

Ohelaku White Corn Growers Travel to Ecuador

By Ruby Kuchma,
Brace Webster and
Mia Webster
Edited by Laura
Manthe

We are a group called Ohelaku, which means "Among the Cornstalks", and we went on a trip to meet the indigenous people of Ecuador who grow corn. Two years ago, we were invited to Ecuador by some women who are called Mama's.

They would be considered clan mothers in our community. We started planning all the details of the trip in October 2017, and we had to work out a lot of stuff, like meals, busses, hostels, and what we were going to do. Our goal was to learn how to restore the old way to grow indigenous white corn.

We landed in Quito and went to a hostel about

forty minutes away. At the hostel, we met up with friends from Oaxaca, Mexico. Pedro, his wife Araceli, and his son Little Pedro. Pedro grows heirloom corn, too. Araceli made huge crispy corn tortillas to share. Little Pedro. We were excited to meet the Oneida corn growers after hearing so much about them from Robin John and Don Charmon. Pedro had a very important job.



Submitted photos

From left to right: Steve Webster, Johnson Jimerson, Kwnwahta Smith, Lea Zeise and Robin John hold corn grown in Ecuador.

He was our translator. The next morning, we got on the bus and started our trip through Ecuador.

Ecuador is in South America, and has many different biomes, with different climates, so we had to prepare for mountains, cities, and jungles. The Andes mountains run through Ecuador, so there are many mountains and volcanoes that help make up the topography. It is also called Ecuador, because the equator runs through it. We stopped at the land mark to learn about it. The equator is what divides the world in half. We weren't just in the mountains though, we were in urban areas too. There were many markets and shops. In Ecuador they use the US dollar, so it was pretty easy to understand what they meant when they were talking about money.

Most people speak Spanish, and many indigenous people speak Quichuan. In the first village, they only spoke Quichuan, and one guy spoke Spanish, so we had him translate to Spanish, and Pedro translate to English.

We were able to teach other tribes about our ways of growing and eating our traditional foods, as they also taught us their way of growing and eating their foods. We tried a lot of food, and all of the food we ate in the indigenous villages were corn based. We ate lots of soup, eggs, potatoes, chicken, rice, fish, food wrapped up in banana leaves, corn drinks, guinea pigs, plantain, tamales, empanadas, and a variety of different types of Ecuadorian traditional corns. We toured a chicha bottling plant. Chicha is a fermented corn drink

that is derived from indigenous culture.

We learned a lot about their cultures, like food, dancing, singing, crafts, and their way of life. We taught them some of our social dances, how to make corn husk dolls, and what we use our corn for.

We've visited many places while we were here and I believe that it is amazing that we were able to experience and learn about a different country and the different ways they take care of their crops. We went on a lot of cool adventures such as superman zip lining, hikes, we also visited a lot of awesome waterfalls.

Our group learned that our tribes our really similar because they were fighting over land, have

• See 47
Ohelaku

7 FAMILY EVENT

Seven generations
Ending
Violence &
Empowering
Native people.


**"Embrace Your
Voice"**
Monday, April 23, 2018
5:00P.M.-7:00P.M.
at
Norbert Hill Center Cafeteria
N7210 Seminary Road
Oneida, WI

*April is Sexual
Assault
Awareness
Month*

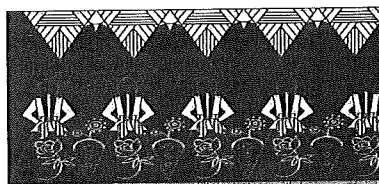
Meal will be served at
6 P.M.

Guest Speakers

Live Poetry Readings



*Wear your
mocs for the
Special Dance!*



Questions? Call Vange or Lola
at (920)490-3700

From page 46/Ohelaku



Jarrett Wheeler, kneeling, Seneca board member of the Braiding the Sacred and translator Pedro Cardenas Alvarado from Oaxaca, Mexico take part in a cor exchange.

traditional foods, dances, and songs. But we realized that they talk in their original languages all time while we usually talk in English outside of longhouse. Some of the tribes only eat traditional foods. We learned a lot about their ways and they learned a lot about our ways. Our group might want to go again some time because we learned a lot and had an amazing time learning about the Ecuadorian people and their ways of life. As part of our trip, we interviewed the adults on the bus and asked them what they thought and learned throughout Ecuador.

Jen Falck said "We met a lot of different tribes while we have been here in Ecuador. I was struck by the similarities and

ceremonies and how they host people because it's a big, big deal and how it's a celebration to have guests. Also, how they grow their corn, and how they honor their corn."

I asked Tony Kuchma "How is the land different for growing crops in Ecuador vs Oneida?" He responded with "The climate is very different in that we're in the Andes mountains but we're also near the equator which moderates temperatures and extends the growing season all year round. The land is similar in some areas in that it was shaped from glaciers, but it is also in the mountains and is very steep. Other areas formed with volcanic soils and are very rich compared to the soils we have in Oneida. Farm-

ers here do everything by hand on very steep slopes. And in Oneida we have very flat land and the luxury of farming equipment. One thing I would like to highlight is everyone has their own garden and separate corn plot. The majority of these farm fields throughout the country are less than five acres in size. Small scale farming is working in Ecuador and is feeding the nation."

The trip was a great learning experience. Laura Manthe's favorite part of the trip was meeting the woman from the Amazon because it was her first time that she met someone who didn't conform to society and instead they stuck to their traditions. We went to a museum in Cuenca that

had exhibits that displayed traditional clothing and artifacts. We got to experience those things live and in person while everyone else at the museum only got to see them as something from the past. When our group went to see those things in person it meant way more than going into a museum. Everything was worth it but if she could change one thing about the trip we would choose not ride the bus for that

long. Jasmine Jimmerson's favorite part of the trip was getting to see all the plants and herbs they used and how much alike they were to the medicine that we used to have a long time ago, she thinks it's amazing that they still use those things even with today's society. She also thought it was really cool that everyone there was always working even the children and everyone had a responsibility.

They referred to us as the people of the eagle and there referred themselves to the people of the condor. Another cool thing was seeing them plant our three sisters together (corn, beans, and squash). Jasmine enjoyed tasting all the different foods they made with the corn. When we were there, we performed some ceremonial events and Jasmine noticed that we had a lot in common.

Oneida Community Education Center
May Calendar of Events

Plein Air Painting on the Rez

May 2, 9, 16, 23rd

5:30 - 8:30PM

Oneida Nation Arts Program

Basket Making: Tray/Organizer Basket

May 7, 8, 14, 15th

5:30 - 7:30PM

Oneida Nation Arts Program

Two Needle Beading Technique

May 9, 10, 16, 17th

5:30 - 8:30PM

Oneida Nation Arts Program

Play Submissions Due

May 11th

Wisconsin Native American Playwright Festival

Submit to:

shemken@oneidanation.org

For more information and registration:
oneidacommunityeducationcenter.org

