



Shamina (centre) and her students from PLACE

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Teachers, Travels and Turtles

Stories of a Teacher Candidate in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua, by Shamina Chherawala

In May 2010, I had the opportunity to travel to Pearl Lagoon on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua with five of my teacher candidate colleagues from York University in Toronto. My experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, made a significant impact on me and have shaped how I see myself as an educator in a global context.

The four of us were placed in Pearl Lagoon, a small coastal community that relies mainly on artisanal fishing and subsistence farming for economic survival. Alysia Burr and Darshika Thanabalasingam were placed at a public high school, Instituto de Las Perlas. Jeanette Raposo and I taught at the Pearl Lagoon Academy of Excellence (PLACE), an English speaking elementary school run by an NGO called the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (FADCANIC).

We spent some time in Managua and Estelí before heading to the Atlantic coast. We had grown accustomed to the hustle and bustle of Nicaragua's west coast, so it was quite a shock when we got off

the plane in Bluefields, the capital of Nicaragua's east coast, and found ourselves in a soggy port town surrounded by tropical rainforest. One boat trip, a chaotic taxi journey and a very bumpy bus ride later we were informed we had 'arrived' and were dropped off in the pitch-dark on a sandy road. Exhausted and somewhat disoriented, we were startled when out of the darkness a woman emerged with a warm smile and big hugs and asked "Are you the teachers from Canada? Welcome to Pearl Lagoon, ladies!"

And so began our international practicum placement in Pearl Lagoon.

Darshika and Alysia started work at the high school, Instituto de las Perlas. To engage their classroom of teenagers they decided to use popular music to get the students excited about learning. They constructed a unit on poetry that drew on contemporary rap songs with lyrics about overcoming systemic barriers, positive self-image and making empowering choices. The students learned reading comprehension, writing and critical thinking. *Continued on page 3...*

FADCANIC is Pueblito's most recent partner. We are working on a proposal that will help fund FADCANIC's work in non-Spanish speaking cultural communities to strengthen the literacy skills of pre-primary and primary school kids in the Creole, Garifuna, and Miskito speaking communities near Pearl Lagoon on the Atlantic Coast.



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MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Engaging Youth and Global Education: Pueblito at Work in Canada

This fall sees some significant changes at Pueblito; our Program Director, Amanda Proctor is moving on. Amanda has been with us since 2007 and has had a great impact on rebuilding Pueblito. Pueblito is fortunate to have found the equally skilled Katie Daly who has now taken on the role of Program Manager. A proper goodbye to Amanda and welcome to Katie are found on page two of this newsletter. While Amanda was with Pueblito, she worked hard to develop and nurture relationships with our Central American partners, with CIDA, and our Canadian Pueblito supporters, both new and old. One of Amanda's most enduring legacies is a keen interest in engaging youth and providing global education here in Canada.

Through this past spring and summer, Pueblito worked to strengthen its ties with Canadian youth through new global education initiatives. With the help of two interns from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Derek Smith and Xenia Tang, Pueblito developed and delivered workshops about social justice and the Rights of the Child in nine elementary schools in the Greater Toronto Area. Students posed tough questions about ethics and development work. Xenia found that it wasn't only the students who were affected by the workshops. Through her work with the kids, she came to realize that she had her own biases, and that she too benefited from the workshop's message (see her story on page 3 Changing Perspectives; Changing Myself: Global Education with Pueblito Canada).

During these workshops, we witnessed the incredible energy and creativity that youth bring to the field of international development. Our new efforts aim to challenge youth to think about deep questions of inequality and poverty and to work to make change in their own lives and communities. We thank Amanda for pointing us in this direction. The new volunteers that have facilitated the social justice workshops and the numerous young people who have completed the workshops will all contribute to a greater awareness not only of Pueblito and the people we work with in the south, but also to the greater goal of social justice for everyone. We strongly believe that it is important to help Canadian youth to make connections between the issues their communities face and the interests of the Nicaraguan youth with whom we work.

Many of you began your association with Pueblito years ago, perhaps after time spent either on a Pueblito project, hearing a presentation in your church, or attending a meeting in a friend's living room. This was global education, this was youth (or at least young at heart!) engagement. As we move forward in our efforts to engage Canadians in global issues, we look to our supporters to provide us with guidance and resources to continue working toward social change in Nicaragua and at home. Please let us know if you have any thoughts about our global education and youth engagement programs.

Jill Nurse
Vice President, Board of Directors
Pueblito Canada



Jill and her son Ben

Teachers, Travel and Turtles continued from cover

For Jeanette and me, teaching at PLACE exposed us to the importance of validating the social, political and cultural realities of the students. PLACE recognizes that many of its students come from Creole and Miskito speaking families and seeks to ensure equitable representation of their students' language and culture. FADCANIC has produced English language readers and accompanying activity books using narratives based in Pearl Lagoon. Short stories have been published based on local folklore for use in reading exercises. The school also encourages active participation of parents and community leaders and serves as a 'community hub'. We were nonetheless struck by the challenges faced by teachers due to limited resources. Pedagogical materials, classroom resources and literacy materials are in short-supply, particularly for the primary grades.

Outside of the classroom our new friends invited us to participate in community activities. We went crab-catching and fishing, and visited students at home for turtle-back roasts (which is exactly what it sounds like). Ms. Ingrid, our hostess, made our stay pleasant and conversations with her over coffee in the mornings provided insight into the social and cultural history of Pearl Lagoon's Creole and Miskito community.

As we spent more time with our hosts, we recognized that our role as educators extended beyond the classroom and we looked for ways

to meaningfully contribute to the community. We drew on the artistic talents of the high school students at Instituto de las Perlas and the energy of the school administration and faculty to convert an unused auditorium into a community theatre space. Students painted murals in the auditorium, allowing them to express their ideas to their community. Family, friends and teachers from both PLACE and the Instituto began to take notice of the students' work, energy and creativity and offered to help. The final transformation was impressive, and we have since heard that community leaders have agreed to oversee the final repairs so that the auditorium can be used as a community theatre space.

Our experiences working at PLACE and Instituto de las Perlas showed us the role that caring, dedicated and visionary educators can have in preparing students for the changing social and economic context of their communities. By validating the home culture of its students, PLACE offers a sense of belonging and acceptance that is instrumental in encouraging students to stay in school. If students feel they are valuable members of their communities, they can imagine a brighter future for themselves, and this, along with an education, will help them to succeed later in their lives. The hoped for partnership between Pueblito and FADCANIC could help to ensure that students in rural communities, and even in Instituto de las Perlas, might have the same chances as our students at PLACE.



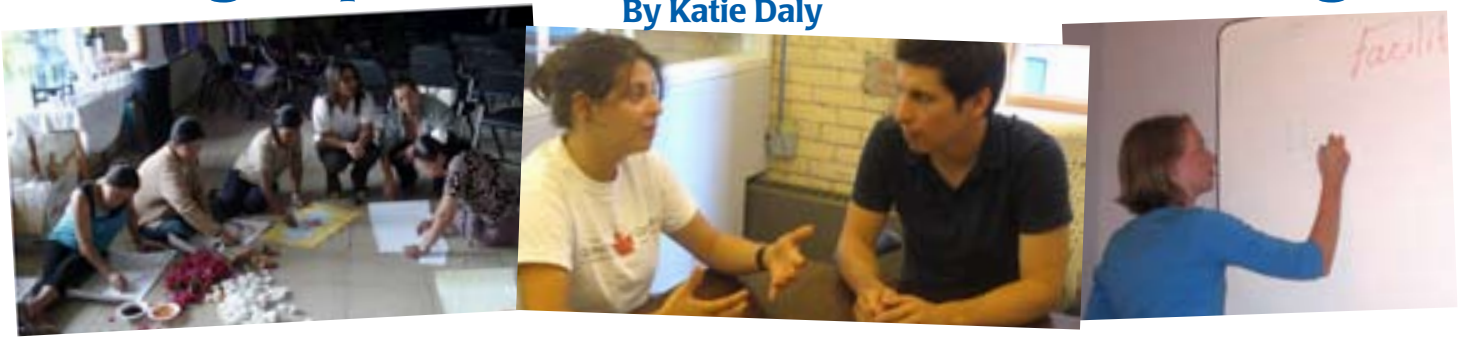
Students from Instituto de las Perlas painting a mural in the auditorium



Pearl Lagoon

Sharing Experiences in Canada and Nicaragua

By Katie Daly



Left: Primary school teachers learning arts based pedagogy in a FUNARTE workshop. Centre: Participants at one of Pueblito's workshops for global educators held in Toronto. Right: Katie Daly facilitating a workshop for educators.

Since beginning with Pueblito in July 2010, I have seen how the organization works, both in Nicaragua and in Canada, to bring educators together to share their experiences, challenges and aspirations.

On August 4, 2010, we brought together global educators in Toronto to share techniques, challenges and successes for facilitating learning. The participants, including representatives from the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition (CYCC) and York University, appreciated the space to reflect on their practice as facilitators and to share their ideas about how to address challenges in social justice education. Together, we discussed topics such as how to address an atmosphere where bullying or intimidation is evident, the fine balance between over-managing a workshop and guiding the discussion effectively, and how our organization's overarching goals affect our daily practice as educators. We also reflected on our own experiences as students and how these experiences have shaped our practice for better or worse.

While we discussed bullying, I shared an experience with the group in which a teacher had used intimidation to control the classroom. In grade one, my teacher flipped my desk and made me clean up its contents in front of my classmates while I cried. We discussed how tactics such as this one are replicated in our own practices to greater or lesser degrees and shared tools for dealing with classroom control in more caring ways.

As I read through a report from our partners in Nicaragua, I couldn't believe how similar their reflections were to those from the workshop in Toronto. Pueblito has continued to support the Foundation to Support Children's Creative Art (FUNARTE), and they recently tackled the issue of the use of intimidation as a form of classroom discipline. FUNARTE provided a space and guidance

for educators to reflect on how these disciplinary tactics affected them when they were children. One teacher cried as she recounted the following experience, "When I was in first grade a teacher yelled that I was very stubborn and stupid just because I spoke to my classmate and she took a belt and hit my back with it so hard that I bled a lot. Because of that violent incident I became very frustrated and now that I'm an adult I still remember that teacher with a lot of fear." While teachers have abandoned these overt forms of intimidation in the classroom, FUNARTE has observed teachers yelling, threatening and pulling students by the ear as a form of discipline.

After the workshops, FUNARTE has observed that these teachers are more conscious when threats and physical punishments creep into their classrooms, and they are more willing and able to make changes in their daily interactions with their students. Together Pueblito and FUNARTE are helping to make classrooms a safe and caring space for young children in Nicaragua.

I am amazed at the connections between Pueblito's work in Nicaragua and the work of educators in Canada. While educators here are struggling to overcome the lessons they learned as students, so too are our partners in Nicaragua. I feel proud that Pueblito is making strides to carry out work in Canada that complements the work of our partners in Nicaragua. Through this approach, we are acknowledging that we are all interconnected and that global issues are also local issues.

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or email alison@pueblito.org
to have one mailed to you

Changing Perspectives; Changing Myself

By Xenia Tang

Picture: Xenia conducting a workshop with middle school students

When the opportunity was presented for me to take an internship with Pueblito Canada last spring I had a lot to consider. Should I get outside my comfort zone and pursue social justice education even though my knowledge was limited or should I look for an internship that already fit my experience? Deep down I knew I wanted to incorporate social justice into my future teaching practice so I took a deep breath and I took the plunge!



I've also observed that these programs bring misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices into the light. I came to see that I had many misconceptions and stereotypes which I didn't even realize I had. Through the Solidarity versus Charity workshop created by Pueblito, I learned about the two different attitudes with which one can approach volunteering or helping. I learned from the workshops and the students that, in the past, I had approached helping with a charitable mind set. When I

Although my teaching experiences have challenged me to present different subject matter to new faces of varying ages, it was particularly rewarding to see students grab hold of tough subjects like poverty and human rights and ask questions that probe the very heart of those issues. Students learned that these issues exist not only out in the world but also within their own neighbourhoods, often tucked away or camouflaged. These discussions led the students to put real faces - familiar faces - to these seemingly distant and daunting problems. They started to understand the need to do something; to start to struggle for those whose voices are silenced by poverty and oppression.

was volunteering, I assumed that anything I did was helpful and wanted. My experiences were based on a power dynamic that may have helped but did not empower those with whom I had worked. I have since learned to listen first and speak second, and to ask how I might be able to help. My goal is to encourage those I am 'helping' to grow on their own terms.

Though I still have much to learn and integrate into my own attitudes I know that this experience with Pueblito has helped to shape my mind not only as an educator but also as a person who wishes to lend a helping hand.

Welcome Katie Daly!

The Board of Directors is delighted to welcome Katherine (Katie) Daly as the new Program Director for Pueblito Canada. Not only does Katie bring energy, enthusiasm and commitment to her work, she brings leadership and communication skills well-honed through her extensive experience in the NGO sector. Katie has managed international youth internships, coordinated fundraising initiatives, and has worked extensively in El Salvador and Nicaragua with local NGOs in a variety of positions. Combine this experience with a Master of Education in Adult Education and Community Development, an undergraduate degree with a concentration in Global Development Studies, fluency in Spanish, and experience with both Pueblito and Casa Canadiense and you can understand the Board's enthusiasm for Katie's appointment.

Since beginning the Program Director's position on July 1, Katie has continued to demonstrate her superior communication and organizational skills. We look forward to seeing the ongoing results of her work in the future as Pueblito continues to strive for excellence in its Nicaraguan projects and as we expand our youth engagement and global education initiatives here at home.



Welcome Katie!

A Huge Thank You to Amanda Procter!



Harry and Amanda chatting at the Pueblito Open House

It is with mixed feelings that we have accepted Amanda Procter's resignation as Pueblito's Program Director. To be fair, we knew this day would come when we asked Amanda to continue in this position, even after she moved to Vancouver in the fall of 2008 to pursue post-graduate studies. But for Amanda, geographic location made no difference. Whether she was working from Toronto, Vancouver or Latin America, we have been continually blessed with her astounding capacities; from her deep theoretical and practical knowledge of all aspects of international development, to her exemplary skills in working positively and successfully with everyone including children in Managua and CIDA officials in Ottawa (not to mention Pueblito board members, staff, volunteers and donors everywhere). Most importantly, we have always been deeply impressed with her commitment and compassion for working towards peace, justice and equality for everyone, everywhere.

Amanda came to Pueblito in 2007 at a crucial juncture in Pueblito's long history. A new board had just taken over and new directions were being determined. As our Program Director, Amanda calmly and skillfully took charge and began the process of guiding Pueblito. New links were forged with partners in Central America, in many cases drawing on the support of her numerous close contacts in the region, and relations with CIDA and other Canadian partners were enhanced. Within a few short months, Amanda had successfully negotiated our first new CIDA supported partnership project with FUNARTE in Estelí, Nicaragua. In addition, under Amanda's leadership, a new office was established in Toronto, communications with Pueblito supporters and donors took on a renewed importance, and Pueblito began its first ventures in global education in Canada.

Amanda - we will certainly miss your daily presence and we wish you the same success you had with Pueblito in all your future endeavours! As our wonderful new Program Director Katie Daly has noted on several occasions, we are all thankful that you have set the standard for our new directions!

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