Committee members



Shirley Montgomery (Trade Aid Nelson) being welcomed by a member of Pukara Committee

A Pukara Committee member weaving

Pukara make essential oils, whistles and woven items. 50% of their ceramic products and 20% of their oil products are sold through Minka. The house and workshop we visited was situated on a hillside with a stunning view. This was the location that Norma referred to when she told the story about the seat facing the wrong way.

Their President is called Tiburcio and is one of seven members. Tiburcio welcomed us saying, "We are surprised and happy at how far you have come. We are very happy that you are buying our products. We welcome you."

Silverio the secretary also welcomed us with a short speech saying "I am very touched by your presence here and that you have come from so far."

The other members of the group who welcomed us were Javier, Juana (Silverio's wife), Beatriz (Tiburcio's wife), and Evangelina. The seven members are individuals rather than representative of family units so the group is fairly small.

Silverio told us, "Minka is very special. I have experience working with other traders but have never met an organisation so reliable in orders and pre payments. When the orders are not large Minka will split the order between the three groups which is very fair. Minka is like a

Mother looking after her children, we know that Minka won't forget about our three committees.”

Pukara formed seven years ago in 2003. Silverio founded the after meeting an NGO in Pisac who was working with farmers. Cecilia's ex-husband was working for this NGO and Silverio asked to be introduced to Minka through him. Silverio already knew about Minka because he had accompanied someone working with Minka into Lima with product when he was 18 years old and had learnt about the benefits Minka were providing. Silverio realised that selling locally would never get him much money and he liked the idea of working for an organisation with a good reputation. He told us “I returned from Pisac very happy”. Minka contacted him and told him he would have to form an association for them to work together, so he used his own money to form a legal body and found eleven artisans keen to work with him. They made samples and took them to Lima. In the beginning the orders were very small so there were several members who became disillusioned and left. Silverio realised that it would take time and patience so remained positive.

We also had the chance to talk to the President Tiburcio, who told us, “I am happy. My work is quality and well polished. When I was young this is how I hoped my life would be. I saw handcrafts in Pisac when I was growing up and I had always liked them.”

Tiburcio's grandparents died at 120 years old eight years ago. He says however that nowadays with the high levels of pollution and the salt and sugar in the diets this longevity of life is changing.

Tiburcio has two children, one was just born a month ago. Silverio has four children. Silverio said “education is more important now and higher education too. Our current income is not enough for this. As a father you have to do what you can so I have two paths I can take. Make new samples for Minka to buy and find a stall to sell my other products.”

The group only receive three to four orders a year from Minka so they are aware they need to consider their own products and product development for sale elsewhere as well as to improve sales to Minka. Some of the new products they have developed recently are too new and still in development phase so haven't been sent to Minka yet. They also wouldn't be able to fill a large order yet.

The essential oils process

When the group receive an order for essential oils they have to find the appropriate medicinal plants to make them. They make both essential oils and ointments from essential oils. The ointments use palm oil as their base. The palm oil comes from a local market and they couldn't tell us about the original source of it. Silverio demonstrated the ointment process for us and for 8 containers of ointment used 100gm of palm oil, 15gm of calendula flowers and 2gm of beeswax. The products are also sold in Pisac and there is a trader who purchases from them to sell in all the nearby cities. They are able to get a fair price in these transactions as they are sold for 15 soles to the trader who then sells them for 20/25 soles.

The first part of the process is to crush the calendula flowers (which are available to harvest all year except August and September) and the palm oil and beeswax is then added. It is then heated and poured into containers to cool.



Silverio demonstrating the ointment process (Tiburcio behind)
Tiburcio (left) Silverio (right)



Saying goodbye and presenting the Committee with small New Zealand gifts

Turumaki Committee

Claudio is the President of the Turumaki Committee and his wife's name is Valentina Huaccanqui. The group used to only have six members but now there are 11 because the wives joined. Only one group member doesn't have a wife so the conversation turned to finding out how many single women there were in our group! The group started with Minka ten years ago in the same way Pukara did, through meeting Cecelia's husband in Pisac.

The house we visited the group at was lovely and tranquil. There had been a lot of work put into the accommodation, the garden and patio area and it would have been a really lovely place to stay. Claudio had created the place entirely from scratch including the toilet at the bottom of the garden which was made from clay. Claudio told us "it is very difficult to survive and sustain ourselves with just agriculture so handicrafts help a lot. You have shops in New Zealand so please encourage your customers to buy more. We know the quality has to be high and we have achieved this. Please promote the Minka tours to your people at home."



The Turumaki Committee talking to the Trade Aid Education Tour participants outside their guest rooms



Claudio, President of Turumaki Committee, talking to Michelia Ward (TAI)

Valentina (left) talking to the Trade Aid Education Tour participants

Valentina in her kitchen where her and her husband share duties

The amount of work they have depends completely on the orders they receive and 30 – 40% of their product is sold to Minka. The local sales are not as well paid and they often wait a very long time to be paid after finishing the order. As a result they don't spend as much time on the quality and design of them. From Minka the producers choose how much of an advance they require, if at all. Currently they are choosing not to receive an advance.

The clay comes from the surrounding lands so the main cost of the product is labour. However if other clay is required they purchase this.

Wilber Huaccanqui (purple top) is the secretary and Valentina's cousin. He learnt how to paint and make whistles after watching other boys doing it while growing up. He demonstrated how they make the ocarinas using a mould. He is engaged and is getting married soon. It is very common for couples to live together before they are married to see how they get on. It is also a practical consideration due to many couples inability to save enough for a wedding immediately. It is often 2 or 3 years before a couple will hold a wedding ceremony. We asked what the ceremony was like and it sounded similar to a wedding ceremony in NZ. To get married they find someone to be the Godmother and Godfather and then go to Pisac for the official ceremony. When they return home there is a party where everyone dances and eats fancy food.



Wilber Huaccanqui, secretary Turumaki Committee, demonstrating the making of Ocarinas from clay

In general it is the males who work with the clay and the women who paint. Valentina however helps with the whole process and she added that she was also responsible for the garden and decorating the house. She says she wasn't interested in the clay work at first but over time her interest grew. Fiorella her daughter claimed "now our Mother is more skilful than our Father!" Because of this sharing of the craft work, where Valentina used to only work in the kitchen and do all the cooking, they now share the work and have one day on, one day off cooking. They grow food on the land, just enough for themselves. They have 1 ½ acres on which they grow quinoa, wheat, potatoes, beans, peas, and oca.

A passion for education

Claudio's passion for education was obvious, "I tried to get into University when I was young but I couldn't pass the exam because of the poor level of rural schools. I have always encouraged my children to do better than I was able to and to work hard." And it would appear they all have. Learning about the opportunities the family now have to improve their future through education was a highlight of the visit.

Claudio's daughter, Fiorella, 19 years, told us she was beginning a tourism course in Cusco next year. "I am very grateful to my parents for the opportunity to get to study in an institute. My

plan is to come back to the village after studying for three years and to create a hostel so we can be part of a package tour within the tourism industry.”

We asked about where she would stay in Cusco and how she would afford it and found out that her 17 year old brother Joel was already living in Cusco studying business administration so she would live with him in a small house with one bedroom and one kitchen. Joel is studying in a public university so the costs are not as high as Fiorella’s in a private institution. Their older brother Vladi, 21 years, lives in Sicuani which is much further away and he is renting a small room there and studying Agronomy. The boys had been waiting with the group for us to turn up but we arrived late so they had left to play soccer and returned later in time to talk.

Fiorella was very confident in talking to us about what she was doing and planning for her future which was the first time we had seen a woman keen and excited to tell us her story. Valentina her mother was very excited that we were visiting them but was incredibly shy so she stood quietly beaming or giggling! She was adorable!

When the boys returned from soccer they were really excited to meet us and keen to tell me their plans for the future as well. Both boys had finished first in school which enabled them to get scholarships. This meant they didn’t need to sit the exam that their father had failed to get into University. Claudio while listening to the boys talking to us had an incredibly proud smile on his face. Joel told me “I am grateful with my whole heart to Minka because without our parents’ savings and our savings we would not be able to do this.”



Joel (left) and Vladi
Fiorella, Claudio, Valentina, Joel and Vladi
Claudio and Valentina’s extended family

The three children all know the various processes involved in the clay work and spent a lot of their free time helping out around schoolwork to increase the family’s income. Joel and Vladi return home in the holidays and help with crops and around the house particularly to help upgrade the accommodation to enhance the tourism experience. Both boys are also planning to return home after studying (Joel in 4 years time, Vladi in 2 ½ years) to give back to their community. They want to work together with their new skills to create a business that is currently lacking in the community.

Claudio and Valentina’s family were the perfect example of how handcrafts through the fair trade market can provide opportunities that wouldn’t exist otherwise. This family are thankful

to Minka for this opportunity and have used every chance they have been offered to improve their lives in the long term. They have passed skills and strength onto the next generation and as a family are proud of what they have achieved. It was a moving experience to meet and talk with them.

Taquile Island

Lake Titicaca is 3827 meters above sea level. The highest point on Taquile Island is just under 4100m. Minka works with 22 artisan families out of the community of 62 families who are located in Huayllano, the Southern end of the island.

These artisans no longer sell their handcrafts to Minka because there aren't orders from its clients, so their relationship has become one based around tourism. Minka believes that the groups are receiving sufficient sales from tourists so have chosen to put their sales efforts into placing orders with other groups who are in greater need. This situation highlights the success of the tourism programme and the vital role it plays in artisans lives whose product may not easily sell into export markets. Tourism has provided an additional income generating stream for these artisans and it is one that fits perfectly with their wish to retain their traditional culture and handcraft skills.



Maria Pacisa Machaca Yuccra and her daughter Elizabeth Pacisa Machaca weaving

Andrea Quispe Huatta weaving

Maria (left) and fellow artisan weaving

Maria Pacisa Machaca Yuccra weaving



Left and middle images: Huayllano artisans weaving

Maria Pacisa Machaca Yuccra and her daughter Elizabeth Pacisa Machaca weaving



Male artisans from Huayllano knitting
 Traditional performance by Huayllano artisans for the Trade Aid Education Tour Group
 Dimisio Huatta Yucra knitting
 Male artisans from Huayllano knitting

It was not hard to see why tourists would enjoy visiting Taquile Island as it is a beautiful place which appears to have lost none of its traditional character. The weather was warm during the day which was appreciated after the colder temperatures we had experienced and the lake views were magnificent.



The main guest house for tourists
 View of the Lake from Huayllano



Elizabeth, in front of the ploughed fields and lake view behind
 Setting sun over Lake Titicaca from Taquile Island
 The jetties at the bottom of the stone steps built by the Huayllano community and funded from Trade Aid capacity building funds.

The addition of stone steps leading up to the top of the island has been beneficial to the community living in surrounding areas, not just the Minka artisans. The beautifully constructed

stone steps were built by the Huayllano community and funded from Trade Aid capacity building funds through the New Zealand Government.



Jonni-Rose Simpson and Meaghan Kelly (Trade Aid) with Huayllano artisan at the top of the stone steps built by the Huayllano community and funded from Trade Aid capacity building funds

Views of the stone steps built by the Huayllano community and funded from Trade Aid capacity building funds, leading down to a double jetty on Lake Titicaca

Artisan culture



Valerio explaining the calendar belt that is woven by Huayllano artisans and depicts the horticultural calendar
Valerio demonstrating the lathering properties of the roque plant used as a biodegradable laundry detergent



Valerio displaying the food eaten on the island such as potatoes, yams and corn, and demonstrating the grinding stones used for turning grains into flour.

The artisans wear traditional dress which originated from the first settlers to the island, the Spanish. We learnt that the Incas didn't wear trousers, that it was the Spaniards who introduced them.

Men: The men are known for their knitted chullos (hats) with the plain red ones indicating someone who is married, red and white identifying a single person. Married men also carry coca bags called 'chuspa', containing coca leaves. The standard form of greeting another person is to exchange coca leaves from these bags (in the case of women they put the coca leaves into a corner of the black hood). Chuspa are made for the men by their wives and are apparently a more accurate indicator of a wedded man than the hats. During festivals men may wear up to 20 chuspas each! The men also wear knitted calendar belts which contain information about the seasonal harvests. Valerio's belt had been made for him by his wife and her name, Elaria, was knitted into it. Under the calendar belt the men wear a second belt made of stiff material, which is designed to support their backs when working around the steep section. The men make their own shirts and use a plant called 'roque', ground into a lather and used as to wash them and maintain their whiteness. We were shown the lathering process using roque and a stone and it was fascinating to see it froth up but also appeared to be a labour intensive process to produce a consistency appropriate for laundering.

Women: The women have three layers of coloured material under their black skirts, but this increases to 30 for a women at her wedding ceremony. They wear black head coverings, some with pompoms on the ends some without. We were told that the women wearing the most colourful pompoms are unmarried. Couples always get married in May around the time of the two island festivals.

The brightest colours in the market are synthetic products which have been developed for tourists tastes. They are cheaper than the natural colours.



A brightly coloured pompom that is attached to the head scarves and worn by women
Women artisans displaying the pompoms attached to the head scarves worn by women
Traditional dancing, displaying the many coloured layers under the black skirt worn by women at festivals and weddings

Agriculture

There are not many animals on the island as there is not enough grass for them to eat. However there are a few cows and few sheep. Dogs are not allowed on the island. Sheep dung is used for

fertilizer. A tool that is used for digging is called a 'chaquitacla' which has a place for placing your foot to give extra power to the digging process.



Valerio demonstrating the digging tool 'chaquitacla' used for digging

Food

The artisans only eat meat once a month or every two months, and at weddings. They each fish including trout and catfish which they catch themselves.

Home stay families



Artisan family: Augustin, Rosa and Augustin's mother Maria with their two boys (Abraham and Moises) and nieces and nephews/ Huayllano children at the home stay/ Maria sitting next to the fire used to prepare the meals, fuelled by eucalyptus trees



Rosa preparing a delicious breakfast of pancakes and fried bread as part of the home stay
Augustin and Rosa's two story mud brick house with internal courtyard

Michelia and Kusi (our guide from Minka) home stayed with Augustin's family for the night we had on the island. The family is made up of Maria and Eugenio (Grandmother and Grandfather), Rosa and Augustin (Mother and Father), and Abraham and Moises (4 and 6 years).

Two girls from part of the wider family joined us for breakfast as well, they were 1st and 4th grades at school and the two boys are in pre-school. The children learn Quechuan at preschool but only Spanish once they go to school. This is decided by the parents who want their children prepared as much as possible for participation in the outside world. The children walk for an hour to get to school each way and there is both a public and a private high school on the island, of which the public school is apparently better! Augustin only went to fourth grade at high school and Maria did primary only.

Breakfast was cooked in the corner of the kitchen on a fire fuelled by Eucalyptus trees. We had a lovely breakfast of pancakes and fried bread.



Artisan children posing for photos

Josee and Rosemary (Trade Aid) stayed with Dimisio Huatta Yucra and his wife Victoria. They have five children: Claudia 12yrs, Delta 10, Diana 8, Luis 7, and Renee 2.

Dave and Anna (Trade Aid) after being dressed up by their home stay hosts

Talking to the group

Francesca (42 years) is President of Huayllano. Her great grandparents came from the peninsula belonging to Puno area. We were told that Francisca had come first in a running competition on Taquile Island recently – which is impressive considering we struggled to walk around the island without stopping for rests.

The group couldn't say how the relationship with Minka started as the person who would have known (Valerio's father, Isidro) was not there. Isidro and Cecilia from Minka wrote a book about life on the island and talked to the old people to get the full history. Minka was doing agricultural programs here in the early days. Artisans would receive improved seeds for potatoes from Minka. Valerio (now 30 years) remembers the group receiving orders for chullos (hats) when he seven years old so deduced their relationship is at least 23 years old.



Maria (left) with Francisca the President of the group.



Francisca demonstrating the potato cooking process using a covered fire of clay stones



The community are keen to keep their culture and clothing alive. They want to receive tourists and to be able to continue making and passing their handcraft skills onto their children.

Valerio says “we would like to learn English to share our information with visitors and to get better at technology. At the beginning we were very shy with the tourists but now we are getting better. People in our community used to run away when they saw tourists! The most important thing is to keep Quechua alive. Having visitors keeps us learning about other cultures and their lives.”

All families on the island (there are 900 in total) make handicrafts and most sell in the main square. There is also a fishing group that supplies the local restaurants in the square and

families on the island. There is an artisan coop of 500 families who display in a showroom, however due to the large number of families only five items per family are displayed. Most of Huayllano artisans don't sell in the square. They are appreciative of the fact that they have their own organisation and with Minka's help are able to receive their own tourists to boost their income. Working in the square is becoming very political and the community spirit is breaking down. For artisans who sell there and others who work in the restaurants or shops, there are responsibilities (chores) which they are required to do. For failing to meet responsibilities there are punishments in the form of bans from trading there, or taking boats out. The restaurants are only able to open on certain days so that they each receive the opportunities to have tourists.

History of the island

During the Spanish period, a thief called Pedro was sent to die in the middle of the lake in a boat. He landed on Taquile Island and lived there for ten years. He then sold the island to three farmers who brought labourers to the island with them. The people who came had the same surnames. They used the wood on the island to build their houses. Workers who came to the island didn't get paid wages only in kind (potatoes) which caused a revolution on the island. As a result of this the farmers gave small useless bits of land to the workers and next generations received small plots too. It was the great grandchildren of these farmers who decided to split the island into six communities. The Huayllano community comes from descendents of these farmers and are 4th generation.

Water problems

The Huayllano community do not have water piped to their houses, instead carrying water from afar from natural springs. Recently the island committee approached their community and asked for permission to tap a spring on their land and pipe it to residents. At first the community were excited about this prospect but then they realised that the plan was to pipe it away from their community taking it only to the square. They refused. This appeared to be a fairly common situation where only the square and area surrounding it are considered important and the Huayllano community are left to their own devices yet still required to participate (with labour and taxes) for the running of the community.



The concrete buildings built by the Huayllano artisans over a spring, ready for a pump and electric generator to be installed providing fresh water to their houses

The group would like to have piped water to their houses, for themselves and to increase the communities appeal to tourists. They have recently built a concrete shelter around the spring using their own funds and labour and the families have agreed to pay S/ 200 (US \$ 70) each for the pipes that are required to run the water to their homes. The only expense left is for the pump and the electric generator. The committee showed our guide Kusi from Minka the shelter as they are hoping Minka will be able to fund the cost of the pump. Minka will look at whether this is a project they can fund at a later date, and outside of the current tourist season.

Juliaca

Collasuyo is an artisan group made up of 14 committees. The committee that we arrived at and where we were hosted was called Tacamani, although it was four committees who were responsible for looking after us (entertainment, food, accommodation etc) and who would benefit from the tour costs.

A warm welcome

We arrived at Tacamani to a large group of men, women and children, all very brightly dressed, many in costumes for performances they had planned and all very excited to see us. As we filed into the courtyard we had dancers forming a line either side for us to move through and necklaces made from alpaca wool placed around our necks.

We were welcomed by each of the 14 Presidents of the committees, each of them giving us a short speech. We in turn introduced Trade Aid and ourselves individually and were then treated to several different dances, poetry readings and songs by both adults and children. We returned the welcome singing the New Zealand National Anthem in Maori, a waiata 'E toru nga mea', and a haka 'Te Waka'.

The room we were to sleep in, marae style, had a wooden floor which is an expensive luxury. The floor was financed through the tourism project with the help of Minka and this room is used for all tourists groups. The wooden floor was a vital addition for warmth given the low temperatures that the altiplano reaches. The mattresses were provided by the committee members and sleeping bags by Minka.



A royal welcome for the Education Tour Participants with dancing and performances by the 14 committees of Collasuyo



Collasuyo artisans in traditional dance dress as part of Trade Aid's welcome
 Danny Abaza, Collasuyo artisan
 The 14 Presidents of the 14 committees of Collasuyo



Edit, 23 years, member of the Committee of Tacamani, performing a poem to welcome Trade Aid
 Child of a Collasuyo artisan welcoming Trade Aid



Collasuyo artisans holding Trade Aid promotional information/ The warm welcome by Collasuyo artisans



Trade Aid Education tour participants performing 'Te Waka', a Maori haka/ singing Maori songs in thanks for the hospitality/ Trade Aid and some of the Collasuyo dancers and musicians

About the groups

The Collasuyo community is incredibly isolated, live a long way from each other and have few opportunities for income generating. The Altiplano where they are situated in and around Juliaca is at a height of 3800m and is not conducive to rearing animals or growing many crops. The income generation and community gained through handcrafts is viewed highly by the community.

Minka has been working with some of these committees for 30 years, but with the Tacamani committee for ten years. 11 out of 14 committees live in rural areas but the three groups located in Juliaca have family in the rural area. Roughly six of the groups have a communal area like Tacamani has.

At Tacamani there is a primary school (we slept in one of the classrooms), a nursery school (called Wawawasi in Quechua - wawa meaning baby, wasi meaning house), an outside kitchen, an outside hole-in-the-ground-toilet surrounded by corrugated iron and built especially for tourists, and a concrete football field. It is also used as a health post, and they are visited by the doctor once a year for check-ups. The secondary school is in Juliaca and once the children turn 11 years they will go to Juliaca alone, or sometimes the mother of the family will move with them. All schools in the area are government funded.



A classroom at the Tacamani Community Centre
Mauricia Apoza Sanca in the kitchen at Tacamani Community Centre
The water pump for fresh water

Before Minka provided the artisans a market for their products, their grandparents were selling in local markets in Juliaca at 1am. They are very thankful they don't need to do this. 10 – 20% of their sales are to local markets with the rest to Minka.

“Thank you very much to our customers abroad who are helping us send the kids to school and grow our food. We are ignored by both local and national governments. We are famers and look after livestock but conditions are hard and with bad weather, some years are very bad so most of our income comes from handcrafts.” Pedro, Cecilia's husband, ex-president of Tacamani.

An additional problem the local community have to deal with is that people from Juliaca come to the area and dump their rubbish. We saw river areas absolutely littered with rubbish on Collasuyo land. They also try and find ways to stop dump trucks (possibly the empty ones after they have dumped their rubbish) digging up topsoil to take back to the city for construction projects. This stealing of soil leaves large holes in the land and reduces the precious top soil for agriculture. We came across a road strewn with rocks that we had to clear before passing through and were told that this was one of the methods locals use to keep the trucks out. I guess this works well given that most of the locals will not own vehicles themselves.

The Alpaca wool process

At 4am the artisans leave to buy alpaca from the market. They must leave early in order to make sure there is still fibre left when they arrive. The best quality wool is chosen first, and quality is considered of utmost importance. Minka trains the groups on production and quality. The wool is all natural colours which means it is very difficult to match colours as they are all slightly different. Even wool from the same animal varies in colour. The first step is to classify the fibre, cut out the burns (caused by the sun) and matted-tangled hair, and to then spin it. Spinning can be with more than one colour wool and the thickness depends on its use. Once the wool is spun it is then ready to knit. Some of our group had turns trying to use the manual spinning machines and in general, failed dismally!



Artisans demonstrating the quality and spinning process of the raw wool (Valeriana on left in blue)
Vilma (right in green) spinning wool

Talking to Vilma and Gregorio

Vilma (38 years old) is the President of a committee and has been a member for 20 years. She learnt to knit from her father when she was six years old along with her three sisters and one brother. The committee started in 1978 and have been with Minka for nearly 30 years. Vilma and Gregorio, her husband, have seven children between the ages of two – nineteen. Their eldest is Margot who is studying Administration in Juliaca and wants to work in hotel and tourism. They both said they want more for their children than they had growing up.

Gregorio built the spinning machines for their group, both manual and electric ones and has given spinning machines to other committees as well. Vilma's committee sometimes sell spun yarn to other committees.



Gregorio (wearing an All Blacks hat), Vilma (wearing a present of a NZ apron) and Mabel, their daughter (6 yrs), Vilma with a spinning wheel.

When asked what life would be like without their relationship with Minka, Vilma replied “sad and difficult.”

However despite the additional income and support they receive from Minka, Vilma added, “To provide the things we want for our children we have to do other work too such as driving, building work in Juliaca or becoming a rickshaw driver.”

We asked what it was like working with Minka and Vilma answered, “It’s been such a long time working with Minka and they are the only ones who have continually given us work. It would be hard to find other markets if not for them. Minka builds the whole community – we only exist because of Minka. They helped train and build up the committee from the start and they share their profits with us.”

We asked their children who had been gradually filling up the room as Wilma and Gregorio spoke, what they wanted to be when they grew up. One wanted to be a policeman and two wanted to knit for Minka. Vilma says “I love knitting, I’ve taught all my children and they can all spin the yarn as well.”

Additional photos from the visit:





Pic 1 & 2 (from left) Hustina Quacira Cochaquinray, Ana Cela Pacori, Margarita Cela Pacori/ Collasuyo artisans knitting



Margarita Cela Pacori/ Hustina Quacira Cochaquinray/ Ana Cela Pacori/ Hustina Quacira Cochaquinray at her place holding lambs



Collasuyo artisans/ The Three Amigos: Manuel Mamani, Francisco Coanki Pacori and Julian Mamani/ artisans being dropped home in a 3 wheeler



Creating a covered fire for cooking potatoes/ Hustina Quacira Cochaquinray's house/ A cemetery on the altiplano



Collasuyo artisan and sheep pen

View from inside of the Tacamani Community area

Outside the kitchen looking at the buildings of the community centre

Quilla – instrument making group

“I love music and have learnt so much from making instruments.” Pablo, Quilla’s leader

Pablo came to Lima from Puno in 1968 at 17 years old. He comes from a line of musicians – including his father and grandfather. The area he comes from in Puno is where many artisans come from. He says, “You should promote my instruments for people to enjoy and learn about different music.”



Pablo cutting bamboo to size

Pablo demonstrating the playing of panpipes for the group

30 people rely on the making of these instruments for a living. They work as a legal association. We visited Pablo’s workshop where up to five people work. When there are large orders, other artisans work in five different houses. The other artisans are also from Puno. When the order is small, Pablo’s family tend to fill the order. He works with his nephews and wife’s brother. He said that now is a low season both domestically and internationally.

Quilla has a shop downtown in Lima. They sell 20% of their product as exports. The rest is sold domestically. Outside of Minka sales they also sell to Japan. Pablo’s 28 year old daughter, Carmen, helps him with the marketing of the instruments. She now travels instead of her father. Most recently she attended fairs in Mexico and Equador and throughout Peru. Their website is www.quillaperu.net

Quilla has been selling to Minka for 15 years and has had a strong consistent relationship during this time. Minka consider the quality of his products to be excellent. Pablo always makes the first sample and then shows other artisans how to make them. Pablo receives the order from Minka and distributes.



The education tour group with Pablo in his showroom

Kusi on left (Minka) and Meaghan Kelly (Trade Aid) showing Pablo a photo from New Zealand
Meaghan and Pablo with photo of Trade Aid Rotorua staff and volunteers

Pablo's wife is called Sila and he has four children between the ages of 22 and 38. Only one of his children has become a musician, the others are involved in nursing, accountancy and Peruvian history.



Pablo's wife Sila is on the right in this picture taken in Pablo's workshop

Instruments

There are different types of instruments for professionals and tourists, his are professional instruments. Pablo is well known for his musical ability and people come from far to buy from him. He has a perfect ear for tuning instruments which enables him to cut the flute to the correct size without testing it by machine. Panpipes are made by hand, no machine needed. Panpipes are made from bamboo from the jungle. Bamboo is fast growing and takes three months to dry to be ready to be worked with. For recorders and flutes they used to make 500 a day, now they can make 2000 an hour because of a cutting machine.



Tall bamboo used for flutes and pipes

View out at the shanty town area 'invasión' from Pablo's workshop

Tanone is the name of the seeds for the maraca instruments. They come from a two metre high tree which produces only seeds. The inside of the seeds are removed to produce the right sound.



Pablo and his wife Sila with the tanone seeds used to make musical rattles

NB: We got a little lost trying to visit Pablo's workshop and drove for a while through a large shanty town area that is given the name 'invasión'. It is made up of people migrating to Lima, finding a place to squat and bringing their friends and family to settle with them in makeshift houses. These towns are illegal but after 10 – 15 years the government tends to provide infrastructure to the town. We saw some parts with steps built into the hillsides, and electricity running to homes. Kusi told us that the government doesn't encourage this migration, however since the education and health assistance in rural areas is so poor, there is no disincentive for people to move and create shanty towns.