

Elvi,

Thanks for the book title! Wilbert Yanez was so wonderful in explaining everything, but there is always more to learn and understand.

Thanks also for helping to create a wonderfully life changing experience for Travis and me. The trip went well beyond all of my expectations! I enjoyed meeting Nilda and her family and seeing the work she is doing with the weavers. She will be coming to Vermont in January to do fundraising for the foundation and I hope we can connect again there. I will try to get additional support for her from my associates and contacts here in the Hudson Valley.

Although my intent was to learn more about the weaving in the Andes, for me the most moving part of the trip was our visit to the mountain village of Willoq. Walter, the driver, turned off the already rough cobblestone road onto a very steep and rough dirt road that followed along a rushing stream. We wound our way higher and higher on this very treacherous road, occasionally stopping to roll a large stone out of our path. More than an hour later we arrived at a small settlement. Wilbert led us into a court yard in front of a long low building that served as the school there. By the time we arrived it was already late afternoon, there were a few children playing in the yard, boys and girls dressed in the traditional handwoven mantas and hats of their village. Wilbert found a teacher and asked him to assemble the children. In only a few minutes there were dozens of students ranging in age from 3 to 13. The children sang us songs and read a poem aloud, then we passed out pens and colored pencils to each one. I will never forget the expressions on their faces. After more songs and thank yous, the children went out to play in the yard. Travis kicked a soccer ball around with some of the boys. I had also brought construction paper, pencil sharpeners glue sticks and scissors with me for the classroom, a whole suitcase full of supplies, but it seemed such a drop in the bucket in relation to their need. I asked the teachers what they needed and would want to have sent from the US. We compiled a long list.

I will be working with girls scout leaders next month, also the school where I am doing the weaving residency. We will begin a drive for supplies for the Willoq school. I do not believe in Westernizing other cultures, but I do believe all children should have the opportunity to make choices. Education is the key to opportunity.

Thanks again Elvi. We have wonderful pictures from the trip. I will send you some as soon as they are processed.

With much appreciation,
Alice and Travis