Classrooms without borders

Education, Inclusion and Diversity through Comics

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PREFACE

In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, education must rise to the challenge of shaping citizens who are capable of living together in plurality. Inclusion and interculturality stand as fundamental pillars for building equitable societies in which every individual regardless of origin, identity, or abilities has the opportunity to learn and flourish within environments that recognise and value their uniqueness. With this goal in mind, **Classrooms without** borders emerges as an innovative pedagogical proposal that integrates the narrative power of comics with the principles of inclusive and intercultural education.

This work is part of the International Teacher Training Programme on Innovative Practice (ITP), an initiative funded by VLIR-UOS and led by PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Belgium) in strategic partnership with Technical University of the North (Ecuador), Jimma University (Ethiopia), North-West University (South Africa), and Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia). Within this inter-institutional and transnational synergy, the Technical University of the North has taken the initiative to create a comic-based book aimed at fostering awareness, training, and dialogue around diversity and inclusion in contemporary educational contexts.

Comics, with their unique combination of text and image, are presented here as a didactic resource accessible to varied learning styles and cultural expressions. They generate emotional connections, foster empathy, stimulate critical thinking, and facilitate reflection on the complex realities that inhabit our classrooms. Through visual stories and graphic narratives, this book addresses the challenges faced by students and teachers in multicultural contexts, offering innovative perspectives and creative solutions aimed at promoting equity and the participation of all educational actors.

Each chapter of **Classrooms without borders: Education, inclusion and diversity through comics** explores themes related to integration, discrimination, the construction of collaborative environments, and the visibility of ancestral knowledge. The work goes beyond theoretical exposition; it integrates reflective questions, examples of real-life experiences, student-created comic stories, and

a conceptual glossary that facilitates comprehension and application of the content. These graphic narratives enrich the material, promote experiential, creative, and meaningful learning, and demonstrate the potential of comics as an inclusive and culturally responsive educational tool.

Classrooms without borders is intended for students and teachers, both in training and in practice, as well as for educational researchers and professionals dedicated to inclusive and intercultural pedagogy. The book invites readers to rethink traditional pedagogical practices and offers concrete pathways for implementing approaches that recognise and celebrate diversity as an essential pedagogical value. This publication is the result of an interdisciplinary and collaborative effort involving lecturers, researchers, and students from fields such as Educational Psychology, Psychology, Pedagogy of Arts and Humanities, Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages, Fine Arts, and Graphic Design. This process enabled the development of competencies in research, creativity, visual communication, teamwork, intercultural sensitivity, and the use of digital tools. The contribution of each discipline is reflected in the work, which combines conceptual rigour with an innovative graphic proposal, making it an academic and pedagogical reference.

The proposal of this book aligns with the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, particularly SDG 4 (*Quality Education*) and SDG 10 (*Reduced Inequalities*), and is envisioned as a reference for future research and innovative pedagogical practices. Readers of **Classrooms without borders** will encounter an academic text that weaves together voices, images, and experiences, illustrating that teaching and learning can be profoundly human, creative, and culturally sensitive acts. This work demonstrates that classrooms, rather than being closed spaces, can become a borderless environment where knowledge, languages, colours, and stories converge, and where every student and teacher has the opportunity to be the protagonist of their own educational process.

We invite readers to explore these pages with an open mind and a critical spirit, convinced that within these graphic stories and pedagogical reflections they will find tools, inspiration, and new questions to rethink education and to build through practice and research a more inclusive, equitable, and respectful society that

embraces diversity. **Classrooms without borders: Education, inclusion and diversity through comics** constitutes a significant contribution to the educational field, aimed at enriching pedagogical practices, making student diversity visible, and contributing to the construction of fairer, more inclusive, and more compassionate societies. Its reading invites the audience to embark on an educational, creative, and profoundly human journey.

With appreciation,

The Coordinators

Andrea Basantes-Andrade and Anniek Orye

Chapter 1

Fostering diversity through educational comics

Fostering diversity through educational comics

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Introduction

The increasing cultural diversity characterizing contemporary societies presents complex and unavoidable challenges for educational systems, which must undergo profound transformations to respond with relevance, equity, and cultural sensitivity to increasingly pluralistic contexts. Such transformation necessitates a critical re-examination of traditional teaching and learning models, guided by pedagogical approaches that recognize diversity as an asset and actively promote an inclusive, culturally responsive, and profoundly human education (UNESCO, 2023).

In this context, diversity and inclusion have evolved from being peripheral concepts to becoming fundamental pillars of educational discourse and practice. Diversity Encompasses the coexistence of multiple cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender, religious, and functional identities, among other dimensions, within a shared educational environment (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusion, for its part, entails the creation of pedagogical, social, and attitudinal conditions that ensure

equitable participation and meaningful learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their individual or sociocultural characteristics (Ainscow, 2020).

Facing these challenges require active methodologies and innovative pedagogical resources capable of reflecting and valuing such plurality. Among these resources, the educational comic emerges as a pedagogical tool to stimulate meaningful learning, promote critical reflection, and raise awareness regarding diversity (Belda-Medina, 2024). Its visual and narrative nature facilitates the representation of multiple realities, fosters empathy, and adapts to diverse learning styles, becoming a valuable resource in intercultural educational contexts (Dallacqua, 2019; Derkachova et al., 2022).

This chapter explores how educational comics can be strategically employed to promote diversity, inclusion, and intercultural education. It outlines the theoretical foundations underpinning their pedagogical potential, presents international experiences and evidence-based best practices and proposes didactic guidelines for their integration into educational curricula. The overarching aim is to provide educators, researchers, and students with concrete tools that contribute to the construction of more inclusive, equitable, and culturally diverse educational environments.

Foundations of Inclusive Education and Cultural Diversity

Although diversity and inclusion have been established as fundamental principles within contemporary educational discourse, their affective realization in classroom practice requires a comprehensive understanding of their historical, cultural, and pedagogical foundations. The notion of culture, central to any critical reflection on diversity, has undergone a significant evolution. It is no longer conceived merely as a static repertoire of shared customs, values, and practices but rather as a dynamic construct, continuously reinterpreted and re-signified through ongoing social interaction (Dembeck, 2020; González et al., 2018).

According to the Royal Spanish Academy, culture is understood as the “set of knowledge that enables someone to develop their critical judgment,” as well as the “set of ways of life and customs, knowledge,

and degree of artistic, scientific, and industrial development within a particular era or social group" (Royal Spanish Academy, 2024). UNESCO (2020) has reformulated its approach and, in its recent documents, positions culture as a central axis of sustainable development, considering it a source of identity and social cohesion essential for building fairer and more resilient societies. This implies that culture is connected to visible manifestations such as language, clothing, and traditions, as well as to ways of understanding the world, producing knowledge, and establishing power relations.

From this perspective, cultural diversity in the educational field cannot be reduced to the mere coexistence of different ethnic or linguistic groups within the same space. This entails the coexistence of multiple cosmovision and value systems that can converge, dialogue, or, at times, come into conflict. Such tensions, in fact, they represent valuable pedagogical opportunities, which can become a driving force for critical analysis, ethical reflection, and the construction of meaningful learning (Dallacqua, 2019; Vélez, 2008).

In Latin America, the reflection on cultural diversity has been profoundly shaped by its colonial history. For centuries, Indigenous populations, Afro-descendants, and other ethnic groups have been relegated to subordinate positions, their languages and wisdoms systems have been rendered invisible, and their identities, stigmatized (Vargas, 2019; Viteri, 2020). This historical legacy has given rise to societies marked by enduring social, economic, and political asymmetries, which are also reproduced in the educational sphere. Education, instead of acting as an instrument of liberation, has functioned as a mechanism for reproducing social hierarchies, imposing Eurocentric visions of knowledge and denying the value of local wisdom (Merino, 2019).

In this context, interculturality emerges as a political, pedagogical, and epistemological response. Unlike multiculturalism, which tends to limit itself to recognizing the coexistence of different cultures, interculturality proposes transforming the relationships between them, questioning the power imbalances that have historically placed some cultures and positions of domination and others in positions of subordination (Gómez-Hernández, 2018). In Ecuador, the 2008

Constitution marks a milestone in this regard, declaring the nation as both intercultural and plurinational state, guaranteeing the rights of peoples and nationalities to maintain and strengthen their cultural, linguistic, and territorial identities (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). However, the transition from normative frameworks into concrete educational practices remains a complex challenge, requiring processes of awareness-raising, teacher training, and the development of culturally pertinent pedagogical materials (Valarezo et al., 2019).

The discussion about interculturality has generated a range of conceptual interpretations. Martínez (2018) highlights that it is a polysemous term, whose meaning shifts depending on the historical and political context in which it is employed. While in the European context it is often related to the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, in Latin America, it is closely associated with processes of their decolonization of knowledge and power. This difference determines the priorities and approaches of educational policies and pedagogical practices.

In European contexts, interculturality is often framed around the management of coexistence and preventing cultural conflicts, frequently adopting a paternalistic stance. In contrast, within Latin America, interculturality is rooted in the recognition of a historical debt to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and is oriented toward the construction of a genuinely inclusive and pluralistic model of citizenship (Campani, 2018; Villareal & Ascanio, 2018). Authors such as Wences (2021) argue that interculturality should be understood in critical terms, not as superficial coexistence, or respect, but as an ethical and political project aimed at transforming social and education relations.

From this perspective, three levels of interculturality are acknowledged: the ***relational***, which refers to everyday cultural interactions without necessarily implying structural changes; the ***functional***, which accepts diversity insofar as it is useful to the dominant system; and the ***critical***, which seeks to subvert structures of inequality in pursuit of more equitable and democratic societies (Loh, 2022). This latter dimension is the one with the greatest transformative potential in the education field, it requires

reviewing curricular content, teaching methodologies, pedagogical relationships, and institutional practices.

Inclusive education and critical interculturality converge on a common horizon: to ensure that all students—regardless of their personal, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds— have equitable access to quality learning and can fully participate in school life. This convergence extends beyond the mere physical integration of students into common spaces; it entails the creation of pedagogical conditions that recognize, value, and harness diversity as a source of collective enrichment (UNICEF, 2020). Achieving this requires educational practices that promote intercultural dialogue, empathy, and critical thinking, fostering a pedagogical vision that tolerates difference and considers it essential for the construction of just and cohesive societies (Basantes-Andrade et al., 2025).

Understanding cultural diversity from this perspective entails recognizing that classrooms are profoundly heterogeneous spaces, where different languages, historical memories, and life experiences converge. For educators, this scenario poses significant challenges, but also offers a valuable opportunity to innovate pedagogical practices, develop intercultural competences, and build bridges between diverse knowledge (Belda-Medina, 2024; Derkachova et al., 2022). Adopting pedagogical approaches sensitive to diversity does not merely mean modifying content but redesigning the ways of teaching, assessing, and relating to students, attending to their specific realities and needs. (Basantes-Andrade et al., 2024).

The foundations of inclusive education and cultural diversity extend well beyond the mere recognition of plurality withing the classroom. They demand an active commitment on social justice and the creation of educational environments where every day students can see themselves represented, feel valued, and be supported in realizing their full potential. Within this horizon, innovative pedagogical tools such as educational comics acquire their meaning and potential, as they enable the visibility of diverse identities, promotes critical thinking, and stimulates meaningful teaching and learning processes.

Diversity and Interculturality in Ecuador: Inspiration for Educational Comics

In Ecuador, interculturality is deeply rooted in historical processes and social struggles that have shaped the nation's political and cultural identity. They are particularly linked to the Indigenous movements and other ethnic collectives advocating for the recognition of their territorial, linguistic, and cultural rights. From the mid-twentieth century, and with heightened intensity during the 1960s onwards, Indigenous organizations began demands aimed at achieving structural transformations that ensured the recognition of their territories, languages, justice systems, and educational rights. These elements deemed fundamental for the perpetuation of their cultural heritage and collective identity (Bretón, 2009; Rodríguez, 2017).

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), known in Spanish as *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, emerged as one of the most influential socio-political actors in the country. It strategically articulated its struggles around key issues such as the defense of land rights, the preservation and revitalization of ancestral languages, and the implementation of an intercultural bilingual education system, designed to challenge the cultural and intellectual hegemony imposed by the historically monocultural state (López-Gopar, 2021). These demands crystallized in a historic advance with the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (CRE) in 2008, which recognized the nation as an intercultural and plurinational state, as outlined in the previous section.

The constitutional recognition of plurinationality entails the formal coexistence of diverse nations within the state, effective respect for their legal systems, administrative autonomy, and cultural and linguistic practices. However, the realization of these principles faces significant challenges. Persistent political tensions, the continuation of extractive projects affecting ancestral territories, and entrenched institutional resistance have constrained the development of interculturality in practice (Arias-Gutiérrez & Minoia, 2023; Sempértegui & Báez, 2023).

Initially, the construction of interculturality in Ecuador was primarily oriented towards Indigenous peoples. This has elicited criticism from researchers and social sectors emphasising the need to broaden its focus to include the other historically marginalized groups, such as Afro-Ecuadorians, Montubios, and Mestizos communities with distinct cultural identities (Higuera & Castillo, 2015; Urteaga & García, 2016). Although the 2008 CRE explicitly recognizes interculturality and plurinationality as fundamental principles of the state, in practice, public policies have predominantly centered on the Indigenous population, often relegating the broader ethnic diversity characterising the country to a secondary position (Urteaga & García, 2016).

The achievements attained are undeniable. Since the Constituent Assembly (*Asamblea Constituyente*) of 1998, legal foundations have been established to recognize the cultural, educational, and linguistics rights of peoples and nationalities' accomplishments consolidated with the 2008 Constitution. This normative framework enabled the creation of institutions such as the Council for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Nationalities of Ecuador (CODENPE) known as *Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas del Ecuador*, as well as the institutionalization of entities dedicated to bilingual intercultural education and health with a culturally relevant approach. Furthermore, significant progress has been attained in the delimitation and legalization of ancestral territories, particularly in the Amazon region, thereby strengthening the organizational autonomy of Indigenous communities (Gómez et al., 2018).

Ecuadorian ethnic diversity is undeniably rich and complex. According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, INEC, 2023), 77.5% of the population self-identify as Mestizo, 7.7% as Montubio, 7.6% as Indigenous, 4.9% as Afro-Ecuadorian, 2.2% as White, and 0.1% as belonging to other ethnic identities. These data reflect the profound plurality of the country and underscore the necessity of promoting inclusive public policies that acknowledge and respect the diversity in all its dimensions.

CODENPE and UNICEF (n.d.) have officially identified 14 nationalities and 18 indigenous peoples distributed across Ecuador's diverse geographical regions. This cultural mosaic constitutes provides the contextual foundation for the narratives presented in the comics included in this educational volume. The stories depicted in these pages draw inspiration from the lived experiences, collective memories, cosmovisions, and region-specific challenges faced by these communities, with the purpose of offering a nuanced and respectful representation of Ecuador's vast cultural diversity. Table 1 provides a summary of this cultural richness:

Table 1
Peoples and nationalities of Ecuador by geographic region

Geographic region	Nationalities	Peoples
The Coast	Awá; Chachi; Épera; Tsáchila	Afroecuadorian; Montubio
The highlands	Kichwa	Otavalo; Karanki; Natabuela; Kayambi; Quitu -Kara; Panzaleo; Salasaka; Saraguro; Puruhá; Cañari; Waranka; Palta
The Amazon	Achuar; Andwa (Andoa); Cofán (A'i); Kichwa; Secoya; Shiwiar; Shuar; Siona; Sapara; Waorani	Tagaeri -Taromenane (peoples in voluntary isolation)

Source: UNICEF (2013)

This cultural wealth serves as the cornerstone for envisioning an authentic interculturality, conceived as peaceful coexistence, active dialogue, wisdom exchange and mutual recognition among the various nationalities and peoples. According to CONAIE (2007), the plurinational state is envisaged as a political organization model aimed at decolonizing historical power structures, promoting social justice, and constructing economic and social alternatives to the neoliberal model, strengthening popular sovereignty and social and political equity.

It is crucial to emphasize that the realization of this vision requires interculturality not to remain anchored in symbolic or discursive realms but to be translated into concrete, institutional, and everyday practices. This entails guaranteeing collaborative rights, such as the autonomy of community governments, respect for Indigenous legal systems, and the integration of wisdoms and cosmovisions in areas such as education and cultural production (CRE, 2008; García & Tuasa, 2007).

The 2008 Constitution explicitly enshrines these principles. Article 1 defines Ecuador as a constitutional state of rights and justice, social, democratic, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, plurinational, and secular. It also recognizes rights such as intercultural communication (Art.16), the construction and preservation of cultural identity (Art. 21), and citizen participation in the formulation of public policies with an intercultural approach (Art. 23). Furthermore, it establishes the mandate to protect and strengthen the identity, traditions, and forms of social organisation of communities, peoples, and nationalities (Arts. 56–57).

In the educational domain, the CRE accords a central role to the Intercultural Bilingual Education System (*Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, SEIB), conceived as the result of decades of social struggles. This system encompasses all educational levels, from early childhood education to higher education, and operates articulated with the paradigm of *Buen Vivir* (*Sumak Kawsay* in Kichwa), integrating contemporary scientific knowledge with the ancestral wisdom of Ecuador's diverse peoples and nationalities. (Higuera & Castillo, 2015). Furthermore, Article 276 explicitly links interculturality to the national development model, mandating that development strategies must protect and promote cultural diversity while safeguarding spaces for cultural reproduction and exchange. It also places limits on neoliberal and extractive economic policies.

In this context, speaking of diversity and interculturality in Ecuador entails referring to a political, legal, social, and educational horizon that aspires to transform the nation into a more just, equitable, and culturally plural society. It is precisely within this context weave of historical struggles, political aspirations, and cultural richness that

the educational comic assumes a special significance. The graphic narratives presented in this book transcend their pedagogical function and positioning themselves as tools for visibility, recognition, and intercultural dialogue. Through their visual narratives, they aim to raise awareness of collective rights, honor the diversity of identities, and promote meaningful learning processes that contribute to the construction of a truly intercultural and plurinational Ecuadorian society.

Intercultural Education: Foundations, Challenges, and Perspectives

Intercultural education has become established in Latin America as a fundamental component of educational policies due to its pedagogical relevance and its social and political implications. Over the past decades, its prominence has increased, driven by the impetus of social movements demanding recognition and equity among the diverse cultures coexisting within their territory. This educational paradigm seeks to overcome monocultural structures that have historically rendered invisible Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and other historically marginalized groups (Granados-Beltrán, 2021; Valarezo et al., 2019).

From a critical perspective, intercultural education promotes the integration of ancestral and local knowledge into formal curricula, fostering a dialogue with contemporary scientific knowledge. Such articulation represents an act of historical justice and constitutes a means to promote critical thinking, inclusion, and respect for epistemic diversity (Walsh, 2020). UNICEF (2020) asserts that the educational system constitutes a key space for social transformation, serving as a platform for cohesion and as an engine for emancipatory processes: "The educational system is the foundation of human formation and an instrument not only for maintaining society but for the development, growth, transformation and liberation of that society and all its human potentialities" (p.11).

Intercultural education extends beyond the confines of formal schooling, unfolding within community, familial, productive, and symbolic spaces where collective identities are configured (Likszenberg & Lesta, 2020). It is a social and political process that demands the implementation of pedagogical, institutional, and

community strategies coherent with the socio-cultural realities of the territories.

In Ecuador, this framework is grounded in the Constitution of the Republic (2008), which designates the country a plurinational and intercultural state. Article 347 mandates that the educational system must "strengthen the cultural identity of peoples and nationalities" and guarantee the right to bilingual and intercultural education for Indigenous peoples (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2008). This mandate has driven various policies and programs aimed at recognizing the country's cultural and linguistic plurality, although their implementation continues to face significant challenges.

Garcia and Rojas (2019) contend that intercultural education involves establishing processes of comprehensive intercultural communication aimed at fostering relationships grounded in recognition, appreciation, and equity. Nonetheless, they warn that this transformative model requires a profound revision of traditional pedagogical approaches to develop educational proposals capable of addressing ethnic and cultural complexity from a plural and democratic perspective (Martín-González et al., 2020).

In this regard, Garcia and Sáez (2021) identified several key components that underpin the consolidating intercultural educational policies. These include the recognition of the right of all ethnic groups to contribute their knowledge to the educational system; consideration of intra-ethnic diversity; respect for all cultures without imposing assimilation processes; and the acknowledgment that intercultural education is necessary for society as a whole, rather than exclusively for groups categorized as "minorities". They underscore that challenges arising from cultural diversity cannot be addressed unilaterally but instead require transcultural frameworks that conceptualize knowledge as a collective good.

At the regional level, Granados-Beltrán (2021) expresses that intercultural education in Latin America must move beyond a paternalistic welfare perspective and advance toward a critical praxis that questions power structures and cultural hierarchies. The author contends that integrating interculturality into educational systems involves recognizing the coexistence of multiple epistemologies, making visible the asymmetrical relations between knowledge and

fostering pedagogical scenarios where cultures engage in dialogue on equal terms.

Tipa (2019) highlights that higher education has allowed the access of Indigenous and Afro-descendant students to university institutions and has favored the inclusion of their own knowledge within teaching and research programs. However, challenges persist, in the domains of institutional management, the theoretical design of programs, and the tensions arising from the encounter between diverse knowledge systems (Walsh, 2020). These tensions extend beyond the academic sphere, taking on political dimensions that reflect the confrontation between hegemonic visions of education and emancipatory proposals grounded in non-Western epistemologies.

Recent studies have revealed that, although normative and discursive advances exist, the actual implementation of intercultural policies remains partial and, at times, limited to programs directed exclusively at Indigenous populations, thereby marginalizing other groups such as Afro-descendants, Montubios, or migrants (Gómez-Hernández, 2018;Urteaga & García, 2016). This fragmentation obstructs the development of genuinely inclusive and plural educational systems.

Against this backdrop, intercultural education emerges as a strategic field for building more just, democratic, and diverse societies. Its challenge is to transform curricular content and pedagogical methods, power relations, and cultural frameworks that have historically defined the educational system. As Walsh (2009) and Granados-Beltrán (2021) assert, interculturality cannot be reduced to an aesthetic discourse; rather, it must be envisioned as a political, ethical, and pedagogical project committed to dignity and social justice for all peoples.

Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador

In Ecuador, efforts to integrate interculturality into the educational system have been a fundamental advance in articulating ancestral and Western knowledge. This approach responds to a holistic vision in which different ways of life and levels of learning converge. As Walsh (2005) asserts, talking about interculturality and educational models implies: “Confront and transform colonial designs that have positioned the knowledge of Indigenous people as non-modern and

local, in contrast to the universality and timelessness of Western knowledge" (p.20).

Interculturality in Ecuador has passed through fundamental milestones throughout its history, consolidating meaningful processes in both rural and urban contexts. In the 1940s, leaders such as Tránsito Amaguaña led the founding of the first Indigenous schools in Cayambe, advocating for access to education for Indigenous communities and the most vulnerable populations. Subsequently, in the 1950s, the Summer Institute of Linguistics promoted literacy and training, in the Amazon region, drawing on social sciences and theological currents.

Similarly, in the 1960s, Léonidas Proaño, Bishop of Chimborazo, founded the Popular Radio Schools of Ecuador (ERPE), known in Spanish as *Escuelas Radiofónicas populares del Ecuador,* with the purpose of reaching the Indigenous population through literacy programs and educational materials (Conejo,2008; Krainer & Guerra, 2016; Vélez, 2008). The impact of the ERPE facilitated the creation of similar experiences in Shuar communities, strengthening the use of Indigenous languages and generating demand for educational projects that integrated rural development with intercultural education.

While Indigenous popular action constituted the initial driving force for intercultural bilingual education, it was between during the 1960s and 1970s that more significant advances were consolidated, through the involvement of non-governmental organizations associated with the progressive Catholic Church and the work of private Indigenous institutions (Rodríguez, 2017). During the government of Jaime Roldós Aguilera, Indigenous political discourse was revitalized, with the inclusion of public policies aimed at strengthening Indigenous educational initiatives from the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. This governmental support proved crucial in the institutional consolidation of bilingual intercultural education (Vélez, 2008).

In the 1980s, the implementation of a national Kichwa literacy program ((Higuera & Castillo, 2015), marked a milestone in the integration of interculturality into the Ecuador's educational system. Building on these efforts, the National Director of Intercultural Bilingual *Education (Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, DINEIB), was established, in 1993, followed by the creation

of the Intercultural Bilingual Education Model (*Modelo de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, MOSEIB) in 1993. Krainer and Guerra (2016) highlight that these achievements were not only educational but also political "[...] as in this way were opened for Indigenous participation in public administration, and the capacity to consolidate a pedagogy that addressed diversity, and specificity was recognized" (p.46).

In the same decade, processes of state modernization drove the official incorporation of interculturality as a transversal axis within educational curricula. The 2008 Constitution formally recognized Ecuador as a plurinational and intercultural state. Specifically, Article 57, numeral 14, reinforced the intercultural character of education by strengthening the Intercultural Bilingual Education System (SEIB). Furthermore, Article 347, numeral 9, established the primacy of Indigenous nationalities' own languages as the principal medium of instruction, reserving Spanish as the intercultural relational language (Rodríguez, 2017). This principle was necessary to achieve *Buen Vivir* (*Sumak Kawsay* in Kichwa).

Subsequently, in 2010 the Organic Law of Higher Education (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior*, LOES) was enacted, followed in April 2011, the Organic Law of Intercultural Ecuador (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural*, LOEI). The LOEI devotes fifteen articles to the SEIB and establishes that interculturality must permeate the entire national educational system. Both laws highlight interculturality as a cornerstone in the formation of citizens committed to social transformation. LOES (2010, art. 8, lit. g) establishes that higher education must serve as "spaces for strengthening the constitutional, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, plurinational, and secular State", while its functions underscore the importance of: "promoting and strengthening the development of the languages, cultures, and ancestral wisdoms of the peoples and nationalities of Ecuador within the framework of interculturality" (LOES, 2010, art. 13, lit. l, p. 11).

The LOEI established a distinctive educational system, termed intercultural, which organizes districts and circuits in territories with a high indigenous population, under the administration of representatives from those nationalities. Since this the enactment of this regulation, a new educational management model has been progressively implemented, comprising nine educational zones,

140 districts, and 1,117 educational circuits, all intended to serve the broader National Educational System (Krainer & Guerra, 2016). This process also integrates personnel from Ministry of Education of Ecuador across all levels.

The Ministry has prioritized the strengthening of Intercultural Bilingual Education (*Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, EIB), as a relevant advance in the last decade. Hence, Ecuador has 21 districts of Intercultural Bilingual Education, led by representatives of the predominant nationality in each territory, and 190 intercultural bilingual educational circuits, which integrate the administrative structure with local cultural and linguistic particularities (Ministerio de Educación, 2015). In 2012, the General Regulation to the LOEI was approved, consolidating the normative framework for the effective implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education System (SEIB) (Higuera & Castillo, 2015).

The path of intercultural bilingual education in Ecuador has been marked by challenges. Vélez (2008) critiques that the public policies implemented represent a "multiculturalist" approach based on superficial celebration of diversity, without achieving profound recognition of cultural differences nor the structural transformation necessary for a more just and equitable society. As the author states: "Interculturality is a political proposal aimed at achieving more just and equitable societies, where the exercise of difference is truly a citizen's right and education genuinely contributes to transforming situations of inequality and exclusion" (Vélez, 2008, p. 56).

In this context, teacher training emerges as a key factor for advancing substantive transformations. The LOES (2010), establishes the right of teachers to periodic training in their respective fields, aimed at promoting their academic and pedagogical development. Within the framework of educational reform, the so-called Millennium Units (*Unidades del Milenio*) were established as bilingual intercultural institutions equipped with advanced infrastructure and educational technology. These units were designed to gradually replace traditional intercultural bilingual schools, aligning national educational policy with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

Simultaneously, universities known as "of Excellence" were created, such as Universidad de las Artes (UniArtes), (University of the Arts),

Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) [the National University of Education], Universidad Regional Amazónica (IKIAM) [the Amazon Regional University], and Yachay Tech. Rodríguez (2017) notes that, despite their modern orientation, these institutions reproduce curricula permeated by Hispanocentric models and Western perspectives, generating tensions with the Indigenous cosmovision that conceives educational institutions as extensions of the community (Fernández, 2005).

Higher education institutions have promoted "Affirmative Action Programs" to facilitate the access and retention of Indigenous and Afro-descendant students. Nevertheless, persistent social and cultural barriers continue to hinder their full integration into the university system. UNAE has emerged as a reference institution in teacher training aimed at strengthening of Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) (Hernández, 2016). Solórzano (2016), identifies several pending challenges for EIB, including the limited pedagogical interest in Indigenous content, some parents' preference for Spanish-language education for their children, and the tendency towards universal educational models that minimize the relevance of non-Western knowledge. Despite these difficulties, intercultural bilingual education remains a strategic project that seeks to transform cultural diversity into a driver of local and national development.

Within this framework, the advances, and challenges of intercultural bilingual education in Ecuador highlight the need for innovative pedagogical methodologies that integrate cultural content and didactic tools capable of representing and valuing diversity. In this context, the educational comic acquires relevance; its visual and narrative language allows the expression of knowledge, identities, and social realities from a culturally situated perspective. The articulation between interculturality and pedagogical resources such as the comic opens new opportunities to construct educational spaces so that they reflect national plurality, promotes student participation, and contribute to the consolidation of a transformative education committed to social justice.

Comics in Education: Visual Language, Critical Narrative, and an Intercultural Bridge

In recent decades, the educational comic has consolidated its position as a didactic resource of considerable importance, valued for its capacity to articulate the narrative, the visual, and the pedagogical. It is defined as a visual narrative that integrates text and image, structured in sequences of panels, explicitly designed to communicate knowledge, promote learning, and stimulate cognitive, and affective processes in students (Dallacqua, 2019; Derkachova et al., 2022). Unlike the entertainment comic, whose purpose is predominantly recreational or artistic, the educational comic pursues pedagogical objectives such as explaining complex concepts, raising awareness about social issues, or fostering critical reflection (Pantaleo, 2021).

Beyond its apparent simplicity, the comic constitutes a pedagogical language with considerable potential, operating simultaneously on aesthetic (artistic), cognitive, and affective levels. Through the articulation of verbal, visual, and symbolic elements, it establishes a multimodal form of communication that aligns with the demands of contemporary education, which acknowledges the diverse ways in which students process information. According to multimodal learning theory, individuals learn better when different modes of representation such as text, image, and symbols are integrated (Yu & Sumayao, 2022). By combining these elements, the comic offers an ideal medium for constructing complex meaning in an accessible and meaningful manner (Sousanis, 2015).

One of the principal strengths of the educational comic lies in its capacity to represent cultural and social realities, thereby functioning as a medium through which the experiences, memories, and cosmovision of diverse communities can be expressed. Its narrative dimensions facilitate the construction of stories that connect directly with students' environment and daily lives. This emotional and intellectual connection is key to consolidating significant learning and strengthening students' self-esteem, as they see themselves represented in characters, contexts, or issues with which they can identify (Dallacqua & Peralta, 2022; Pantaleo, 2021).

Moreover, the comic constitutes a valuable pedagogical resource for fostering empathy and raising awareness on topics such as cultural

diversity, educational inclusion, human rights, or social issues. Recent studies have demonstrated that the creation of comics by students promotes understanding of special educational needs, promotes deep reflection on cultural differences, and contributes to generating more inclusive and respectful school environments (García & López, 2023). In this sense, the comic extends beyond the mere transmission of information: it grants visibility and legitimacy to students' experiences, affording them voice and agency within the educational process.

From a cognitive and pedagogical standpoint, the comic stimulates both critical thinking and the development of communicative competencies. Reading a comic is not a passive act but rather an interpretive exercise in which students must infer events occurring between panels, establish connections between visual elements and narrative meaning, and reconstruct the overall coherence of the story (Smyth, 2023). This process fosters analytical, metacognitive, and emotional skills while enabling the exploration of multiple perspectives and connections with complex social and cultural realities.

The visual economy of the comic constitutes another educational advantage; through visual metaphors, speech balloons, color codes, and other graphic devices, it can synthesize dense or abstract information into comprehensible and engaging formats (Huang et al., 2024). This capacity makes it a highly versatile pedagogical tool, applicable across various curriculum disciplines such as history, social sciences, natural sciences, language, and citizenship education. In this regard, the comic acts as a bridge connecting the academic with the everyday, and the abstract with the tangible, facilitating students' access to knowledge in ways that are both contextualized and meaningful.

The incorporation of comics into the classroom enables the accommodation of diverse learning styles. While some students feel more comfortable with visual stimuli, others prefer textual or narrative ones. The hybrid nature of the comic offers multiple entry points to knowledge, adapting to different abilities, interests, and educational trajectories (Jacobs, 2017). This inclusive quality is especially relevant in intercultural contexts, where students from

diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds coexist. By virtue of its visual language, the comic mitigates linguistic barriers and enhances comprehension, positioning itself as a strategic pedagogical resource for intercultural and bilingual education (Moreno-Vera et al., 2021).

From a methodological standpoint, the creation of comics by students constitutes an innovative pedagogical strategy. The creation of a comic requires narrative planning, information synthesis, character design, dialogue construction, and the coherent articulation of visual elements. This process enhances creativity, reinforces linguistic and graphic competencies, and promotes autonomy and self-regulation in learning (Huang et al., 2024). Furthermore, it allows students to project their experiences, values, and emotions, contributing to a more personalized and meaningful pedagogy (Dallacqua & Peralta, 2022).

Another virtue of the comic lies in its potential for interdisciplinary application; its thematic flexibility allows it to address transversal contents such as interculturality, gender equality, environmental sustainability, or human rights. Integrating the comic into the curriculum enriches the teaching of each subject and fosters the construction of a critical and holistic cosmovision (Derkachova et al., 2022). Within the framework of this book, the comic is presented as both a didactic resource and a bridge to sow diversity, make cultural realities visible, and build truly inclusive and transformative education.

Pedagogical Attributes of the Educational Comic: A Multimodal and Inclusive Tool

Within the educational field, the comic emerges as an effective and flexible pedagogical strategy, capable of integrating visual and textual narratives to address the challenges of contemporary teaching. Its application in education contexts has intensified over recent decades, driven by the need to diversify didactic resources and cater to the heterogeneity of students. Beyond its recreational use, the educational comic is characterized by six pedagogical attributes: multimodality, sequentially, accessibility, creativity, critical and reflective character, emotional dimension, and engagement.

- **Multimodality:** The capacity to integrate diverse languages: verbal, visual, and symbolic into a single communicative structure. This convergence allows the comic to offer multiple pathways to meaning, adapting to the different learning styles present in the classroom. The simultaneous use of images, words, colors, and symbols enables the transmission of the same concept through various channels, thereby reinforcing comprehension and facilitating information retention. According to Sousanis (2015) and Moreno-Vera et al. (2021), this attribute makes the comic an ideal tool for representing complex processes, explaining abstract phenomena, or narrating social realities in a clear and engaging manner.

- **Sequentially:** The narratives are organized into panels or frames that allow a logical order allowing information to be broken down into more manageable fragments. Each panel constitutes a minimal unit of meaning, and the set of panels generates a coherent narrative that guides the reader in constructing meaning. This staggered sequentially facilitates students' mental reconstruction of concepts and events, reinforcing overall understanding and reducing cognitive overload (Huang et al., 2024).

- **Accessibility:** The fusion between visual and written language brings complex content closer to students who might have difficulties understanding written texts. This characteristic is particularly relevant in inclusive educational contexts, where students with varying linguistic competencies, specific educational needs, or learning barriers coexist. The comic synthesizes information, employs clear visual resources, and uses graphic metaphors to explain abstract ideas, thereby facilitating learning and reducing cognitive load (Jacobs, 2017).

- **Creativity:** Engaging students in comic creation stimulates competencies such as information synthesis, narrative planning, visual design, and written expression. This process fosters metacognitive thinking, reinforces autonomy, and allows students to project their own experiences, emotions, and perspectives into the final product (Dallacqua & Peralta, 2022). The practice of designing comics has become an innovative didactic methodology that promotes more personalized and authentic learning.

- **Critical and Reflective Character:** Its narrative nature allows addressing social, ethical, or cultural issues presented through conflicts, dilemmas, and characters. This facilitates critical analysis, stimulates divergent thinking, and enables debate on topics related to social justice, cultural diversity, or human rights (Jacobs, 2017; Moreno-Vera et al., 2021), promoting social awareness and civic engagement.

- **Emotional Dimension and Engagement:** Its ability to capture interest and provoke an emotional connection in the reader. The inclusion of characters with human trails, stories close to students' realities, and situations charged with emotional significance contributes to generating engagement and motivating active student involvement. Pantaleo (2021) argues that the effective bond created through graphic storytelling enhances meaningful learning, as emotions support memory and deep comprehension of content. Moreover, the comic allows sensitive or complex topics such as cultural diversity, human rights, or social justice to be addressed in an accessible and empathetic manner.

An Innovative Experience: ITP and the Creation of Educational Comics in Ecuador

Since 2017, educational institutions from different continents such as Universidad Técnica del Norte- Ecuador and PXL University (Belgium) have collaborated in promoting inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices. This strategic alliance has strengthened teacher training through the exchange of knowledge, innovative methodologies and pedagogical approaches centered on diversity (Belda-Medina, 2024).

Within the framework of seeking inclusive and culturally responsive educational practices, the International Innovative Teacher Training Programme Based on Practice (ITP) emerged, funded by VLIR-UOS and led by PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Belgium). This programme is developed in collaboration with international institutions including Universidad Técnica del Norte (UTN), Jimma University (Ethiopia), North-West University (South Africa), and Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia).

Its main purpose is to strengthen the intercultural competences of teacher educators through a practical, collaborative, and situated approach, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 4 (Quality Educations) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). These principles position cultural diversity as an essential component of transformative education, capable of responding to the complex challenges of contemporary societies (Barrow, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). As Mardešić (2023) asserts, training teachers with intercultural competences is key to building equitable and culturally sensitive educational environments, in line with Rosen et al. (2024), who highlight the value of training grounded in experience and critical reflection.

Within this collaboration Universidad Técnica del Norte (UTN) led the design and development of an innovative pedagogical initiative: the book *Classrooms Without Borders: Education, Inclusion and Diversity through Comics*, in collaboration with PXL University. This project integrates educational comics as a didactic resource to foster inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and social justice in diverse teaching contexts. The choice of the comic responds to its capacity to visually represent cultural plurality, facilitate meaningful learning, and stimulate critical thinking (Aikman & Dyer, 2012; Sousanis, 2015). Furthermore, it constitutes an accessible and effective medium to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, promoting empathy and awareness towards diversity (Savoia et al., 2024).

The development of this book was undertaken through a collaborative process involving teacher-researchers and students from various disciplines, including Educational Psychopedagogy, Psychology, Arts and Humanities Pedagogy, National and Foreign Language Pedagogy, Visual Arts, and Graphic Design. From the selection of topics related to diversity, scriptwriting, sketching and panel creation, to the final integration of text and digitized images, a horizontal, creative, and participatory workspace was fostered. This process enabled the development of educational materials, strengthened digital competences, promoted pedagogical reflection, fostered intercultural sensitivity, and enhanced both creativity and visual communication among the participants.

Each story narrated in this book constitutes concrete evidence of the potential of the educational comic to cultivate diversity, build

community, and open pathways towards a more inclusive, critical, and humane education. This Ecuadorian experience illustrates how intercultural education, and the comic can converge to transform pedagogical practices and make diverse realities visible, offering students and teachers tools to construct more just and equitable educational environments.

This volume is fully embedded within the framework of international best educational practices and naturally connects with other global experiences in which the comic has been consolidated as an effective tool for addressing diversity, fostering inclusion, and promoting social awareness, as will be examined in the following section.

The Educational Comic in Action: International Experiences

The comic has evolved from being recreational medium to becoming a recognized pedagogical and sociocultural instrument. Experiences gathered from various countries demonstrate that the comic facilitates content teaching and establishes itself as a privileged resource for addressing sensitive topics, stimulating critical thinking, and building inclusive educational environments. These international practices highlight the potential of the comic to act as both educational and critical instruments, capable of articulating learning processes with an active commitment to social responsibility.

In the United States, one of the most emblematic projects is *The Comic Book Project*, led by Michael Bitz. Implemented in over 850 schools, this programme invites children and adolescents to create comics reflecting their culture, language, or social concerns. Bitz (2016) emphasizes that this methodology has positively impacted immigrant students, who, by narrating their personal stories, strengthen their self-esteem, improve linguistic skills, and develop a stronger sense of belonging. This experience illustrates how comics, due to their multimodal nature, facilitate identity expression and cultural integration in diverse educational settings.

Smyth (2023), for his part, incorporated comics into science and humanities degree programs to facilitate scientific dissemination and critical analysis of texts and social contexts. Similarly, in Finland, comics have been integrated into teacher training education

programs to promote inclusion and cultural diversity in the university classroom (Huang et al., 2024).

In the United Kingdom, the *Graphic Justice* project, documented by Jacobs (2017), demonstrates the power of the comic to open critical debates in secondary education. In this initiative, students created comics addressing racial discrimination and human rights, processes that served to develop narrative and visual skills, generate spaces for ethical reflection and intercultural dialogue. The comics were exhibited in school communities, catalyzing profound conversations on prejudice and social equity. This experience confirms that the comic can articulate academic learning with social engagements, forming critical and participatory citizens.

In Spain, the use of comics in pre-service teacher education has enhanced creativity and multimodal literacy, equipping future teachers to face contemporary educational challenges (García-Ruiz et al., 2021). García- Hernández et al. (2022) describe workshops in Spanish schools where primary and secondary students created comics on functional diversity, migration, and gender. Following these interventions, a notable decrease in stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes was observed, alongside an increase in empathy and social sensitivity among students. The participating teachers noted that the comic enabled the addressing of delicate topics in an accessible, visual, and emotional manner, thereby fostering the construction of more inclusive school environments.

In the Canadian context, Pantaleo (2021) studied the use of comics in intercultural education, focusing on narratives created by Indigenous students. These comics served to make visible their identities, cosmovision, and native languages, integrating them into the school curriculum. According to Pantaleo, this approach strengthened Indigenous students' cultural self-esteem and raised awareness among the rest of the educational community about the richness and diversity of their traditions. This practice underscores the role of the comic as a key resource for decolonizing educational contents and promoting an intercultural pedagogy based on recognition and respect for cultural differences.

Another important contribution is the work of Davies (2019) in his book *Urban Comics: Infrastructure and the Global City in Contemporary*

Graphic Narratives, which analyses comics produced in cities such as Cairo, Cape Town, New Orleans, Delhi, and Beirut. Davies introduces the concept of "infrastructural form" to describe how the comic becomes a visual and narrative tool capable of representing, questioning, and reconstructing urban spaces. These graphic narratives reveal that cities are not neutral spaces but are charged with political and social tensions, capable of enabling or restricting specific forms of social life. In education, this approach opens new possibilities for addressing topics such as urbanism, social inequality, and spatial justice through the accessible and emotionally powerful language of comics. In a similarly critical vein, Giddens (2018), in his study *On Comics and Legal Aesthetics*, explores the intersection between law and comic, highlighting how the multimodality of the comic reveals the emotional, cultural, and visual dimensions of legal systems. Giddens argues that the comic challenges the purely textual and rational view of law, allowing power discourses to be questioned and alternative readings of justice to be explored. Within the educational domain, this perspective is particularly significant, as it positions comics as a tool for critical literacy and ethical reflection beyond conventional contents.

A recent and relevant example emerges from Belgium in the work of Furniere (2023), which highlights the experience of the artist Judith Vanistendael, who addresses taboo subjects and complex contemporary life issues through the comic. Her work is linked to artistic collectives and social movements, using graphic narratives to make visible women's experiences around equality, intercultural relationships, family crises, terminal illnesses, gender violence, and ethical dilemmas related to war and climate change, among others. This demonstrates how the comic transcends their pedagogical function to become a language of cultural resistance and social transformation. Expressing oneself without fear means communicating ideas and emotions authentically, overcoming the fear of judgement or rejection. For Vanistendael, comics serve as a vehicle for fostering such freedom, inspiring people to be themselves and contribute to a more open and just society.

In Latin America, universities in countries such as Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina have implemented projects where students create comics to address social, historical, and scientific issues.

These initiatives have strengthened visual literacy and the ability to synthesize, as well as foster participation and critical thinking in the university classroom (Moreno-Vera et al., 2021). For instance, in Colombia, university workshops have employed graphic narratives for training in human rights and historical memory, while in Mexico, comics have been used in social science courses to analyze cultural and political phenomena.

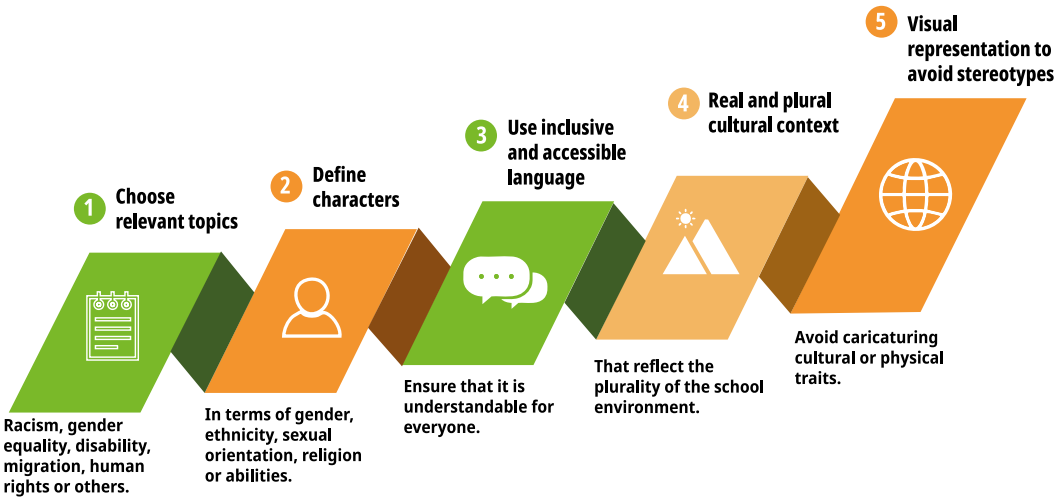
In Ecuador, recent experiences demonstrate that the integration of comics into university curricula fosters comprehension of complex topics and the development of critical and creative skills. For instance, in teacher education programs, comics have enabled future educators to examine educational scenarios from an inclusive and reflective perspective, facilitating discussions on diversity and equity (García-Ruiz et al., 2021). The experiences presented in this section constitute valuable references for the design of didactic proposals aimed at transforming the schools into a more inclusive, plural, and culturally responsive learning environments.

How to Design an Educational Comic with a Focus on Diversity

Designing an educational comic with a focus on diversity involves more than illustrating scenes or narrating stories; it is a profound pedagogical exercise that demands ethical, cultural, and aesthetic reflection on the messages conveyed and the realities represented. The specialized literature (Dallacqua & Peralta, 2022; Pantaleo, 2021) emphasizes that the creation of comics in educational contexts must aim to generate inclusion, foster empathy, and dismantle stereotypes, becoming a didactic resource coherent with the principles of intercultural and critical education.

Based on the professional experience of the authors, Figure 1 presents a structured proposal consisting of five recommended steps for designing an educational comic with an intercultural emphasis. These steps are detailed below.

Figure 1
Five steps to design an educational comic with an intercultural approach



- **Selecting Relevant Themes:** The educational comic allows complex issues to be addressed in an accessible and emotionally meaningful way. Topics such as racism, gender equality, functional diversity, migration, human rights, and others, are suitable for exploration through this multimodal language. Its graphic representation facilitates students' understanding of realities that can sometimes seem distant or abstract when presented solely in written texts. Choosing themes close to students' experiences fosters a sense of belonging and grants legitimacy to their own lived experiences, connecting teaching with their cultural and social context.

- **Defining Diverse Characters:** In terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or abilities. The presence of plural protagonists enables students to see themselves reflected and recognized, which strengthens self-esteem and promotes emotional identification with narratives. According to Dallacqua and Peralta (2022), comics that include diverse characters contribute to normalizing social heterogeneity and combating the invisibility of historically marginalized groups. It is important to note that merely including diverse characters is insufficient, it is essential to grant them active roles, avoid stereotypes, and ensure their voices and perspectives are respected and represented with dignity.

- **The Use of Inclusive and Accessible Language:** In the educational comic, both written text and visual language must be carefully crafted to ensure comprehensibility for all students, regardless of their linguistic or cognitive competencies. This involves avoiding unnecessary technical terms, using respectful vocabulary, and adopting a non-sexist and non-discriminatory approach. It is advisable to design panels with brief, clear messages accompanied by graphic resources that reinforce meaning, thereby optimizing reading comprehension and visual memory.

- **Incorporating Real and Plural Cultural Contexts:** This means situating stories in scenarios recognizable to students, using symbolic elements specific to different cultures and depicting customs, ways of life and artistic expressions of diverse communities. This approach enriches learning, legitimizes local wisdom, and contributes to strengthening students' cultural identity. Derkachova et al. (2022) highlight that the comic is an ideal resource to integrate interculturality in the classroom, as it allows the visual representation of cultural practices that might be relegated to superficial mentions in curricular contents.

- **Visual Representation to Avoid Stereotypes:** One of the most common criticisms of the traditional comic has been their tendency to caricature cultural, physical, or gender traits, reproducing harmful clichés. To prevent this, the creator must conduct a critical analysis of each panel, and the symbols used, avoiding exaggerated features, colors that reinforce stigmas (such as dark tones for villains and light tones for heroes), or narrative situations that perpetuate prejudices. The challenge lies in maintaining the artistic expressiveness of the comic without falling into simplifications that foster biased views of the cultures or groups represented.

Designing an educational comic oriented towards diversity involves careful planning of contents, characters, and messages, employing visual language responsibly and critically. This proposal aligns with the pedagogical commitment to build an inclusive, plural, and culturally sensitive school environment where students can see themselves reflected and recognized in the narratives explored in the classroom.

Visual Language and Types of Speech Balloons in Graphic Narrative in Comics

The visual language of comics plays an essential role by integrating text and image into a narrative system. Within this system, balloons are graphic elements that convey words and provide information about emotions, voice volume, narrative tone, and the dynamics of interaction among characters (Antony & Huang, 2025; Figueiredo et al., 2019; Perea, 2024). Understanding their uses is indispensable for analysing or producing comics for educational or cultural purposes.

Based on what is presented in Perea (2024) and complemented with recent academic literature, it is possible to identify the main types of balloons and their narrative function. Table 2 summarises these types and illustrates their potential to express emotions, situations, and nuances in graphic stories.

Table 2

Types of speech balloons and their narrative function in comic strip narratives

Type of balloon	Visual characteristics	Narrative function	Balloon shape
Normal Dialogue	Oval -shaped, tail pointing to the character	Represents regular speech between characters	
Vertical Dialogue	Vertically oriented oval	Used when horizontal space is limited	
Thought	Cloud -shaped, tail made of small bubbles	Expresses internal thoughts or inner monologues	
Caption (Narration)	Rectangular, no tail	Narrator's voice; indicates context, time, or place	
Shouting or Exclamation	Jagged or irregular edges, bold or capitalized text	Indicates shouting, exclamations or intense emotions	
Whisper	Dashed or dotted edges, fine lines	Represents soft -spoken dialogue or secrets	

Electronic Device	Tail shaped like a lightning bolt; straight or square edges	Voice from electronic devices, robots, or technological sounds	
Weakness or Fatigue	Wavy edges, trembling lines	Indicates physical weakness, exhaustion, or altered states	
Extended Speech	Several balloons connected by "bridges"	Distributes long speeches into visually organised segments	

Source: *Adapted from Perea* (2024); *Dey and Bokil* (2021).

These speech balloons are not merely graphic ornaments; their strategic use affects the emotional, cognitive, and narrative interpretation of the story (Antony & Huang, 2025). For instance, a jagged balloon conveys urgency or aggression, whereas one with wavy lines suggests weakness or fatigue, directly influencing how the reader perceives a scene or character (Borkent, 2023; Perea, 2024).

In the context of this educational initiative *Classrooms Without Borders*, mastery of these visual elements enables the creation of comics that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally responsive. The considered use of speech balloons supports the dismantling of linguistic and cultural barriers, fosters empathy and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds, and enhances emotional expression, critical thinking, and student creativity (Forceville, 2023). Thus, a thorough understanding of speech balloon types and their communicative functions is essential for maximizing the pedagogical potential of comic narratives, particularly in multicultural or multilingual classrooms.

Integrating this knowledge into teaching practice opens new pedagogical possibilities, making the comic into an enjoyable, educational, and transformative resource.

Pedagogical Strategies for Integrating Comics into the Curriculum

The integration of educational comics into the curriculum requires innovative and reflective methodologies that transcend the

occasional use of this resource as illustrative materials. To transform comics into a genuine pedagogical tool, they must be articulated with contemporary didactic approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), critical education, and interdisciplinary teaching.

An effective strategy is Project-Based Learning (PBL). Within this approach, students undertake the challenge of creating a comic as a final product, working on themes related to diversity and interculturality, such as gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, the denunciation of racial prejudices, and others. This process encompasses research, information gathering, character design, dialogue development, and panel composition, integrating knowledge from various curricular areas. Moreover, it fosters transversal skills such as cooperation, planning, and critical thinking, while giving meaning to school content by connecting it with real social issues (Bitz, 2016; Pereira et al.,2024).

Another valuable methodology involves the critical reading of existing comics. Analyzing published works, such as **Ms. Marvel** or ***John Lewis's March***, enables students to identify stereotypes, explore cultural representations, and reflect on how visual narratives are constructed to either reinforce or challenge social prejudices. This practice strengthens visual literacy and contributes to forming critical readers capable of interpreting written text and the ideological dimensions embedded in images (Jacobs, 2017).

Guided debates constitute a third key strategy. After reading or creating comics, the classroom can become a space for dialogue where students share opinions, discuss values, and examine ethical dilemmas. For instance, after reading a comic about migration, teachers might pose questions such as: What emotions does the migrant character convey? What barriers do they encounter? Are stereotypes present? This approach stimulates empathy and reflective thinking, which are fundamental to education oriented toward social justice.

Due to its hybrid nature, the comic also facilitates interdisciplinary integration. Its multimodal language allows working on contents from language (oral and written expression), social sciences (cultural contexts, human rights), arts education (drawing, color, composition),

and citizenship (democratic values, diversity). In this way, it becomes an ideal resource for developing didactic projects that transcend subject boundaries, promoting meaningful and contextually grounded learning experiences (Pantaleo, 2021).

Suggested activities, such as autobiographical comics or inclusion stories, exemplify how comics can strengthen cultural identity, raise awareness of discrimination, and stimulate critical reflection. These exercises stimulate creativity and allow students to express their personal experiences, values, and emotions. They encourage active and participatory learning, where students become protagonists of their educational process.

Incorporating comics into the curriculum is not a methodological innovation; it represents a pedagogical commitment to inclusion and diversity. The capacity of comics to represent multiple voices and make invisible realities visible makes it an indispensable ally in building more just, equitable, and culturally sensitive educational environments.

Limitations and Challenges of Educational Comics

Although educational comics has gained recognition as innovative and versatile pedagogical tools, it is imperative to critically examine their inherent limitations and contextual challenges. Such scrutiny is essential to prevent their mischaracterization as universal applicable solutions withing all educational settings. A nuanced understanding of their scope allows their strategic and pedagogically integration.

Firstly, the comic presents pedagogical limitations related to the complexity of certain contents. Highly abstract concepts, such as advanced scientific theories or intricate mathematical formulations, may require visual representations that exceed the graphic possibilities of the comic or render them excessively dense for students (Jacobs, 2017; Sousanis, 2015). In such cases, exclusive reliance on the comic may be insufficient, needing to be implemented with other didactic resources to ensure full comprehension of the material (Moreno-Vera et al., 2021).

Educational comics may also be unsuitable in contexts where instructional time is limited as its design, reading, and analysis

demand considerable time investment from both teachers and students (Smyth, 2023). The creation of educational comics requires detailed planning, narrative design, and graphic production, which can become unfeasible in educational settings burdened by extensive curricular demands or constraints on material and temporal resources (Belda-Medina, 2024).

An additional challenge lies in the didactic use of comics and the specific competencies required from teachers, both artistic and pedagogical. Proficiency in visual literacy, graphic design, and sequential narrative is often necessary to either produce or critically employ comics within the classroom (Pantaleo, 2021). This situation highlights the need for teachers training programs that integrate multimodal and visual competences, promoting a critical and creative use of comics as educational tools (Carlson et al., 2022).

From a cultural standpoint, the use of comics in educational contexts is not exempt from risks. There is the possibility of reproducing stereotypes or cultural simplifications when depicting ethnic groups, gender identities, or complex social realities (Marshall, 2019). If not approached with a critical and culturally sensitive perspective, the educational comic could reinforce prejudices rather than contribute to inclusion and respect for diversity (Moreno-Vera et al., 2021).

Access to technological tools and high-quality materials present further limitations to the widespread integrating of educational comics. In low-resource or rural educational contexts, limited infrastructure may hinder the creation, reproduction, or distribution of comic-based materials (UNESCO, 2023). As such, the use of comics must be contextualized, complemented with other methodologies, and supported by appropriate teacher training to ensure their meaningful contribution to equitable, critical, and culturally relevant education.

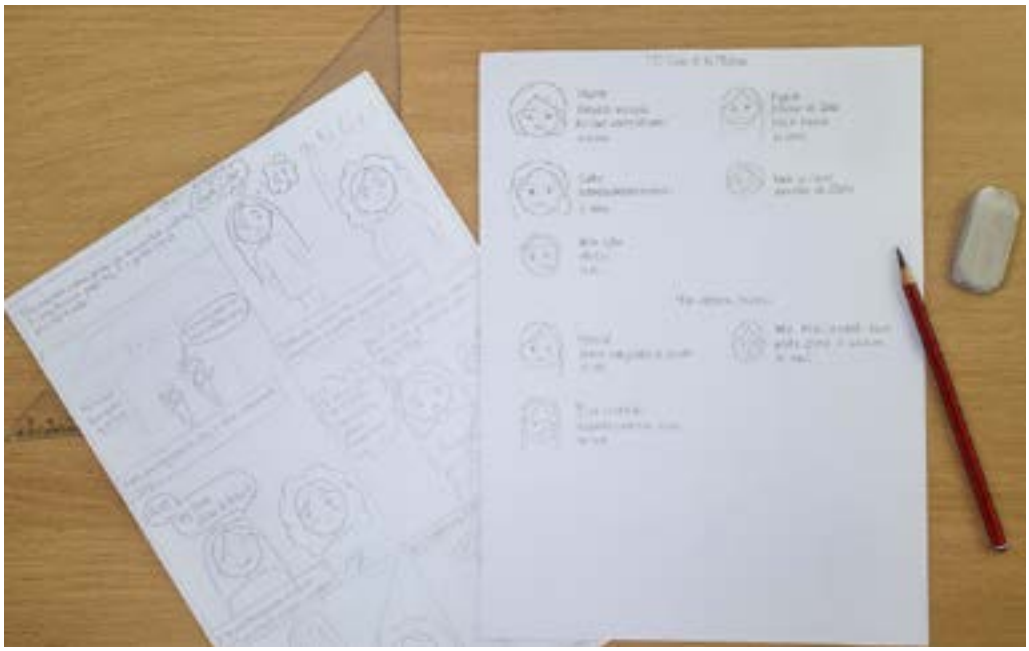
Narrating with Images: Phases of the Creative Process of Comics

The creation of the comics that accompany each chapter of the book followed a carefully designed methodological process, consisting of four main phases that ensure both narrative coherence and the visual and pedagogical quality of the graphic stories.

- **Phase 1. Story construction.** The starting point was the definition of the narrative script. Each working team developed stories based on the thematic content of the chapter, seeking to maintain a balance between academic rigour, pedagogical relevance, and narrative appeal. In this phase, the conflicts, characters, and settings that would bring the stories to life were established, ensuring alignment with the objectives of inclusion, diversity, and interculturality set out in the work (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Story construction



- **Phase 2. Definition of characters and sketches.** Once the story was consolidated, the creation of characters and the preparation of the first sketches followed. This creative stage enabled the visualisation of the protagonists, giving them physical, expressive, and cultural traits representative of the diversity that characterises educational contexts. The preliminary sketches facilitated the organisation of panels and the arrangement of the visual story into comprehensible sequences (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Definition of characters and sketches

• **Phase 3. Colouring with traditional technique.** Subsequently, the sketches were developed in a colouring stage using traditional techniques, prioritising chromatic harmony and visual expressiveness. Colour was employed both as an aesthetic resource and as a pedagogical element that reinforces emotions, underscores key messages, and contributes cultural identity to the stories portrayed (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Colouring with traditional technique

- **Phase 4. Layout and integration of texts.** Finally, the completed illustrations were integrated into a layout process, in which texts, dialogue balloons, and graphic resources that complete the narration were added. This phase ensured coherence between image and word, optimising readability and communicative impact. The result is a set of comics that accompany the theoretical content and enrich it with a dynamic, inclusive, and accessible visual language for different types of readers (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Layout and integration of texts

These images not only reveal the technical progression but also highlight the pedagogical and cultural dimension of each stage, providing transparency and methodological rigour to the project. In this way, the comics section culminates in a graphic and narrative proposal that integrates theory and practice, preparing the reader to delve into the bibliographic references, where the conceptual and

methodological framework underpinning the development of this work is established.

Conclusions

The educational comic consolidates as an innovative and multimodal pedagogical strategy, integrating visual, narrative, and symbolic elements to represent cultural diversity and foster meaningful learning experiences. Its implementation encourages critical thinking, empathy and understanding of complex social realities, thereby positioning itself as a pivotal resource for inclusive and transformative education.

Intercultural education, particularly in Latin America contexts such as Ecuador, faces the ongoing challenge of moving beyond normative discourse toward effective pedagogical practice. Despite legislative progress and the development of relevant educational initiatives, persistent tensions remain regarding the implementation of intercultural policies, the provision of specialized teacher training, and the integration of local knowledge systems into formal curricula. These challenges highlight the urgent need for more critical, contextually relevant, and culturally responsive educational approaches.

The experience of the International Innovative Teacher Training Programme Based on Practice (ITP) and the collaborative creation of educational comics demonstrate the value of international partnerships and pedagogical co-creation. These processes legitimize local wisdom, strengthen intercultural competences among teaching staff, and generate didactic resources tailored to diverse educational realities, thereby making a significant contribution to the construction of culturally sensitive, inclusive, and democratic education communities.

While educational comics hold considerable pedagogical potential, their use also presents certain limitations that must be critically acknowledged and addressed These include the risk of oversimplifying complex concepts, inadvertently reinforcing cultural stereotypes, and the need for specialized teacher preparation in visual literacy and narrative design. Overcoming these limitations necessitates the promotion of teacher education programs focused on multimodal

competencies, the implementation of participatory and collaborative methodologies, and the intentional use of comics as illustrative, critical, and emancipatory tools to advance the construction of more just, equitable, and culturally pluralistic societies.

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Chapter 2

One classroom, many cultures

One classroom, many cultures

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Cultural Diversity in the Classroom

Ecuador is a country distinguished by its vast cultural, ethnic, and linguistic richness, manifested in the coexistence of multiple nationalities and Indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, Montubios, and mestizos, each possessing their own worldviews, languages, and traditions. This cultural diversity is reflected within classrooms, where boys, girls, and adolescents from diverse backgrounds share educational spaces that are far from being homogeneous and are marked by multiple identities. In this context, the school becomes a pivotal space for the promotion of inclusion, respect for differences, and the construction of a plural citizenship. "The school must teach how to live together with cultural diversity. To this end, children must learn that diversity is a value. For all these reasons, it is vital to address cultural diversity in education" (Peinado, 2021, p. 2).

According to the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), in its Article 1, the country is declared an intercultural and plurinational state. This recognition marked a milestone in the national history by officially acknowledging the existence of diverse cultures that compose a social fabric, both authentic and heterogeneous. Interculturality refers to the plurality of cultures that coexist, interact, and share within a given context and locality. Plurinationality implies the acceptance of a society composed of distinct nationalities. Both concepts constitute foundational principles of a state oriented towards harmony and respect for diversity. It is worth noting that these statements are

intricately linked to the alternative development model, known as Development Plan for a New Ecuador. According to the Secretaría Nacional de Planificación (2024), this plan:

> Seeks to improve the living conditions and comprehensive security of the population, directing public action towards the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities, equitable access to health, housing, and education, and the strengthening of social justice as the foundation of a safer society. (p. 1)

Education plays a crucial role in the appreciation and recognition of cultural diversity. Learning about cultures, languages, and skills within the classroom enables an understanding of the past and how these evolve and adapt in the present. It is essential that students value their own culture as well as that of others, thereby fostering the importance of preserving identities over time. Intercultural education does not merely entail the coexistence of students from diverse backgrounds; rather, it involves the integration of their knowledge, languages, and perspectives into the curriculum and school life.

Recognizing the ethnic diversity present within educational institutions entails profound reflection and the construction of relationships among diverse groups. The inclusion of Indigenous languages in the curriculum is fundamental to preserving cultural identity and guaranteeing the right to education in the native language. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education of Ecuador (LOEI) establishes guidelines for bilingual education, promoting the use of Indigenous languages alongside the official language, Spanish, at all educational levels, the implementation of intercultural policies in educational institutions requires institutional will and adequate resources. In this regard, the following is proposed:

> Through the Educational Units of the Order as the object of investigation, the aim was to analyze whether the inclusive educational policies established in the LOEI (2010) foster an inclusive mindset oriented toward the acceptance of the other and the recognition of human dignity in the capacity to face global challenges with free access to education and the implementation of rights on equal terms (Reyes-Paz, 2022, p. 7).

Cultural diversity in the classroom poses significant challenges. Educators must be prepared to address cultural and linguistic differences in ways that enrich the teaching-learning process. This entails training teachers in intercultural competencies, creating a school environment that celebrates diversity and promotes equity. García et al. (2023) assert that: "Inclusive education upholds the right to be different as a legitimate claim that explicitly values the existence of such diversity" (p. 3). This approach benefits students from minority groups and enriches the educational experience for all learners.

It is essential to consider the role of families and communities in the educational process. Collaboration between the school and the community is fundamental to creating an environment that values and respects cultural diversity. Families can contribute knowledge and experiences that enrich the school curriculum, and their participation may foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride among students. "The involvement of the family is of great importance, as it predicts the optimal advancement of student learning, taking into account the commitment of their knowledge and interactions with the school" (Gómez & Orozco, 2022, p. 194)

Intercultural education constitutes both a right and a transformative tool that enables the construction of a more equitable society, one that is conscious of and respectful toward the diversity that characterizes Ecuador. Cultural diversity within the classroom represents an opportunity for collective learning and growth, fostering respect and understanding among distinct cultures. As we move toward a more inclusive future, all stakeholders involved in the educational process must work collaboratively to ensure that cultural diversity is valued and celebrated in every corner of the classroom.

One of the main challenges faced by culturally diverse environments in Ecuadorian classrooms is the persistence of stereotypes and prejudices that may affect school coexistence. When cultural differences are not addressed with sensitivity and respect, situations of discrimination and exclusion may arise, thereby undermining the emotional and academic well-being of students. "Cultural discrimination in educational contexts constitutes a subtle yet persistent form of symbolic violence that hinders the full exercise of

citizenship by Indigenous and Afro-descendant people" (Walsh, 2012, p. 25). For this reason, it is urgent to implement pedagogical strategies that promote empathy, mutual recognition, and intercultural dialogue.

From a pedagogical perspective, teacher training in intercultural competencies is essential to ensure educational practices are both inclusive and culturally relevant. According to Guaita (2022), "Teaching is conceived as a collaboration, wherein the teacher acts as a guide who actively participates in the students' learning process" (p. 24). This paradigm demands specialized academic preparation as well as an ethical commitment to the principles of social justice and equity. Universities and teacher training centers bear the responsibility of incorporating into their curricula content related to interculturality and the decolonization of knowledge.

The school curriculum must be reviewed and adapted to authentically reflect the country's cultural richness. Several current educational contents continue to perpetuate Eurocentric or centralist perspectives that render Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian cultures invisible. This transformation strengthens the identity of students belonging to Indigenous people and nationalities, while enriching the cultural horizon of the entire educational community.

Technology can play a significant role in promoting cultural diversity within the classroom. Digital platforms, multilingual resources, and audio-visual content may facilitate access to diverse educational materials adapted to various cultural contexts. "Many educators perceive new technologies as supportive tools for the classroom, useful for expanding the learning environment into a virtual space, or effective in entertaining and motivating students, which in turn facilitates teaching" (Crespo-Fajardo & Pillacela-Chin, 2021, p. 340)

The coexistence of cultures within the classroom should not be understood as an obstacle but rather as an asset that enables the construction of a more inclusive, equitable, and meaningful education for all students. The recognition of the multiple cultural identities present in the Ecuadorian context demands an institutional and pedagogical commitment that promotes educational justice and respect for differences. Integrating interculturality into the

educational system is both urgent and necessary to advance towards a more democratic, plural, and unified society, wherein each student recognizes themselves as a fundamental part of a just, equitable, and culturally diverse society.

Strategies to Promote Intercultural Dialogue in the Classroom

Intercultural dialogue within the classroom is fundamental for fostering an environment of respect and understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. To achieve this, it is necessary to implement strategies that facilitate communication and mutual comprehension. One of the most effective strategies is the creation of dialogue spaces where students can share their cultural experiences and perspectives. Soto and Quijije (2025) affirm that: "School coexistence is a critical aspect of the educational environment, as it directly influences students' well-being and their capacity to learn effectively" (p. 21). These circles may be organized regularly, allowing students to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. The regularity of these meetings helps build trust among students and enables them to develop active listening and critical reflection skills essential for intercultural dialogue.

Another important strategy is the incorporation of activities that foster collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds. Group projects requiring the participation of all members can help build interpersonal relationships and develop teamwork skills. "The implementation of strategies and pedagogical practices that strengthen group integration and promote a collaborative educational environment centered on the holistic development of students" (Hidalgo et al., 2024, p. 12). Such activities may include the creation of murals representing the classroom's cultural diversity or the organization of cultural fairs where students present their traditions and customs. By working together on projects, students learn about their peers' cultures, develop a sense of community and belonging, which are crucial to fostering an inclusive school environment.

Educators must receive training in intercultural competencies. Teachers' professional development in this domain enables them to effectively address cultural differences and to foster an inclusive environment. "Interculturality recognizes difference, promotes

equitable dialogue among knowledge, cultures, and ways of life" (Walsh, 2018, p. 46). This encompasses the development of skills to manage cultural conflicts and to promote empathy. Training may include workshops on how to approach sensitive issues related to culture and identity, as well as strategies to integrate cultural diversity into the curriculum. Continuous professional development for teachers is vital, as it provides them with the necessary tools to adapt to an ever-changing educational environment and to respond to the needs of a diverse student population.

The use of didactic resources that make cultural diversity visible constitutes an effective pedagogical strategy. Integrating materials such as books, videos, comics, or works of art that represent different cultural expressions enables students to recognize and value the plurality of identities present in their environment. For example, comics featuring narratives from diverse people can serve as powerful tools to capture students' interest and foster intercultural dialogue. This type of material enriches the educational experience by reflecting the cultures of the students themselves, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging, motivation, and commitment to learning.

It is imperative that schools establish policies that promote inclusion and respect for cultural heterogeneity. The development of a code of conduct emphasizing the importance of respect and tolerance towards all cultures may be considered. The implementation of such policies should be accompanied by continuous monitoring to evaluate their effectiveness and to adjust as necessary. The creation of an inclusive school environment benefits students from minority groups and enriches the educational experience of all learners, fostering meaningful and lasting learning.

It is important to recognize that intercultural dialogue is not limited to interaction among students from different cultures; it also entails reflection on one's own identities. Educators must encourage students to explore and share their own cultures, which can help build a sense of identity and belonging. This process of self-exploration is essential for students to feel safe and valued within the classroom, thereby enhancing an environment of respect, and understanding.

Intercultural dialogue within the classroom fosters a multifaceted process that necessitates the implementation of diverse strategies. The

creation of spaces for consensus-building, collaboration on projects, educator training, the use of varied didactic resources, and family involvement are key elements to promote an inclusive and respectful environment. As schools apply these strategies, it is essential that all stakeholders engaged in the educational process commit to valuing and celebrating cultural diversity, thereby contributing to the construction of a more just and equitable society. Intercultural education constitutes a right; it is a transformative tool capable of building bridges between cultures, strengthening democratic coexistence, and forging citizenship that is both solidaristic and conscious.

Methods to Assess the Development of Intercultural Competences

The evaluation of the development of intercultural competences constitutes a pivotal aspect within the educational sphere, as it enables the measurement of students' progress in their capacity to interact and communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Various methodologies are available to educators for the effective assessment of such competences. The significance of these evaluations lies in their comprehensive focus on theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the attitudes that students cultivate throughout their educational trajectory.

- **Formative assessment:** One of the most common methods is formative assessment, which focuses on the learning process rather than on the outcome. In a study on intercultural assessment, Cruzado (2022) found that:

> Formative assessment establishes a continuous process of change, resulting from the interactions between students and the teacher's pedagogical approaches; it is imperative to understand what occurs during the process and to recognize the need for new learning opportunities; thus, the process is more relevant than the outcome and becomes key for reflection and improvement. (p. 4)

This provides valuable insight into the development of intercultural competences and enables educators to adjust their teaching

accordingly. Formative assessment may include observations, feedback, and self-assessments, allowing students to reflect on their learning. This approach assists educators in identifying areas for improvement and empowers students to actively engage in their learning process.

- **Self-assessment:** Self-assessment involves students reflecting on their own intercultural experiences and skills. Aravena et al. (2023) assert that "self-assessment is a continuous process of reflection, feedback, and learning from practice that contributes to the construction of a shared vision of education" (pp. 21–22). This practice promotes personal responsibility in learning, as students become active agents in their educational process. Self-assessment may include questionnaires, reflective journals, or interviews in which students analyse their interactions and experiences with other cultures. This type of assessment helps students develop greater self-awareness and enables them to set personal goals for their intercultural growth.

- **Evaluation through projects:** Assessment via intercultural projects constitutes an effective means to measure the development of intercultural competences. Projects that require collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds offer a platform to evaluate skills such as communication, empathy, and conflict resolution. According to the UNESCO report (2020), intercultural projects enable students to apply their skills in real-world contexts, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Such projects may include organizing events, creating presentations on different traditions, or conducting research on the cultural richness within the community. Through engagement in these projects, students acquire knowledge about other cultures and develop practical skills essential for life in a multicultural society.

It is important that educators utilize assessment rubrics that include specific criteria to measure intercultural competencies. These tools can assist educators in objectively evaluating students' performance in intercultural activities. Rubrics may incorporate criteria such as participation, the ability to listen to and respect others' opinions, and teamwork skills. At providing clear criteria, educators can help students understand how they can improve and which skills they need to develop to be more effective in their intercultural interactions.

Differences between Multiculturalism, Interculturality, and Plurinationality

It is essential to understand the differences between multiculturalism, interculturality, and plurinationality, as these concepts are pivotal for addressing cultural diversity within the classroom. Although often used interchangeably, each term possesses a distinct meaning and focus. Education, in its role as a shaper of citizens, must integrate these concepts to foster an inclusive and respectful environment that values cultural diversity.

- **Multiculturalism:** Multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of diverse cultures within society. This approach acknowledges and values cultural diversity but often remains limited to the mere acceptance of different cultures without promoting interaction among them. "Multicultural education offers equal opportunities for all students. It helps educators recognize the strengths and capabilities of all students, regardless of their cultural background" (Naz et al., 2022, p. 2). This approach may result in a lack of understanding and respect among cultures, as it does not foster dialogue or collaboration. Multiculturalism can be considered a passive approach that, although recognizing diversity, does not promote active coexistence among different cultures.

- **Interculturality:** Interculturality goes beyond multiculturalism by promoting dialogue and interaction among different cultures. This approach seeks to create a space where cultures can learn from one another and mutually enrich each other. Interculturality entails an active commitment by individuals and institutions to foster understanding and respect among cultures. Unlike mere coexistence, this approach aims to establish an environment where differences are valued and utilized as a source of learning and enrichment.

- **Plurinationality:** Plurinationality refers to the existence of multiple nationalities within a state. In the Ecuadorian context, plurinationality implies the recognition of the country's ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as the acceptance that each nationality possesses its own identity and rights. The Constitution of Ecuador (2008) establishes that Ecuador is an intercultural and plurinational state, reflecting the country's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

This approach acknowledges cultural diversity and promotes the participation of different nationalities in political and social decision-making processes.

In the educational context, plurinationality entails the necessity to recognize and value the languages and traditions of the various nationalities coexisting within a country. "Plurinationality seeks to acknowledge the cultural and ethnic diversity within the state, promoting a deeper inclusion of Indigenous people and other nationalities" (Ruiz & Luzuriaga, 2024, p. 1). Education must serve as a space where linguistic and cultural diversity are respected and promoted. This benefits students from minority groups and enriches the educational experience of all learners, fostering meaningful and lasting learning.

The key difference among these concepts lies in their approach to cultural diversity. While multiculturalism focuses on the coexistence of cultures, interculturality promotes interaction and dialogue between them, and plurinationality recognizes the diversity of nationalities within a state. Understanding these distinctions is essential to effectively address cultural diversity in the classroom and to foster an inclusive and respectful educational environment.

Intercultural education, derived from the concept of interculturality, seeks to integrate these principles into the school curriculum. This entails the inclusion of content that reflects cultural diversity and the promotion of intercultural skills among students. Plurinationality, understood as a principle of social justice, aims to guarantee equality and respect for the cultural diversity of people. Intercultural education is presented as a pedagogical approach focused on fostering peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among cultures (UNESCO, 2020, p. 8). This educational approach is essential to prepare students to live and work in an increasingly globalized world, where the ability to interact and collaborate with people from different cultures is fundamental.

The implementation of educational policies that reflect these principles is crucial for the success of intercultural and plurinational education. Schools must develop programs that encourage student participation in the construction of an inclusive environment. This may include organizing activities that celebrate cultural diversity, such as cultural fairs, language workshops, and research projects on

the different nationalities present within the community. Boada and Mayorca (2019) emphasize that "student participation, both individual and collective, is especially significant, synergizing with the rapport established among peers" (p. 4).

Teacher training plays a fundamental role in the implementation of these approaches. Educators must be equipped to address cultural diversity in the classroom and foster an environment of respect and understanding. Training in intercultural competencies has been identified as an essential factor enabling teachers to promote dialogue and comprehension in culturally diverse contexts. This includes developing skills to manage cultural conflicts and encouraging empathy. Continuous professional development is vital, as it provides educators with the necessary tools to adapt to an ever-changing educational environment and to respond effectively to the needs of a diverse student population.

The assessment of the development of intercultural competencies is a crucial aspect of education. Educators must employ evaluation methods that reflect students' progress in their ability to interact and communicate with people from diverse cultures. This may include formative assessment, self-assessment, and evaluation through intercultural projects. The implementation of clear and specific assessment rubrics can assist educators in measuring student performance in intercultural activities and in providing constructive feedback.

The differences between multiculturalism, interculturality, and plurinationality are essential to addressing cultural diversity in the classroom and promoting an inclusive and respectful educational environment. Education must integrate these concepts to foster a setting where cultural diversity is valued and dialogue and interaction among different cultures are encouraged. The implementation of educational policies reflecting these principles, teacher training in intercultural competencies, and the assessment of intercultural competence development are key elements to ensure the success of intercultural and plurinational education. As we advance toward a more inclusive future, it is crucial that all stakeholders involved in the educational process collaborate to build a more just and equitable society where cultural diversity is valued and celebrated. Intercultural

education is a right and a powerful tool to transform society and promote peace and coexistence among different cultures.

Ecuador is a country characterized by its remarkable linguistic diversity, where multiple Indigenous languages coexist alongside Spanish. This linguistic richness reflects the country's cultural diversity and represents an invaluable opportunity to enrich the educational process within classrooms. Education in Ecuador must recognize and value this diversity, fostering an environment where all languages are appreciated and respected. According to the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), the State recognizes linguistic diversity as a cultural heritage that must be protected and promoted. This recognition is fundamental to ensuring that students from different linguistic backgrounds feel valued and respected within the school environment.

The inclusion of Indigenous languages in the school curriculum is a key strategy for fostering the appreciation of linguistic richness in classrooms. The Organic Law on Intercultural Education (LOEI) establishes guidelines for bilingual education, promoting the use of Indigenous languages alongside Spanish at all educational levels. This bilingual education allows students to learn in their native language while also providing them with the opportunity to develop Spanish language skills, which is essential for their academic and social success. "The mixing of two languages is not a sign of confusion in children who are learning a language; it is a sign of communicational growth of how to use multiple communicational systems to create powerful meanings" (Torres & Romero, 2022, p. 4).

It is important that educators receive training in linguistic and cultural competencies to effectively address linguistic diversity. Teacher education in this area enables them to create an inclusive environment where all students feel comfortable sharing their languages and cultures. This includes the development of skills to manage linguistic conflicts and to promote empathy among students.

The use of didactic resources that reflect linguistic diversity is essential to fostering an appreciation of languages in the classroom. Incorporating materials that represent different languages, such as books, videos, and comics, can help students recognize the richness of linguistic diversity. "These resources are teaching tools that facilitate communication, interaction, portability, among others, to

represent knowledge or theories embodied in each discipline within the curriculum" (Intriago et al., 2023, p. 4). For example, using comics that depict stories in Indigenous languages can be a powerful tool to capture students' attention and facilitate discussion about linguistic diversity.

It is essential to foster an environment of respect and openness toward linguistic differences. This entails establishing clear norms regarding respect and inclusion within the classroom. Educators can set coexistence agreements that include respect for linguistic differences and the promotion of a supportive and collaborative atmosphere.

Family participation in the educational process is crucial to fostering an appreciation of linguistic richness in the classroom. Families can contribute knowledge and experiences that enrich the school curriculum, and their involvement can foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride among students. Family engagement remains a fundamental pillar to ensure comprehensive education. As Aguiar et al. (2020) emphasize:

> The family is irreplaceable in its educational role, playing a fundamental part in the development of children. The education of children is the exclusive responsibility of parents. All parties must analyze and determine their function in the educational process to contribute to the comprehensive development of the learner by providing a quality educational response. Schools can organize events where families share their languages and traditions, creating a space in which everyone feels valued and respected. (p. 3)

The linguistic richness of Ecuadorian classrooms is an invaluable resource that must be appreciated and promoted throughout the educational process. The inclusion of Indigenous languages in the curriculum, teacher training, the use of diverse didactic resources, and family participation are key strategies to foster appreciation for linguistic diversity in the classroom. As Ecuador moves toward a more inclusive future, it is essential that all stakeholders involved in education work collaboratively to ensure that every student feels valued and respected, thereby contributing to a more just and harmonious society.

Identity and Recognition of Ecuadorian People in School Textbooks

The construction of identity is a fundamental process in education, especially in a country like Ecuador, where multiple nationalities and Indigenous people coexist. Textbooks play a crucial role in this process, as they are tools that can contribute to the formation of a strong and diverse cultural identity. The inclusion of content that recognizes and values Ecuadorian nationalities and people in textbooks is essential to promote a sense of belonging and cultural pride among students. According to the Constitution of Ecuador, the State recognizes and protects the country's cultural and ethnic diversity, which implies the need to reflect this diversity in educational materials.

Intercultural education seeks to integrate and value cultural diversity within the curriculum, promoting respect and inclusion of all cultures. Intercultural education forms the foundation for enhancing learning and recovering ancestral values essential to the cultural identity of the people and nationalities present in the country (Sarmiento, 2021, p. 8). This is especially important in contexts where students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The inclusion of histories, traditions, and customs of the various Ecuadorian nationalities and people in textbooks can help students develop a richer and more diverse cultural identity.

It is fundamental that textbooks are representative of the country's cultural diversity. This entails the inclusion of content about the different nationalities and people, reflecting their languages, traditions, and worldviews. Adequate representation of Ecuadorian nationalities and people in educational materials can help students feel valued and respected in their cultural identity.

The use of didactic resources that include comics and other visual formats can be an effective strategy to foster identity construction. Comics can present stories of different nationalities and people in an engaging and accessible way for students. "The comic as a didactic tool allows both students and teachers to break away from traditional methods and focus on a comfort zone where both can teach and learn" (Hernández et al., 2024, p. 53). These resources can complement textbooks and provide a richer and more varied representation of

Ecuadorian cultures. Family and community participation in the educational process is crucial for identity construction. Families can contribute knowledge and experiences that enrich the school curriculum, and their involvement can foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride among students. "Family participation is a shared responsibility with school staff to meet educational goals and foster student growth" (Mendoza-Santana & Cárdenas-Sacoto, 2020, p. 15). Schools can organize events where families share their traditions and customs, creating a space where everyone feels valued and respected.

The construction of identity through the recognition of Ecuadorian nationalities and people in textbooks constitutes a fundamental process for fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride among students. The inclusion of content that reflects the country's cultural diversity, the employment of engaging didactic resources such as comics, and the involvement of families are key strategies to promote the development of a rich and diverse cultural identity. As Ecuador progresses towards a more inclusive future, it is essential that all stakeholders involved in education collaborate to ensure that every student feels valued and respected in their cultural identity.

Conclusions

Cultural diversity in the classroom is not merely a logistical or linguistic challenge; it represents a pedagogical opportunity to enrich teaching-learning processes and promote a more inclusive and equitable education. The implementation of intercultural approaches requires rethinking traditional educational practices and incorporating methodologies that validate the knowledge, languages, and worldviews of all students to foster an environment of respect and mutual recognition.

There is clear evidence of the need for continuous teacher training in intercultural and didactic competencies to prevent unconscious biases and to create educational environments capable of responding to cultural plurality critically and creatively. A future line of research is identified in deepening pedagogical models that effectively integrate intercultural content across various curricular areas, evaluating their

impact both on academic performance and on the construction of intercultural citizenship.

The integration of innovative pedagogical resources, such as educational comics, can be key to facilitating intercultural learning by offering accessible visual and narrative languages that emotionally connect with students and meaningfully represent cultural diversity.

Comics

One classroom, many cultures

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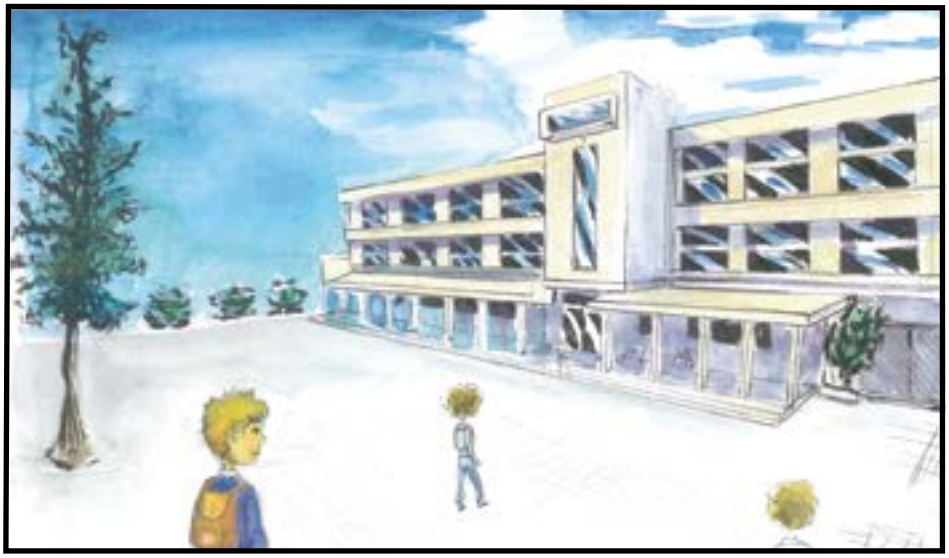
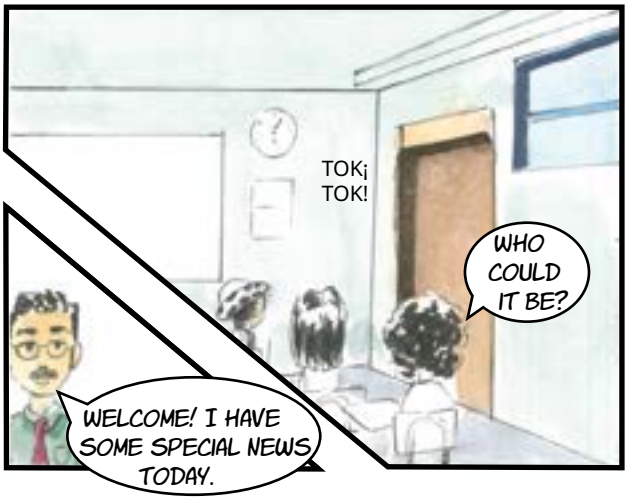
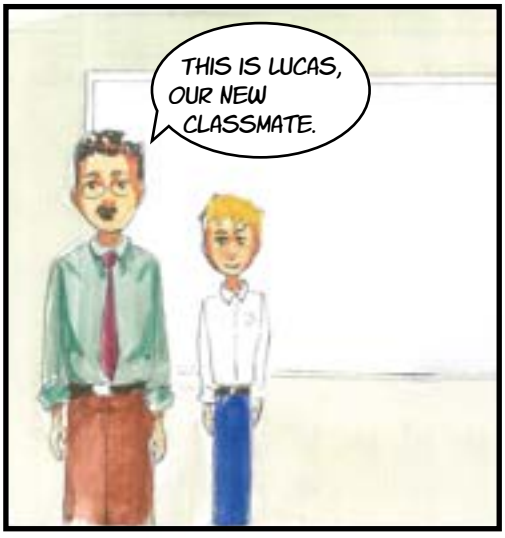
THE WELCOME

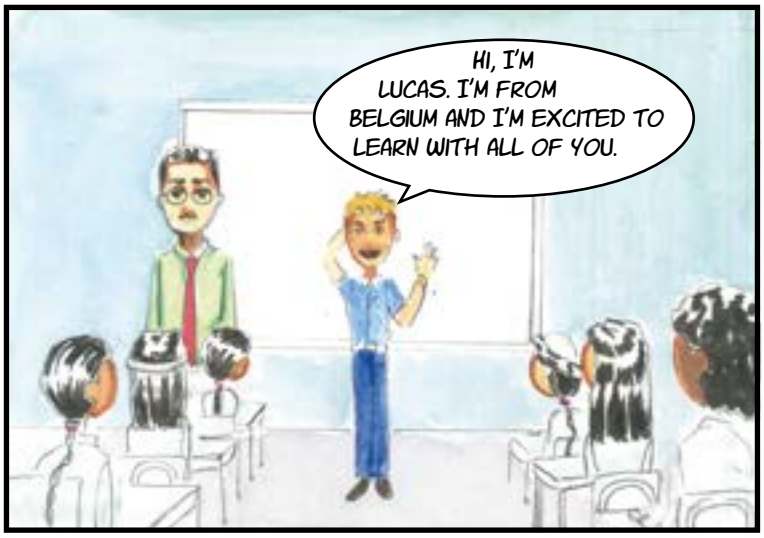
The new school year begins, and students return with excitement. This year brings a surprise: Lucas, an exchange student from Belgium, joins the class. Through a special activity, the students learn more about him and reinforce the value of diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

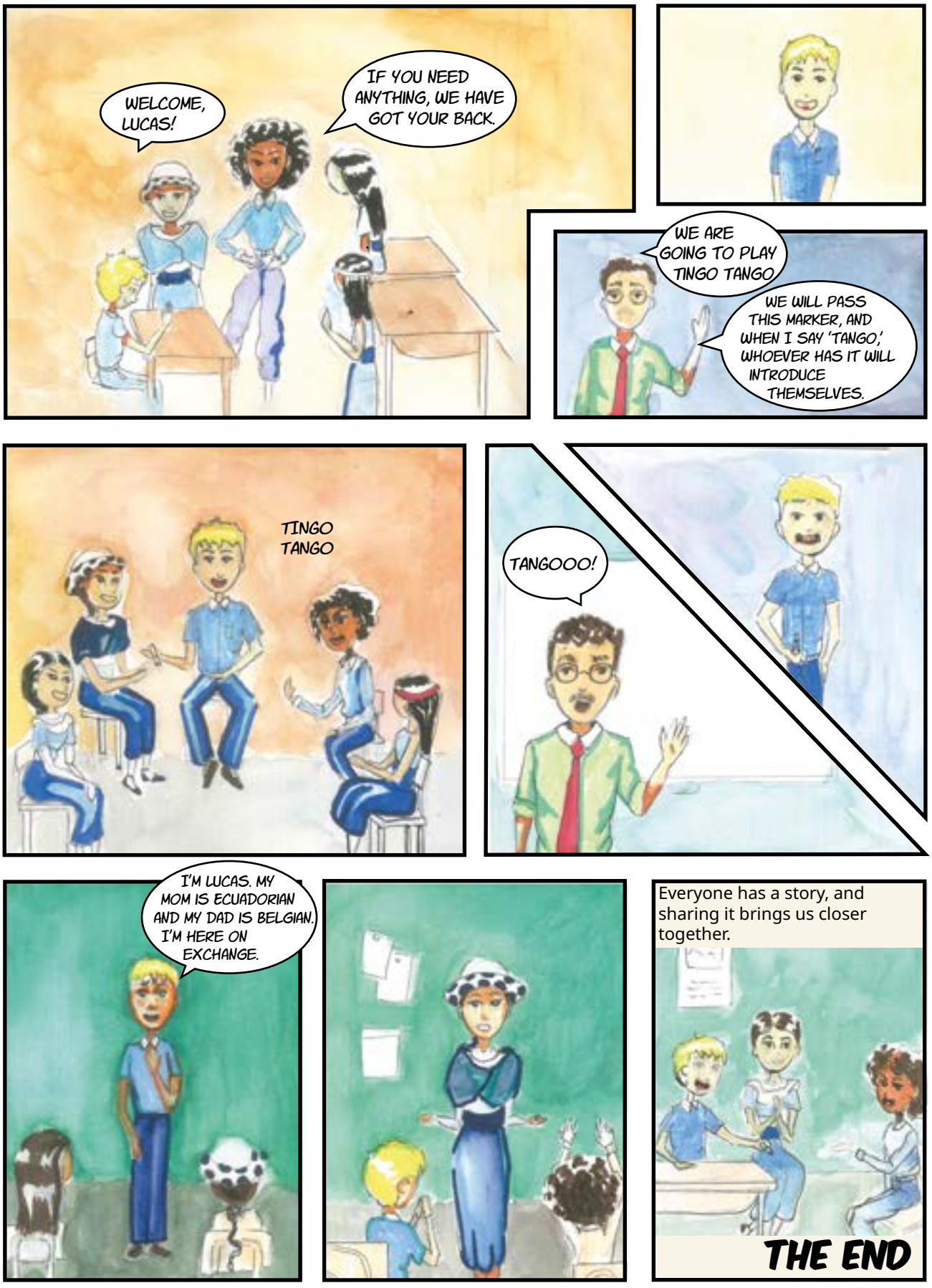


The first day of school is a new chance to learn and make friends.





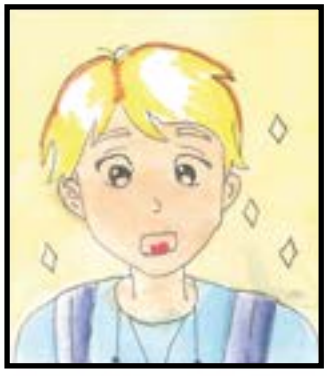


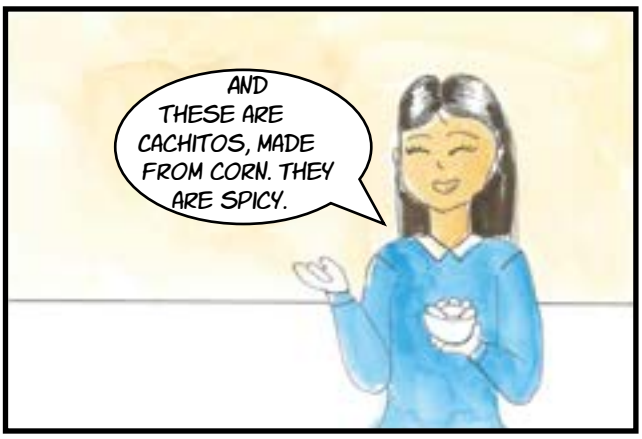

WELCOME, LUCAS!
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, WE HAVE GOT YOUR BACK.
WE ARE GOING TO PLAY TINGO TANGO.
WE WILL PASS THIS MARKER, AND WHEN I SAY 'TANGO,' WHOEVER HAS IT WILL INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.
TINGO TANGO
TANGOOO!
I'M LUCAS. MY MOM IS ECUADORIAN AND MY DAD IS BELGIAN. I'M HERE ON EXCHANGE.
Everyone has a story, and sharing it brings us closer together.
THE END

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

As the days pass, Lucas's classmates discover that it is his birthday. With great enthusiasm, they organize a surprise in the classroom, sharing traditional Ecuadorian sweets. Through the celebration, Lucas gains a deeper understanding of the local gastronomy and the importance of sharing meaningful moments.

Celebrations bring people together and help us appreciate our traditions.



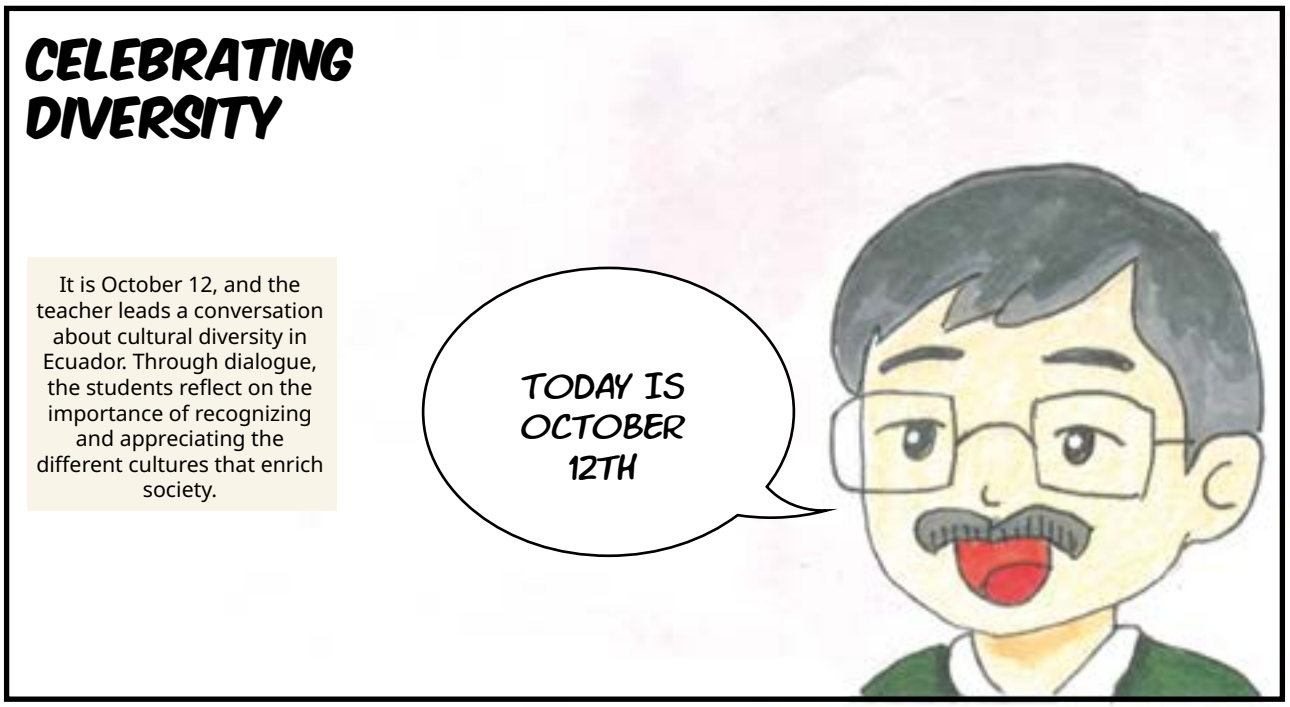


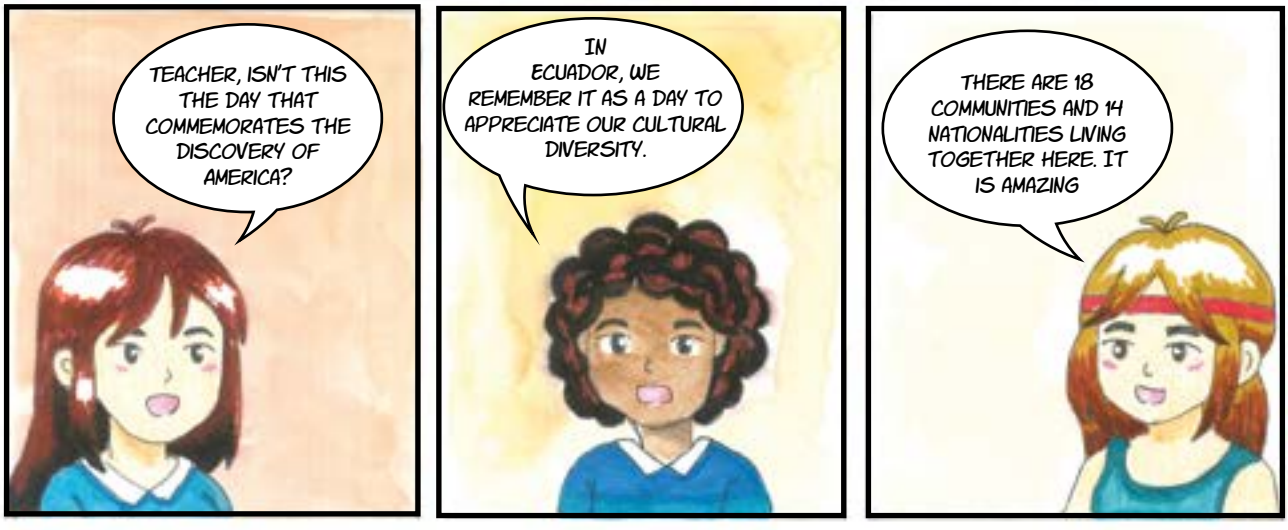
Celebrations allow us to share, learn, and strengthen our friendships.

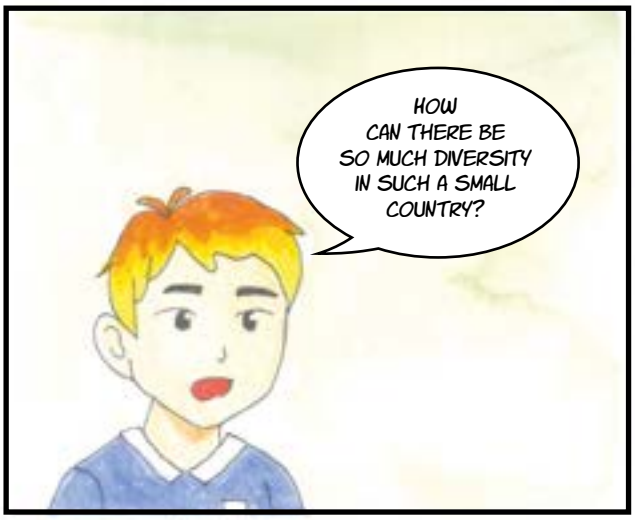
THE END

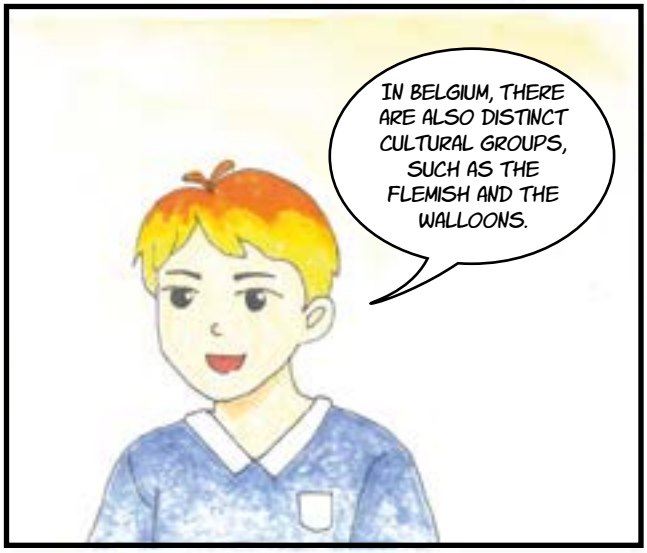
CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

It is October 12, and the teacher leads a conversation about cultural diversity in Ecuador. Through dialogue, the students reflect on the importance of recognizing and appreciating the different cultures that enrich society.





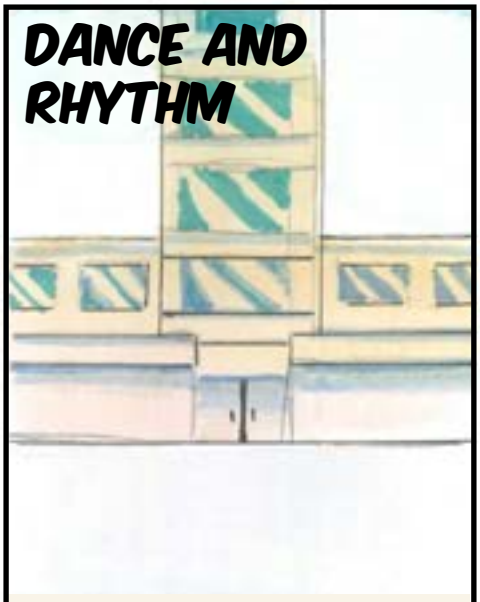




Each culture has its own history and value. Learning about them helps us live together more respectfully

THE END

DANCE AND RHYTHM



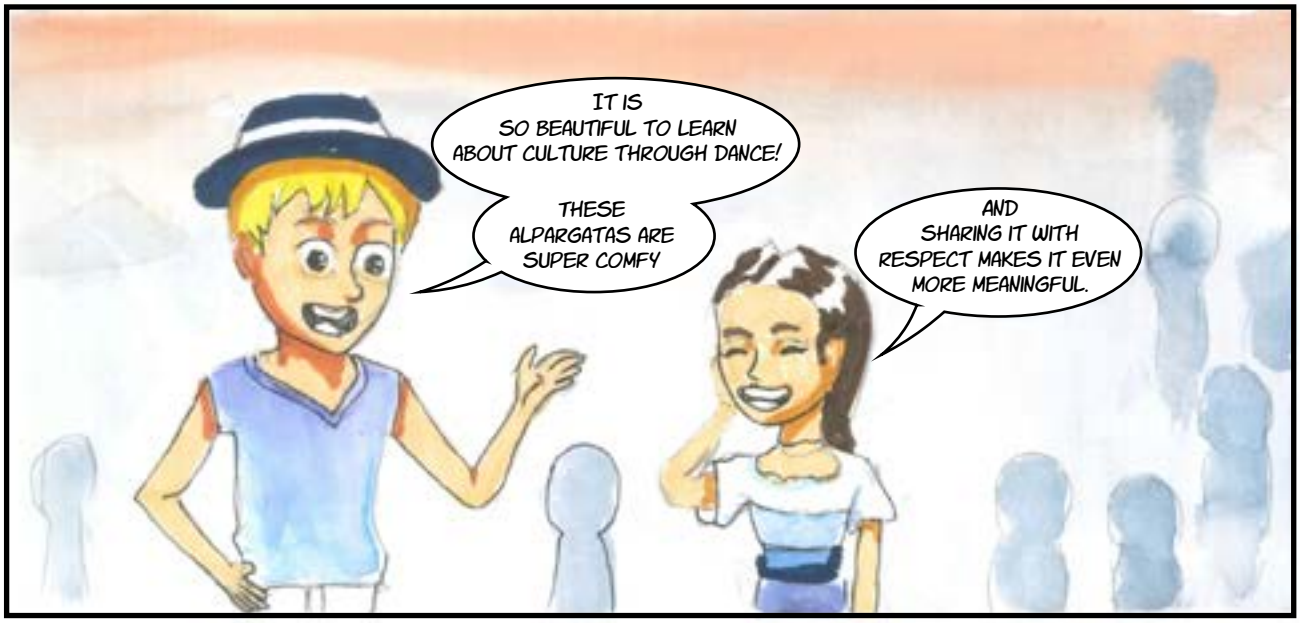
At school, a traditional dance festival is being organized to celebrate Ecuador's cultural diversity.

In the schoolyard, students watch other classes rehearse.

Lucas and his class begin practicing, but the first steps aren't easy.

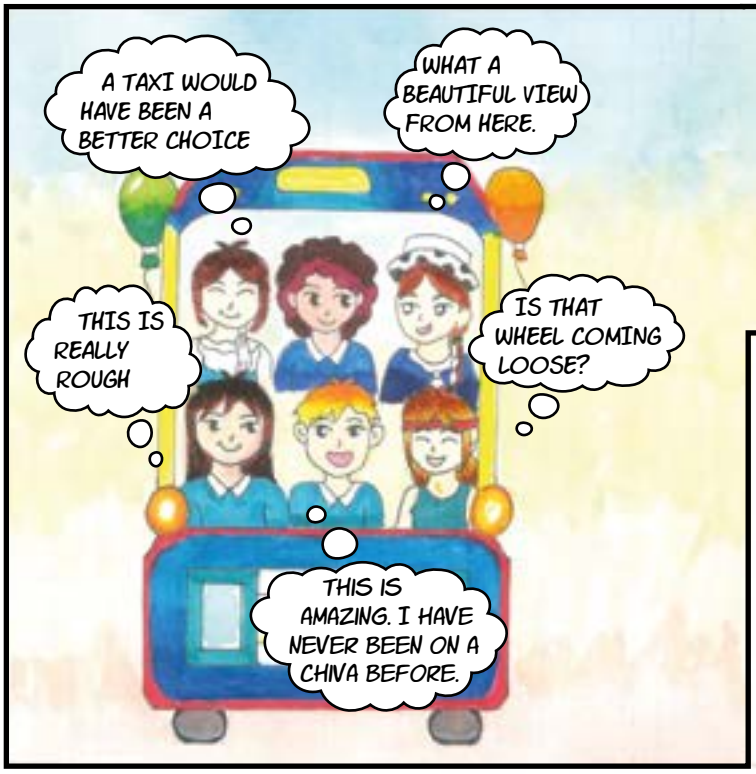
The big day has arrived. Everyone is dressed in their traditional outfits.

On stage, each class performs their dance. The audience claps enthusiastically.



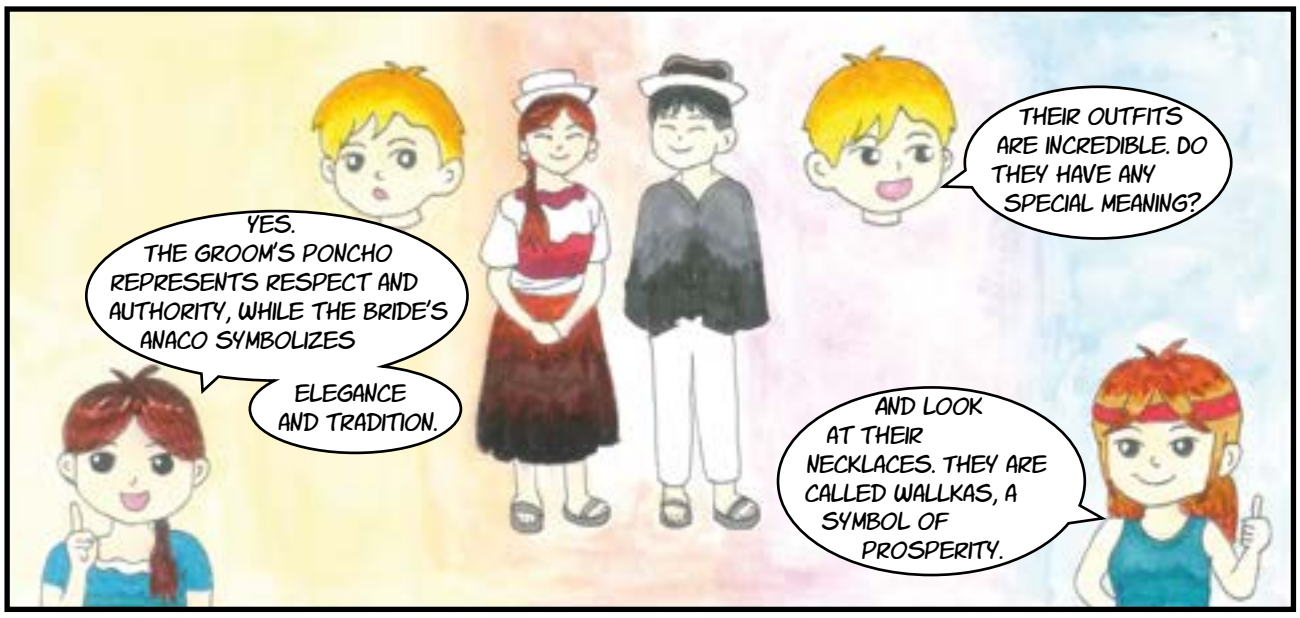
THE END

TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS WEDDING



The group travels in a slightly old bus called a chiva, decorated with balloons and streamers.

Arriving at the wedding on the chiva.



The godparents give expensive gifts to the bride and groom.

Lucas is amazed after seeing how the couple receives so many gifts.

The bride's mother shares chicha with the guests, especially with Lucas.

Lucas tries cuy for the first time.

Everyone enjoys the dance.
LONG LIVE!
IT IS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT
LONG LIVE!
LONG LIVE THE BRIDE AND GROOM!
IT'S TRADITIONAL FOLK MUSIC.
THIS MUSIC IS BEAUTIFUL.

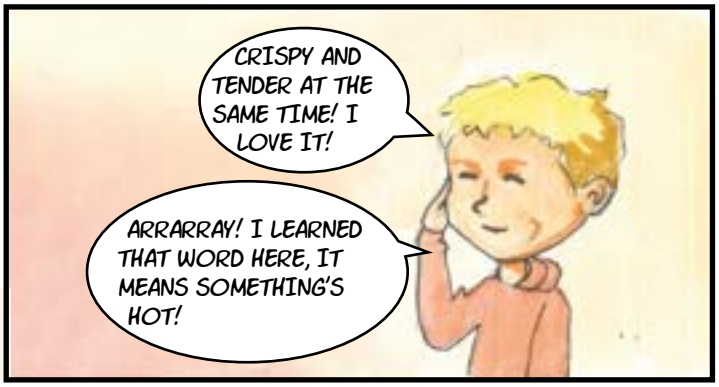
THAT WAS AN INCREDIBLE WEDDING. ONE OF THE BEST EXPERIENCES I HAVE HAD.
NOW I ACTUALLY LIKE RIDING ON THIS CHIVA HAHAHA.
Return home.
Everyone smiles as the chiva drives away along the road.
THE END.

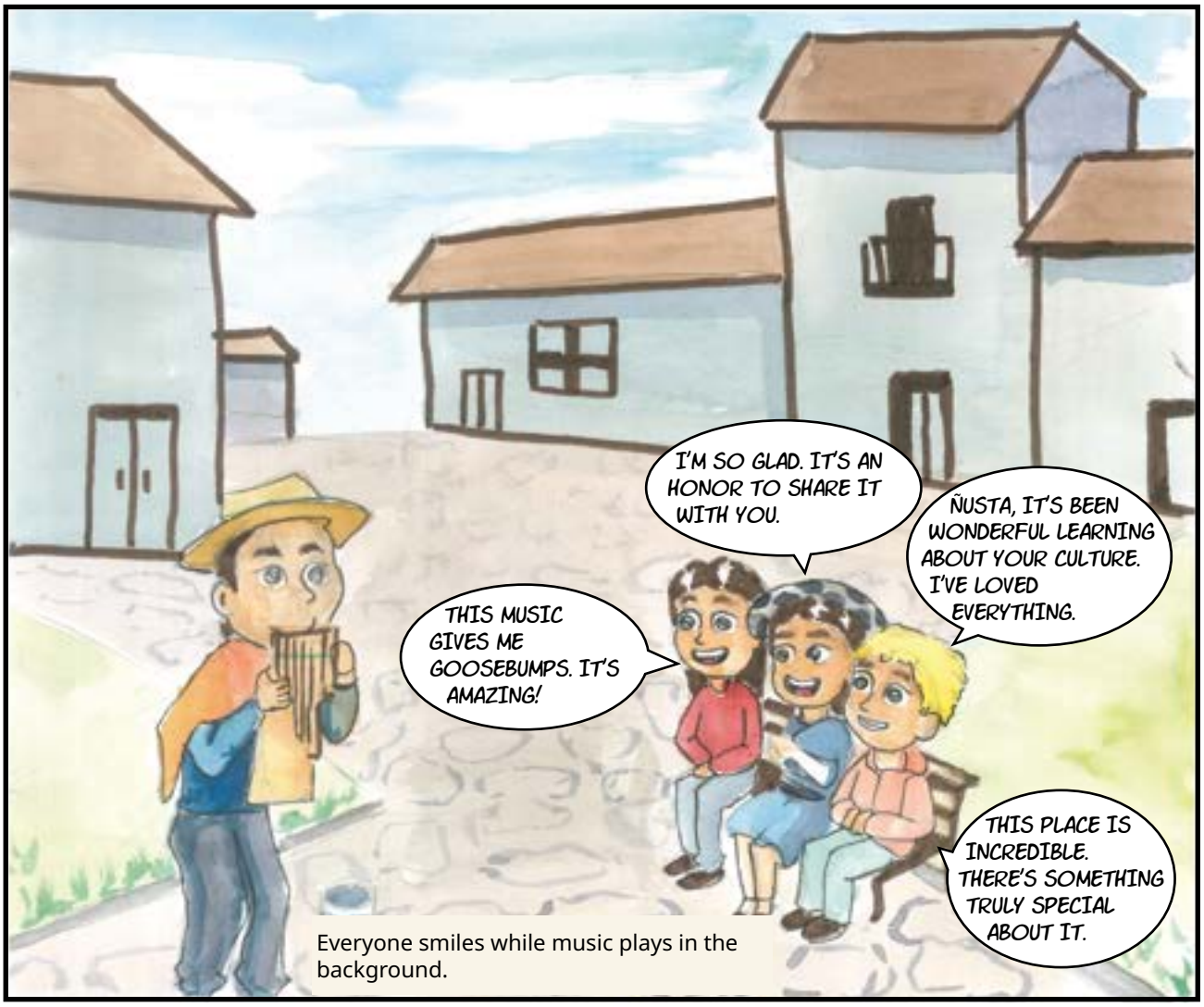
DISCOVERING OTAVALO

The group walks through the plaza, surrounded by stalls full of ponchos, hats, necklaces, and crafts.

In Indigenous culture, textiles not only provide warmth but also convey the identity and traditions of each community.

Fritada is a traditional Ecuadorian dish made of fried pork.





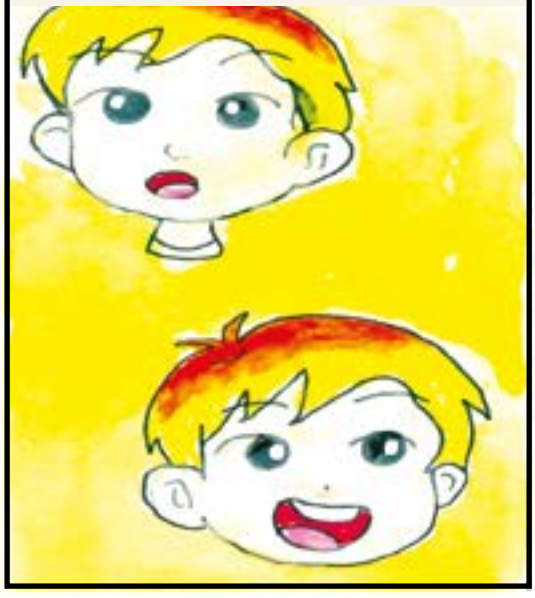
Everyone smiles while music plays in the background.

THE END

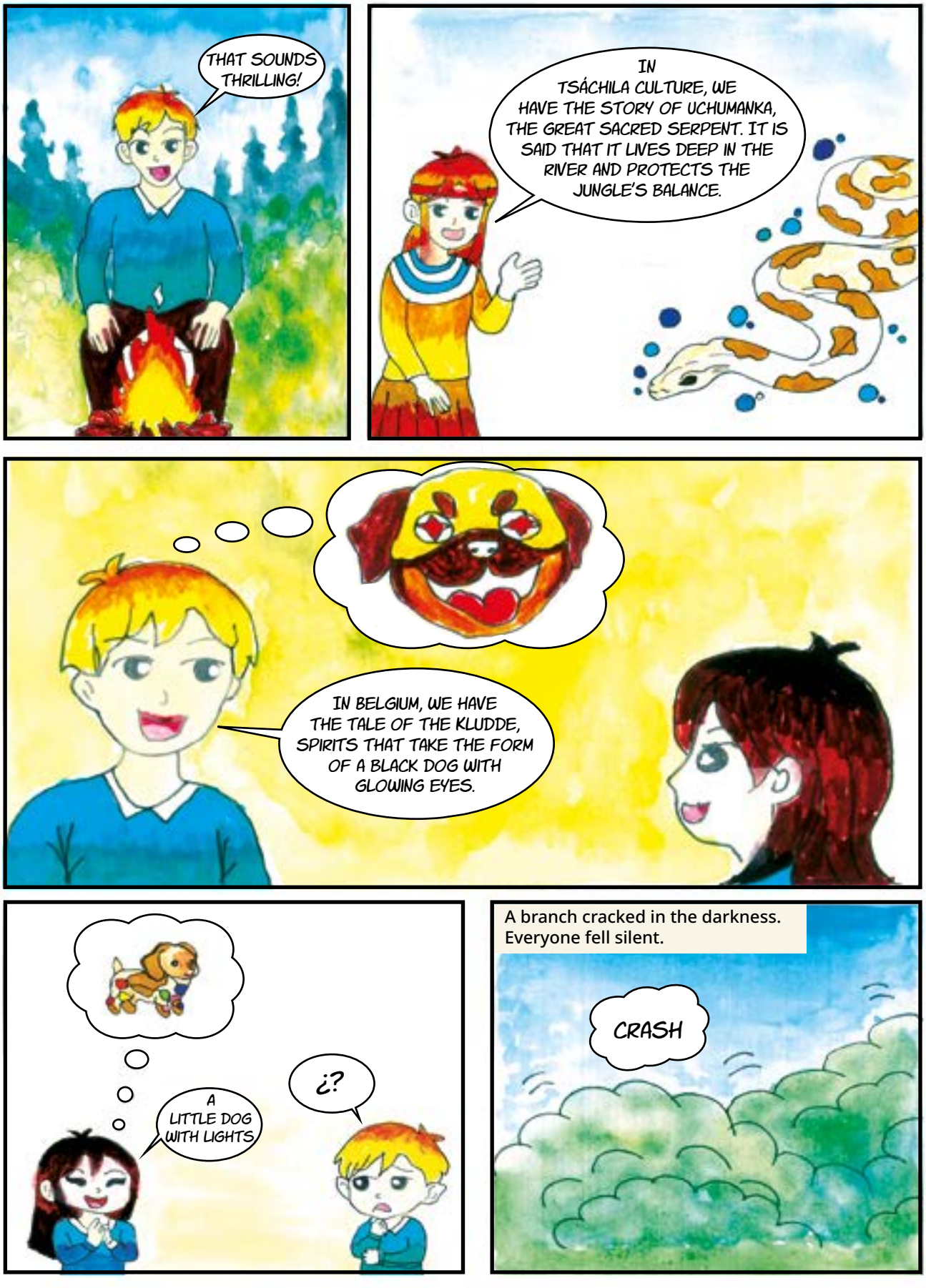
ONE CAMPFIRE, MANY VOICES

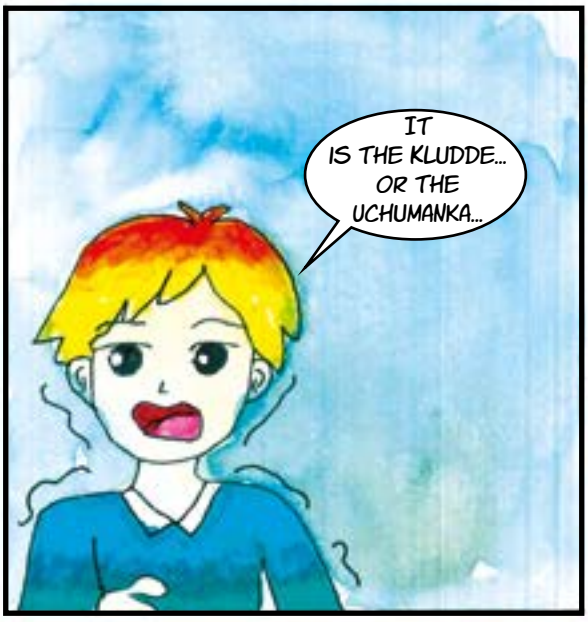
The teacher adjusted his glasses and raised the flashlight to light the way. The group of students moved forward with backpacks on their shoulders and flashlights in hand, excited for the night hike.

Lucas, the Belgian exchange student, looks around with eyes wide open.

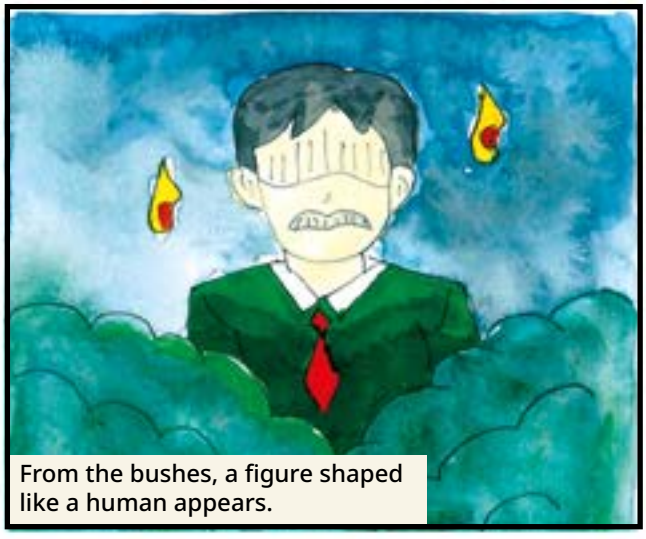


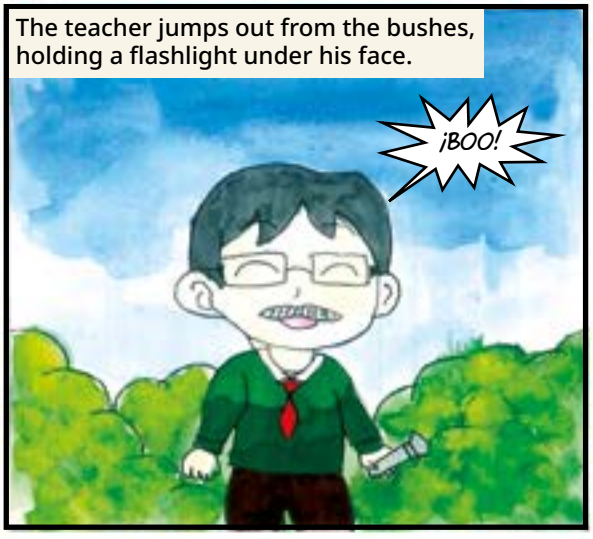
IF YOU SAW A REAL JUNGLE, LUCAS, YOU WOULD PROBABLY FAINT.
IMAGINE SEEING AN ANACONDA UP CLOSE.
ALRIGHT, EVERYONE! THE CAMPFIRE IS LIT, AND TONIGHT IS SPECIAL.
EACH OF YOU WILL SHARE A STORY OR LEGEND FROM YOUR CULTURE. LET'S START WITH ZULEMA.
IN ESMERALDAS, WE SAY LA TUNDA TAKES AWAY DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN.
FIRST, SHE DISGUISES HERSELF AS THEIR MOTHER OR A RELATIVE TO LURE THEM INTO THE FOREST.
THEN, WITH HER WOODEN PADDLE-LIKE LEG, SHE HYPNOTIZES THEM WITH ENCHANTED FOOD.


THAT SOUNDS THRILLING!
IN TSÁCHILA CULTURE, WE HAVE THE STORY OF UCHUMANKA, THE GREAT SACRED SERPENT. IT IS SAID THAT IT LIVES DEEP IN THE RIVER AND PROTECTS THE JUNGLE'S BALANCE.
IN BELGIUM, WE HAVE THE TALE OF THE KLUDDE, SPIRITS THAT TAKE THE FORM OF A BLACK DOG WITH GLOWING EYES.
A LITTLE DOG WITH LIGHTS
¿?
A branch cracked in the darkness. Everyone fell silent.
CRASH

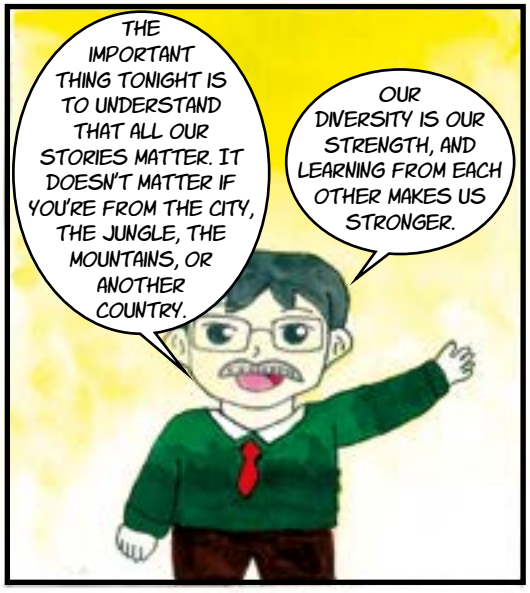


Everyone looks scared, waiting to see what it is.


From the bushes, a figure shaped like a human appears.


The teacher jumps out from the bushes, holding a flashlight under his face.

The students screamed, and after a few seconds, the tension turned into laughter.



The group huddled closer to the campfire, sharing laughter and stories. That night, they learned that true magic lies in the diversity of their voices.

THE END

DIFFERENT BUT BEAUTIFUL

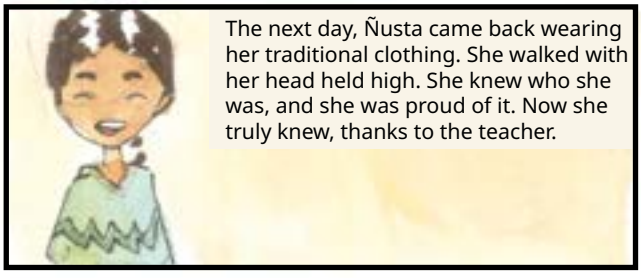
At school, Ñusta had always worn her traditional clothing with pride.
Her colorful skirt and braided hair were part of her identity.

The next day...

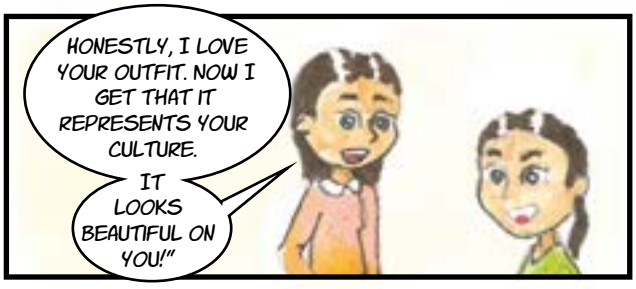
The next day, she came to class wearing jeans and a plain blouse, with her hair down.

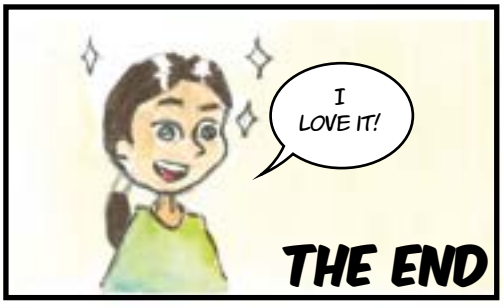
But something didn't feel right. Ñusta noticed the looks from her friends Lina, Zulema, and Mayra. They didn't say anything, but there was disappointment in their eyes.

During class, the teacher noticed Ñusta's change.
He didn't say anything at first, but when the lesson on cultural identity began, he paused and looked at all the students.



The next day, Ñusta came back wearing her traditional clothing. She walked with her head held high. She knew who she was, and she was proud of it. Now she truly knew, thanks to the teacher.





BEYOND THE SCREEN

The girls in the class loved social media; they watched videos and shared photos.

One day, the teacher arrived with a special task.

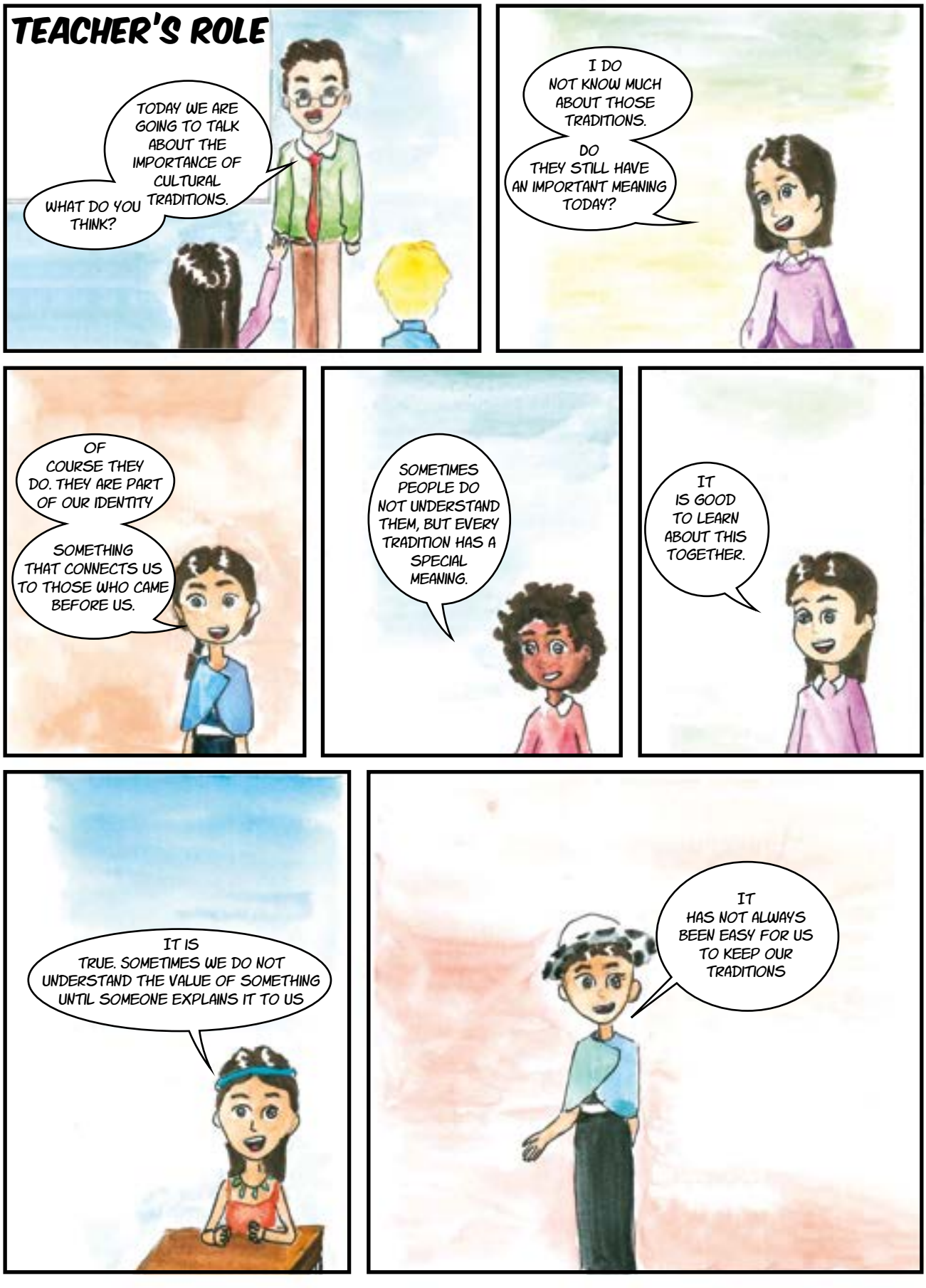
Little by little, the ideas began to flow. They recorded themselves trying typical dishes, wearing traditional clothing, dancing, and teaching new words.

Thousands of people started commenting and sharing.

After a week, the teacher asked them to reflect on the experience.

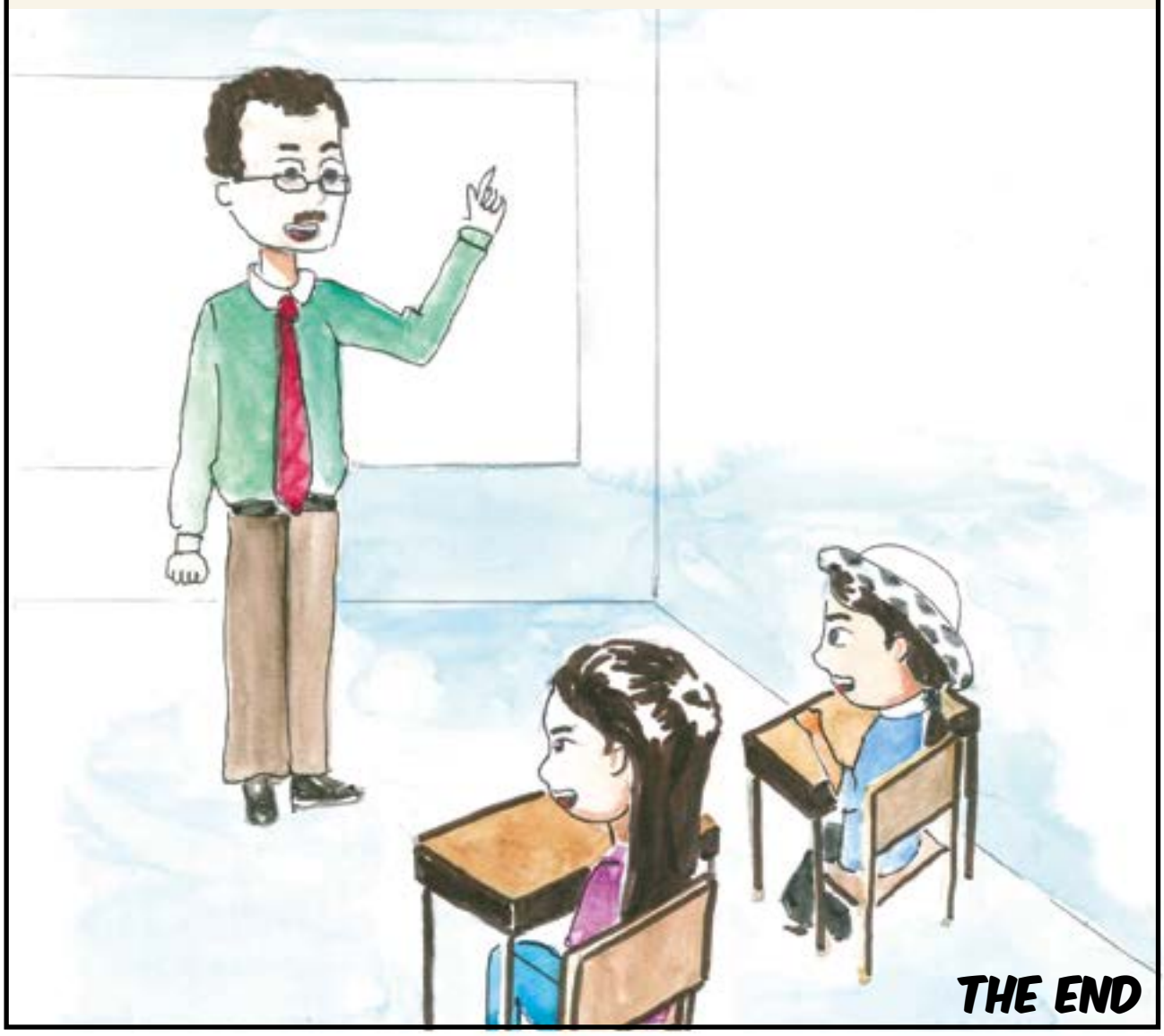
Social media, when used properly, could be a bridge to unite cultures.

THE END


TEACHER'S ROLE
TODAY WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DO NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT THOSE TRADITIONS.
DO THEY STILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT MEANING TODAY?
OF COURSE THEY DO. THEY ARE PART OF OUR IDENTITY
SOMETHING THAT CONNECTS US TO THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US.
SOMETIMES PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM, BUT EVERY TRADITION HAS A SPECIAL MEANING.
IT IS GOOD TO LEARN ABOUT THIS TOGETHER.
IT IS TRUE. SOMETIMES WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF SOMETHING UNTIL SOMEONE EXPLAINS IT TO US
IT HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY FOR US TO KEEP OUR TRADITIONS

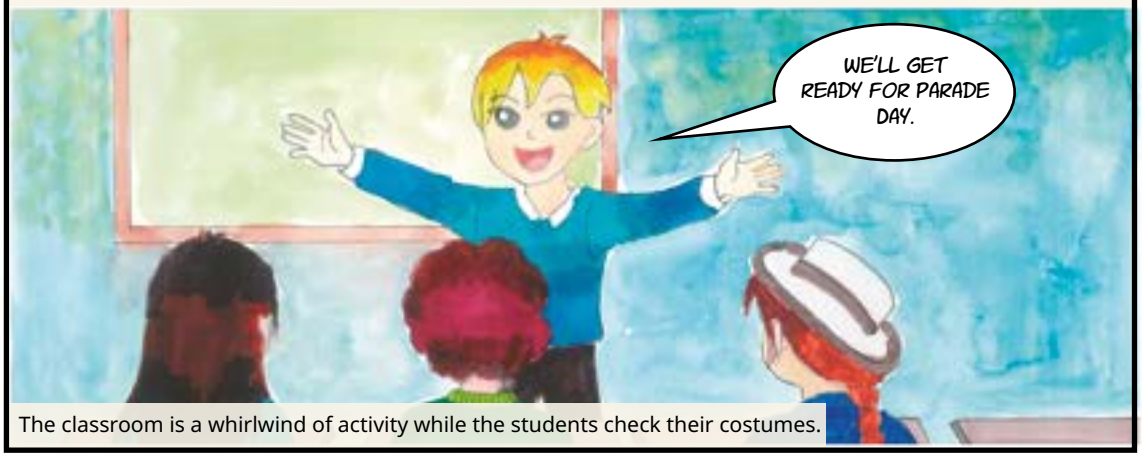
BUT WE DO IT PROUDLY
THAT SOUNDS INTERESTING. I HAD NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT ALL OF THAT.
THIS IS THE WONDERFUL THING ABOUT LEARNING.
WE CAN SHARE OUR STORIES AND GROW TOGETHER.
ÑUSTA, HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT ANDREA SAID?
FOR ME, OUR TRADITIONS ARE A BOND WITH MY GRANDPARENTS.
THEY TEACH US VALUES AND GIVE US IDENTITY.
THAT IS WHAT REALLY MATTERS.
THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR STORY WITH ME.

Diversity enriches us. Listening and respecting help us live together better and learn to value the cultures that surround us.

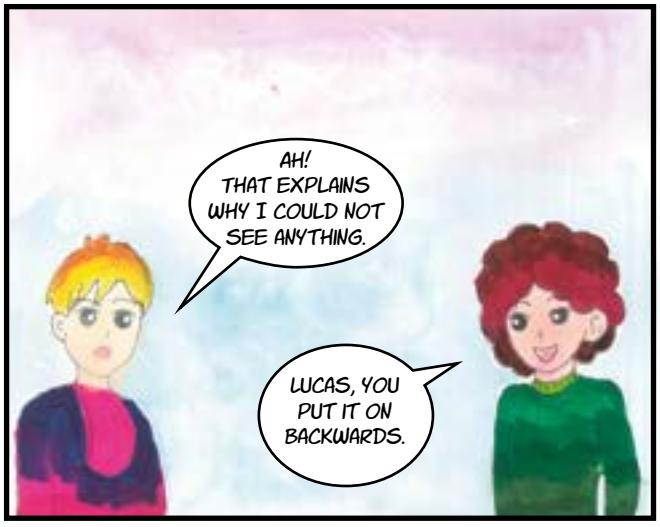


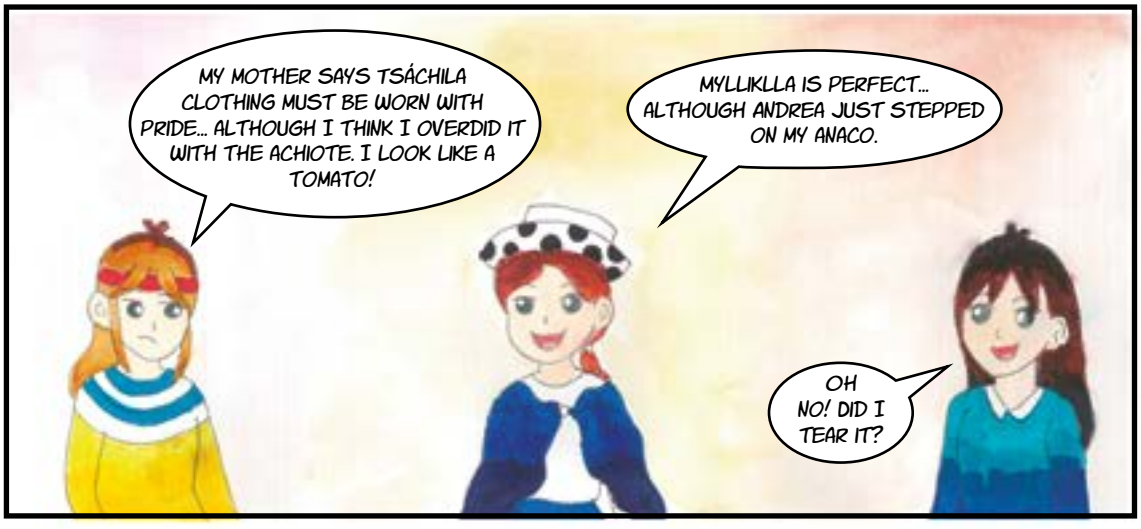
THE PARADE

The school is getting ready for the holiday parade. The teacher has organized a procession where the students represent different cultures of Ecuador. What no one expects is an event full of chaos and unexpected laughter.



The classroom is a whirlwind of activity while the students check their costumes.





The big day arrives.

The parade: Between disaster and spectacle.(Music...applause and... butterflies!)

Ñusta discreetly helps her. Andrea smiles and adjusts her skirt. Sofía improvises with her headpiece. The audience applauds, thinking it's all part of the show.

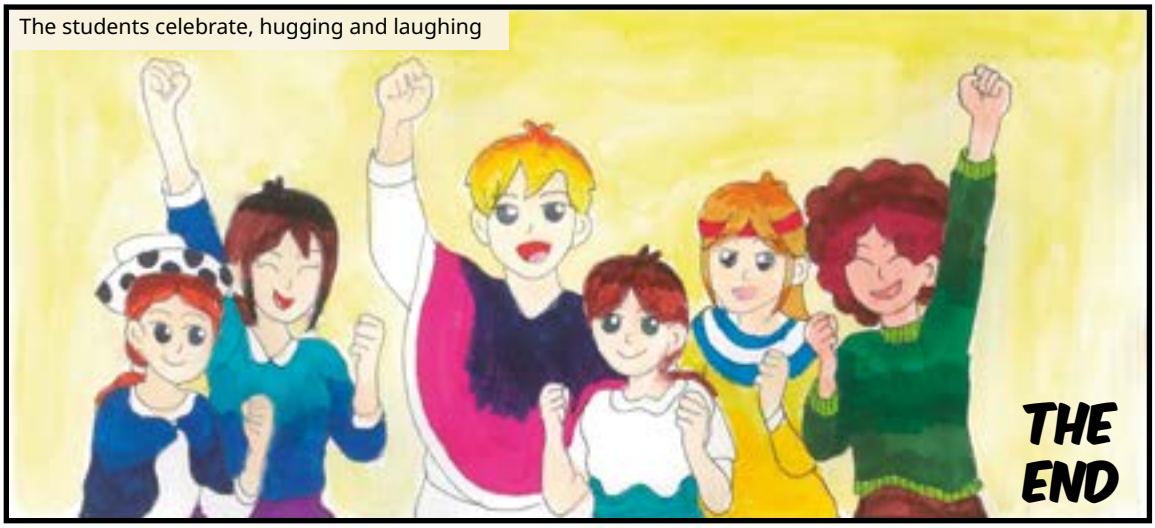
Everyone shows off their outfits with great style.

Reflection and Ending: When chaos bring people together.

After the parade.

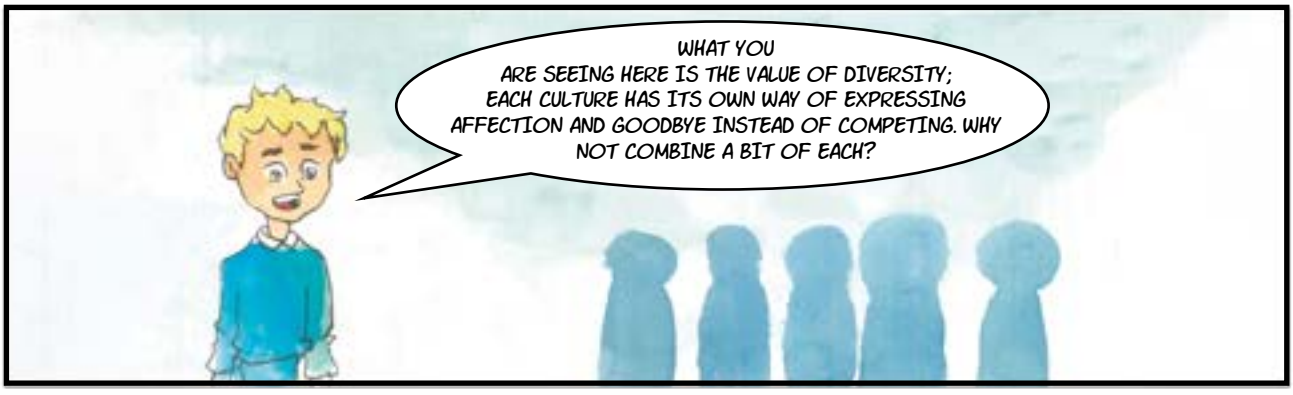
The students laugh about what happened.

The students celebrate, hugging and laughing



FAREWELL TO LUCAS

The students are planning a heartfelt surprise to say goodbye to Lucas, their Belgian exchange student.



Each student contributes in the farewell...

Ñusta performs a symbolic blessing to wish him a safe journey.

Lina paints a small achiote stripe on his forehead as a symbol of good wishes.

Zulema plays music and they start a small farewell dance.

Andrea organizes a meal with traditional dishes.

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Chapter 3

Invisible barriers

Invisible barriers

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Introduction

Education, in its most just and equitable essence, must be centred on inclusion, as it is expressed in the following definition: Inclusive education seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or social contexts, have access to quality education (Villera-Coronado & Villera-Ceballos, 2024). However, in practice, many individuals encounter barriers that hinder their participation and learning. These barriers include the lack of adequate infrastructure, the absence of curricular adaptations, and the persistence of prejudice and stigma within various High School. Article 47, paragraph 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador guarantees that:

> An education that fosters the development of their potential and abilities for integration and participation in equal conditions. Their education shall be ensured within regular education. Regular institutions shall incorporate differentiated treatment, and specialized attention shall provide specialized education. Educational establishments shall comply with accessibility standards for people with disabilities and they shall implement a scholarship system that responds to the economic conditions of this group. (p. 25)

This entails an active commitment on the part of High Schools, to adapt to the needs of all students, valuing the diversity of learning styles and abilities. In this context, it is essential to acknowledge that

each student may require distinct forms of support to reach their full potential. A specific learning disorder associated with a delay in neurological maturation, which is mainly evidenced in difficulties in acquiring reading and writing skills (Prieto et al., 2025). Consequently, although it is not related to intelligence, dyslexia can lead to exclusion if the necessary support is not provided.

It is essential to identify and implement a wide range of pedagogical, communicative, and social strategies which serve to reduce or eliminate the barriers that hinder equitable access to education and full participation in both educational and social environments. These strategies must be designed with an inclusive approach, one that regards diversity as a strength rather than as an obstacle. In this regard, the legal framework also supports this commitment. Article 47 of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI) stipulates that:

> High Schools are obligated to admit all people with disabilities and to establish the physical, curriculum, and promotional supports and adaptations appropriate to their needs; and to ensure the training of teaching staff in methodologies and specific evaluations to the instruction of children with capabilities for the process with inter-leaning, with the aim to get high in quality and warmth attention. (p. 41)

The implementation of these strategies ensures a more equitable and egalitarian education, and it contributes to the construction of an educational environment in where individual differences are respected and valued. By adopting inclusive practices, the participation of all students is promoted, providing them with the necessary tools to achieve full academic, social, and emotional development. In doing so, an institutional culture grounded in respect, empathy, and educational justice is fostered, it enables students to learn more effectively and become clear examples of inclusion, cooperation, and coexistence within each High Schools nationwide.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Inclusion in Formal Education

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a pedagogical approach that advocates curriculum planning from the outset, ensuring that all students, regardless of whether they have a disability, can learn equitably and effectively. Unlike traditional adaptations, which alter the curriculum only after barriers have been identified, UDL seeks to prevent them by anticipating diverse needs during the design phase. The origins of UDL can be traced to the concept of "universal design" in architecture, which emphasizes the creation of spaces accessible to all individuals without requiring subsequent modifications. This concept was later adapted to the educational field by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) in the United States during the 90s (CAST, 2018). UDL is grounded in neuroscientific research demonstrating that every brain learns differently, thereby demanding a flexible and diversified educational response (Meyer et al., 2014).

Since its development, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has exerted a significant influence on international educational policies oriented toward inclusion. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States and UNESCO's guidelines promote similar principles. In the Latin American context, countries such as Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador have begun to incorporate UDL into their regulatory frameworks and strategies for addressing diversity. UDL represents a paradigmatic shift in teaching, moving away from a traditional and homogeneous approach toward one in which diversity is not accommodated post hoc, but is embedded from the outset. It is a tool that actively promotes inclusion and enhances the quality of education for all learners. As underscored in the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2020), this inclusive framework "recognizes that education systems must be adapted to student variability, rather than expecting all students to conform to a single model" (p. 120).

Fundamental Principles of UDL

UDL is grounded in three fundamental principles, each derived from the functioning of the neural networks involved in learning: the

recognition network (the "what"), the strategic network (the "how"), and the affective network (the "why"). Each principle seeks to address different ways of learning, expressing, and engaging with knowledge (CAST, 2018). (see Table 3)

Table 3
Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL Principle	Description	Examples of Implementation
Multiple Means of Representation	Present information in multiple formats to accommodate students' learning styles	Texts, audio recordings, images, videos, charts, augmented reality
Multiple Means of Action and Expression	Allow multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned, respecting their individuality	Oral presentations, essays, dramatizations, videos, digital tools
Multiple Means of Engagement and commitment	Provide options and environments that foster students' interest, emotional security, and effo rt	Clear goals, positive feedback, differentiated challenges, safe and motivating environments

Source: *Adapted from Alba et al.* (2018).

Practical Application of UDL in the Classroom

Implementing UDL in the classroom entails changing the way teachers design their lessons, activities, and assessments. It is not about creating multiple versions of the same class but about designing learning experiences that are accessible to all from the outset. This requires pedagogical intentionality, flexibility, and creativity. A practical example might be a history lesson in which, instead of explaining a topic solely through reading, the teacher offers an explanatory video, an infographic, and an interactive experience. For assessment, students may choose between writing a summary, recording a video in which they explain the topic, or building a model using recyclable materials. In this way, all three UDL principles are addressed (Novak & Rodriguez, 2016).

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) constitutes a powerful tool within the framework of UDL. To personalize learning, educators can employ digital platforms, text-to-speech readers, automatic subtitles, interactive games, or accessibility

applications. Nonetheless, it is essential that the approach is not limited to technology use alone but rather to be grounded in inclusive pedagogical strategies. Collaborative work, project-based learning, thinking routines, and explicit instruction are methodologies that align with UDL. These practices enable the meaningful inclusion of all students in the learning process, regardless of their individual characteristics. Implementing UDL requires institutional planning: teacher training, evaluation of curricular materials, assessment adjustments, and the commitment of the entire educational community. Only through such coordinated efforts can you build a school that truly values and embraces diversity.

UDL not only offers multiple benefits for students with disabilities, but also promotes inclusive practices for all. One of its main advantages is that it promotes educational equity, as it does not begin with a standardized model to which all learners must adapt; rather, it offers multiple pathways for all students to achieve learning objectives. From an inclusion perspective, UDL reduces learning barriers that typically arise when curricula are designed in a rigid manner. By anticipating diversity, UDL minimizes the need for later adaptations, thereby facilitating the full participation of students with disabilities, learning difficulties, exceptional talents, or vulnerable backgrounds (Echeita, 2019).

This approach enhances both motivation and academic performance. When students feel acknowledged, valued, and can have the opportunity to choose how they learn and demonstrate what they know, their engagement and confidence increase. It fosters autonomy, self-regulation, and creativity skills which are essential in the twenty-first century (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Another key advantage is that UDL transforms traditional teaching. It compels educators to reflect on their practice, to question their assumptions, and to innovate in their instructional approaches. This enriches professional experience and strengthens the ethical foundation of education as a universal right.

UDL benefits students with specific needs as well as the entire educational community by fostering a more inclusive, flexible, and empathetic culture. It is an approach that demonstrates there are no "normal" or "different" students, only multiple ways of learning that must be acknowledged and valued.

Best Practices for the Inclusion Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Educational inclusion represents a fundamental ethical and pedagogical commitment to ensuring the right to quality education for all students, regardless of their personal or contextual characteristics. Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) not associated with disability require differentiated pedagogical practices that address their specific learning barriers without falling into stigmatization or exclusion. According to Booth and Ainscow (2015), "inclusion is not simply about placing everyone in the classroom, but about creating cultures, policies, and practices that celebrate diversity and remove barriers to learning and participation" (p. 16). In this context, the best practices focus on timely identification, relevant curricular adaptations, and the implementation of inclusive pedagogical strategies that foster the holistic development of each student.

The Role of the Student Counselling Department (SCD)

The primary function of the Student Counselling Department (SCD) is to provide follow-up for referred students. On the other hand, the District Unit for Inclusion Support (DUIS), fulfils two responsibilities: supervising the work carried out by the SCD to ensure appropriate case follow-up, and coordinating referrals to the relevant units of the Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador (MPH) for the necessary evaluations and interventions. Once a student's Special Educational Need (SEN) has been identified, specific strategies are designed and implemented, such as appropriate curricular adaptations, developed by the teacher in collaboration with the institution's interdisciplinary team (Ministerio de Educación, 2019).

The Role of the Teacher in Inclusive Educational Contexts

The teacher plays a vital role in the early identification of indicators associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN), a critical component for the implementation of timely and differentiated pedagogical responses. This task requires the execution of systematic and context-sensitive observation processes within the school environment, with the aim of detecting indicators such as persistent learning difficulties, atypical behaviors (hyperactivity, withdrawal, or aggression),

impairments in oral communication or language comprehension, as well as limitations in fine or gross motor skills.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2022), some of these indicators may coincide with standardized clinical diagnostic criteria. It is not the teacher's role to conduct diagnoses or issue clinical judgments, but rather to refer relevant cases to specialized teams, in accordance with institutional protocols and while ensuring the objectivity of the process. It is essential that teachers' observations be cross validated with information provided by the family, given the direct influence of the sociocultural environment on the student's development.

According to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2023), the first step in addressing SEN is their accurate identification. To achieve that, the teacher must prepare a descriptive report documenting the difficulties observed in the student's academic performance and behavior. Subsequently, the Student Counselling Department (SCD) will request a diagnostic questionnaire to detect potential barriers to learning and participation. Both documents shall be submitted to the institutional SCD or, if unavailable, to the entity designated by the District Education Office, to validate the existence of a SEN.

In public institutions that do not have a SCD, documentation shall be processed through the District Unit for Inclusion Support (DUIS). In the case of the private education sector, it is the responsibility of legal guardians to arrange the evaluation through an authorized psych pedagogical or neuropsychological center. The ultimate objective is to obtain a technical report outlining individualized pedagogical actions to be implemented by the SCD (Ministerio de Educación, 2023).

The Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador (MPH) is the entity responsible for providing specialized support to students with SEN within the public education system, through services such as physical therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological care. This process requires effective inter-institutional coordination to ensure comprehensive support. In specific cases, the involvement of external professionals may be necessary to complement the therapeutic approach.

Students with learning difficulties or conditions requiring differentiated educational attention, they will benefit significantly from a special education model that responds to their particular characteristics. In this context, the implementation of curricular and methodological accommodations is essential to facilitate meaningful engagement with knowledge. These adaptations may include content modification, the use of assistive technologies, or the application of differentiated pedagogical strategies that address individual learning styles and paces (Palacios-García, 2024)

Diversity and educational inclusion promote equity, respect for differences, and the development of socio-emotional skills such as empathy, cooperation, and acceptance of otherness. These principles strengthen school coexistence and contribute to the formation of citizens committed to building a just, plural, and solidary society (Revilla et al., 2025).

Curricular adaptations are intentional modifications made to various components of the curriculum: learning objectives, skills, methodologies, teaching resources, activities, allocated time, assessment systems, and access conditions. Their purpose is to address each student's SEN in a relevant and effective manner (Ministerio de Educación, 2019).

The responsibility for designing and implementing these adaptations lies primarily with the teacher, supported technically by SCD and coordinated through subject-area teams. The corresponding institutional authority must formally validate the adaptation document, and the student's legal guardians must actively participate in the process by providing relevant information and expressing their consent through a signed letter of acceptance.

The design of curricular adaptations must be guided by pedagogical principles established by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador: flexibility, student-centeredness, contextualization, realism, cooperation, and participation. These principles underpin inclusive teaching practices aligned with a rights-based approach and grounded in educational equity.

- **Curricular adaptations according to the level of concreteness:** the levels of curricular concreteness make it possible to adapt the national curriculum from a general design to specific interventions, thus guaranteeing inclusive and relevant education. According to the Ministerio de Educación (2019):

  The curriculum is organized into three levels of concretion: the macro curriculum, which corresponds to the national curriculum model with an inclusive and plurinational approach; the meso-curriculum, which adapts the curriculum to the particularities of each High School through documents such as the IEP, ICP and ACP; and the micro curriculum, which focuses on classroom planning and individual curricular adaptations registered in the ICAD, addressing the specific needs of students.(p. 45). Table 4 below describes these levels for a better understanding.

Table 4

Curriculum planning levels and their characteristics

Description	Description	Examples / Documents
Macro curriculum	General curriculum design is developed by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador . Reflects ideological, pedagogical and structural transformations with an inclusive, plurinational and intercultural approach.	Compulsory national Curriculum
Meso curriculum	Institutional planning that translates the national curriculum into the reality of each educational center, considering its context and student diversity	Institutional Educational Project (IEP), Institutional Curriculum Project (ICP), Annual Curriculum Planning (ACP)
Micro curriculum	Classroom planning that responds to the specific needs of students. Includes individual curricular adaptations recorded in the Individual Curricular Adaptation Document (ICAD).	Lesson Planning, Individual Curriculum Adaptation Document (ICAD)

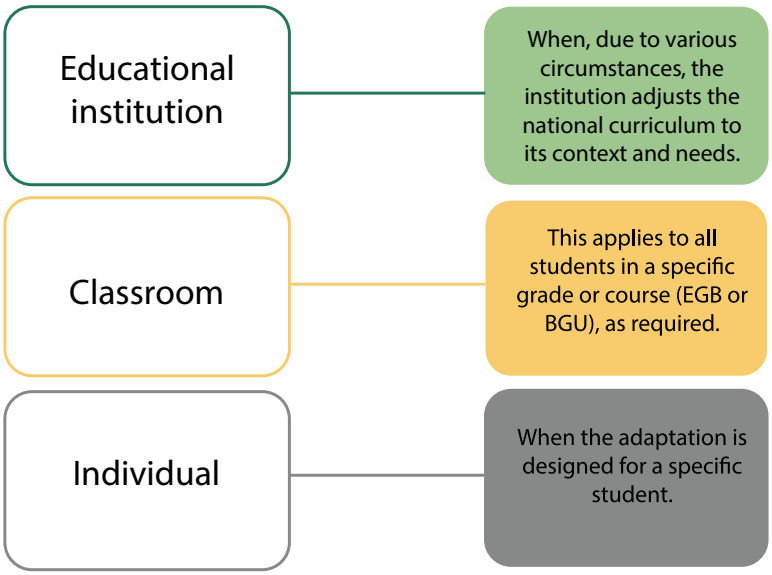
Source: *Ministerio de Educación* (2019)

Every curriculum must address key questions such as: Why teach? What to teach? How to teach? When to teach? as well as What to assess? How to assess? and When to assess? From these questions derive the essential elements: objectives, content, methodologies, resources, and assessment (Ministerio de Educación, 2019).

- **Curricular adaptations according to the entity in which they are applied:** curricular adaptations are an essential component in the construction of inclusive and equitable education systems. These modifications can be applied at different levels of school management and operation, from the school as a whole to the classroom and the individual, allowing the national curriculum to be adjusted to specific contexts, groups of learners or particular needs. This differentiation is key to ensuring that all students have access to relevant and quality learning opportunities, fostering participation and academic progress. Figure 2 summarizes curricular adaptations according to the entity in which they are applied, in accordance with the guidelines established by the Ministerio de Educación (2019).

Figure 6

Curricular adaptations at different levels of the education system



Source: *Ministerio de Educación* (2019)

- **Curricular adaptations according to degree of impairment:** Adaptations for access to the curriculum involve adjustments to aspects such as the physical environment, available resources and materials, infrastructure, the time needed for the student to carry out an activity, and the means of communication used.
- **Grade 1 impairment:** According to the Ministerio de Educación (2019), when making curricular adaptations it is important to consider different types of resources, among them:
    - **Human resources:** These include the head teacher, the professionals of the Student Counselling Department (SCD) and the technical team of the District Inclusion Support Unit (DUIS).
    - **Spatial resources:** It is essential to adapt the physical conditions to ensure access to inclusion.
    - **Communication resources:** Alternative communication systems need to be implemented.
    - **Material resources:** Materials designed or adapted to facilitate student learning and participation.

The incorporation of these technical resources and the adaptation of the school environment to the particular needs of students are considered part of the adaptations for access to the curriculum.

- **Grade 2 or non-significant:** According to the Ministerio de Educación (2019), this type of adaptation involves additional adjustments to those of grade 1, incorporating changes in methodology and assessment. However, the learning objectives and skills with performance criteria remain the same for all students. Methodological and assessment strategies must be flexible, creative, motivating and tailored to the individual needs of learners.

Strategies that can be applied include:

- **Peer tutoring:** Students with greater mastery of knowledge and skills collaborate with peers in need of support.
- **Teacher support group:** Educators with expertise in SEN provide guidance to other staff; in addition, the SCD is responsible for accompanying and training teachers in the process.
- **Centers of interest:** A technique that consists of organizing the classroom into different workspaces, each with activities that favor the development of specific skills.
- **Projects:** Group activities focused on the creation and execution of a project related to the students' interests. Students with SEN participate according to their abilities and possibilities.
- **Paired reading:** Particularly useful in cases such as dyslexia, it allows a partner to support a student who needs it by reading aloud.
- **Collaborative writing:** A strategy that involves the joint creation of a text by several students, encouraging teamwork and improving the skills of those who face difficulties in expressing their ideas in writing.
- **Grade 3 or significant:** For the Ministerio de Educación (2019), this type of adaptation involves modifications to the elements included in grade 2 (methodology, assessment, resources, etc.), educational objectives and skills with their respective performance criteria. The curriculum is further adjusted to respond to the particular needs of the learner.

Assessment strategies that can be applied include:

- **Oral assessments:** Exchange of questions and answers verbally to assess knowledge.
- **Objective written assessments:** Consisting of multiple choice, true/false, matching, completion and ordering questions.

- **Objective attitudinal assessment:** Systematic observation of the effort and commitment of the student with special educational needs.

- **Conversations:** Activity based on a reading or video, where each student expresses the main idea and shares his or her opinion.

- **Rubrics:** Tools in the form of matrices that allow different aspects of a specific task to be evaluated.

- **Other forms of assessment:** For students with reading or writing difficulties, alternative products such as mock-ups, collages or drawings can be used instead of written work.

Curricular adaptations according to duration: In education, curricular adaptations are deliberate adjustments made to cater for the diversity of students, with a particular focus on those with special educational needs (SEN). Among the classification axes, the duration of the adaptation is a key dimension: a distinction is made between temporary and permanent adaptations, see Table 5. Understanding this distinction allows teaching and technical teams to design more adjusted, effective, and inclusive educational processes (Loor & Aucapiña, 2020).

Table 5
Classification of curricula adaptations according to their duration

Duration	Level of integration	Typical examples
Temporary	Access or not meaningful	Overtime, tutoring, light physical support
Permanent	Not meaningful or meaningful	Modified objectives, methodological changes, deletion of content

Source: *Loor and Aucapiña* (2020)

Pedagogical Strategies to Address Specific Educational Needs

Inclusive teaching strategies consist of a set of tools and approaches that enable teachers to respond to the diversity present in the

classroom, regardless of physical, social, economic, or cultural characteristics. Each student has particular needs, so it is essential that teaching is adapted to ensure their learning and all-round development. Currently, these strategies promote participation and the development of values such as empathy, respect, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity. To this end, it is essential that teachers have the necessary preparation to apply relevant methodologies to the needs of each student (Ministerio de Educación of Ecuador, 2024).

This process involves observing and understanding the specific characteristics of all students who present some barrier that hinders their learning, and different methods and strategies that help with the needs of each student must be carefully and systematically implemented.

- **Strategies According to the Type of Need**

Learning disabilities

- Use auditory material.
- Make learning concrete.
- Use manipulatives: (picture boards, syllable cards, dice and blocks).
- Use tangible objects: (Plasticine, puzzles, word or number puzzles and memory games with pictures or sounds).
- Incorporate familiar (everyday) objects.
- Differentiated assessment.
- Use visual materials.
- Motivate the student to complete small tasks.

Behavioral disorders

- Give more time to respond (verbally and in writing).
- Break activities into short steps.

- Model instructions for an activity.
- Explain instructions using visual material.
- Provide clear instructions.
- Explain what is expected of the learner clearly and consistently throughout the day.
- Remain calm in the face of inappropriate behavior.
- Use different behavior modification techniques (BMPT).
- Work on turn-taking.
- Reinforce positive or appropriate behavior when it is present.

Superior endowment

- Give importance to their interests to motivate them.
- Create extra activities related to their interests.
- Create activities according to their abilities.
- Encourage more complex activities.
- Provide material to encourage research on different topics.
- Make curricular adaptations.
- Create teaching moments in which students learn to accept their mistakes.

Pervasive developmental disorders

- Observe what environmental stimuli may be bothersome to the student (sensory).
- Make adaptations considering the sensory sensitivities the student has and demonstrates.
- Make a behavior modification plan. Work on areas of need for the student (fine and gross motor, language, or socialization).

- Make curricular adaptations.
- Modify activities according to the student's abilities.
- Use visual material.
- Use different forms of communication (pictograms, sign language).
- Create activities that teach social skills and behaviors.
- Use group work to promote acceptance and socialization.
- Have clear rules and routines.
- Anticipate any schedule changes to avoid student anxiety.

Common Stigmas and Myths about Disability

Understanding disability from a human rights and social model implies recognizing that it is not just a medical or biological condition of social construction arising from the interaction between a person's individual characteristics and the physical, social and cultural barriers of their environment (Navarro, 2023). This vision represents a fundamental change with respect to the traditional medical model, as it does not focus the problem on the person, on the need to transform society to guarantee equal opportunities and the full exercise of rights. Despite theoretical and policy advances, many myths and prejudices persist that fuel discrimination and hinder inclusion, especially in education (Samaniego et al., 2024). Some of the most common stigmas are discussed below, based on current research, to promote a fairer, more empathetic, and evidence-based view.

- **Disability is not a disease:** One of the most common misconceptions is the belief that having a disability is equivalent to being ill. This confusion stems from a reductionist view that associates every different condition with the need for treatment or cure. Nevertheless, many disabilities are not caused by diseases, but rather by genetic factors, accidents, ageing or congenital conditions. In Mexico, 34% of disabilities are due to diseases, while 23% are linked to old age, 16% to birth conditions and 15% to accidents (Baumed,

2023). The United Nations emphasizes that disability should not be seen as a pathology, but rather as a condition that requires the removal of physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that impede people's full participation in society.

- **Not all people with disabilities want to stop being disabled:** There is a widespread perception that people with disabilities want to be 'cured' or free from their condition. This view is based on a negative conception of disability, as if it were a mistake or defect that needs to be corrected. Many studies show that people with disabilities want to live in a society that respects them, values their abilities, and provides them with opportunities for development and participation as much as anyone else (UN DESA, 2024). For many people, disability is part of their identity and does not necessarily represent an obstacle to being removed, it is a feature of their lives that they have learned to integrate and with which they can fully develop if they receive appropriate support.

- **Not all disabilities imply intellectual disability:** A widespread prejudice is to assume that all people with disabilities have cognitive limitations or learning difficulties. This generalization is erroneous and harmful, as it makes the diversity within the group invisible. There are many types of physical, sensory, psychosocial, and intellectual disabilities, and stuff, and the presence of a physical or sensory disability does not imply any impairment in intellectual capacity (Baumed, 2023). For example, people with visual or hearing impairments can access higher levels of education, pursue complex professions, and excel in various fields, demonstrating that intelligence is not determined by the presence or absence of a disability (Samaniego et al., 2024).

- **People with disabilities are not a social burden:** Another harmful stigma is to consider that people with disabilities represent an economic burden for society, due to the fact that they require special support or adjustments. This approach ignores the multiple contributions they can make if given the right conditions. This study highlights that inclusion in the workplace brings significant benefits such as improved emotional well-being, financial autonomy, social integration, and legislative and cultural challenges that persist for effective inclusion (Santana & Pinargote, 2025). Inclusive companies

tend to be more innovative, resilient and productive, and investments in accessibility and human diversity have a positive long-term impact.

- **People with disabilities can work and be highly productive:** Related to the previous myth, it is still believed that people with disabilities cannot perform a job or that their performance will be lower. However, the evidence shows the opposite. With reasonable accommodation, such as adapting physical spaces, implementing accessible technology or flexible working hours, many people with disabilities can effectively perform a wide range of work tasks (Aksnes & Ulstein, 2024). In many cases, they even exceed productivity expectations. The key is to remove existing barriers in the work environment and foster an inclusive and respectful organizational culture.

- **Not all people with disabilities are the same:** A common mistake in public discourse is to treat individuals with disabilities as a homogeneous group. In reality, disability encompasses a broad spectrum of conditions, over 200 distinct types, each marked by its unique characteristics, challenges, and potentialities (Samaniego et al., 2024). This diversity necessitates a personalized approach in the formulation of public policies, educational strategies, and support systems. Generalization obstructs the development of effective solutions and perpetuates stigmas that hinder the full participation of these individuals.

- **People with sensory disabilities can live a full life**: It is often assumed that those with visual or hearing disabilities lead limited or incomplete lives. Nevertheless, when there is adequate support, assisted technology, and accessible environments, these people can develop personal, social, and professional skills with full autonomy (Aguila, 2025). The key is not in the condition itself, but in the opportunities that society offers for each individual to unfold their potential.

- **Not everyone needs constant care**: It is common to think that all people with disabilities depend on the permanent care of others. In reality, many people are capable of making decisions, managing their daily lives, and living autonomously, if they have

the appropriate tools and environment (Jaramillo Ruiz et al., 2023). Overprotection, far from helping, can limit their development and perpetuate dependence. Fostering autonomy is essential for well-being and inclusion.

- **Regular education is a valid option:** For decades, it was considered that people with disabilities could only attend special education institutions. Nonetheless, current research demonstrates that inclusion in regular classrooms, with appropriate support and adjustments, improves academic learning, strengthens social skills, and contributes to a fairer and more supportive school culture (Samaniego et al., 2024). Educational segregation limits the potential of these students and reinforces social exclusion**.**

- **People with disabilities can form a family:** The belief that people with disabilities cannot take on family responsibilities or be parents remains. However, there are numerous documented cases of people with disabilities who, with appropriate support, have formed stable families and have successfully raised children (Baumed, 2023). The ability to care, love, and educate is not determined by physical or sensory condition, support networks, and access to conditions of equity.

- **They can make decisions about their lives:** The infantilization of people with disabilities leads to the false idea that they cannot make important decisions. On the other hand, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities recognizes the right to autonomy and informed decision-making, provided that the necessary support is provided (Arias, 2025). Fostering their self-determination strengthens their self-esteem and general well-being.

- **Independent mobility is possible:** Thanks to technological advances and improved urban accessibility, more people with disabilities are able to move independently. The ability to travel or move does not depend solely on their physical condition, the design of accessible environments, inclusive transport, and the availability of support tools (Aguila, 2025).

- **They can be agents of change and innovation:** Contrary to the disability myth, many people with disabilities are actively involved

in developing technological solutions, accessible programs, and innovative tools that benefit society as a whole. Functional diversity brings different perspectives and enriches the processes of design, creativity, and innovation (Aguila, 2025). Their expertise is key to building more inclusive and humane environments.

- **Not all disabilities are visible:** It is important to recognize that there are invisible disabilities, such as psychosocial, mental, or certain chronic diseases, which are not physically evident but have a significant impact on people's lives (Baumed, 2023). Lack of understanding these conditions can lead to discrimination, stigmatization, and even denial of rights. Making this diversity visible is essential for inclusion.

- **Living with a disability is not a tragedy:** It is common to assume that a life with a disability is marked by suffering or resignation. This narrative victimizes and limits people, when in reality, many of them lead full, active, and meaningful lives, facing challenges with courage and creativity (Baumed, 2023). Changing this view means recognizing the dignity, abilities, and achievements of people with disabilities as a valuable part of society.

The persistence of these myths reveals the urgent need to transform social, educational, and cultural discourses around disability. The greatest barriers are not found in people, but in attitudes, structures, and policies that perpetuate exclusion. Promoting inclusion requires dismantling stereotypes, promoting universal accessibility, and respecting human diversity with an informed, empathetic, and committed society to equity, which will ensure that all people, with or without disabilities, develop their potential and exercise their rights.

The Impact of Internal Migration on Access to Education in Ecuador

Internal migration in Ecuador has gained significance in recent decades, becoming a social and economic phenomenon that affects various regions of the country. The migration process involves people moving from rural to urban areas in order to seek better living conditions and opportunities (Illicachi 2023). This has several implications on key issues, such as access to education. As migrant families settle in new communities, they face significant challenges

that can impact the continuity and quality of education for children and young people. Factors such as lack of adequate infrastructure, limited resources in High Schools, cultural and linguistic adaptation are obstacles faced by many communities, which can result in unequal access to equitable educational opportunities.

According to Torres (2023), "existing educational policies often do not take into account the specific needs of this migrant population, which aggravates the situation" (p.58). In the Ecuadorian context, it is essential to understand how internal migration impacts on the education system and what strategies can be implemented to mitigate the barriers faced by these families. The study seeks to analyze these dynamics, providing data and reflections that serve as a basis for developing effective public policies that promote access and quality of education for children and young internal migrants in Ecuador.

Context of Internal Migration in Ecuador

According to the Migration Unit (2024), the term internal migration is defined as "movement of people within the same country, for example from the countryside to the city or between regions" (p. 4). This refers to a change of residence from one location to another, without crossing international borders. This phenomenon may be driven by a variety of factors including economic, social, political, and environmental factors.

In the Ecuadorian context, internal migration has been historically significant, especially to urban areas from rural areas, which corresponds to the search for better job opportunities, access to basic services, and more adequate living conditions (Yanza, 2022). This type of migration is often associated with seeking education and improving the quality of life. In Ecuador, internal migration has been strongly influenced by natural disasters and climatic phenomena, which have forced entire communities to move to other regions in search of security and stability.

Internal migration impacts individuals moving, it has repercussions in the places of origin, altering demographic structures and generating both challenges and opportunities in terms of access to services, including education for migrant children and their families, because it often involves the relocation of children to new High Schools which

can generate progress or challenges related to cultural adaptation, social integration, and available educational quality (Bayona et al., 2024).

Ecuador is characterized as a country of origin, transit, and destination for both internal and international migration. In terms of internal migration, the provinces of Manabí, Guayas, Los Ríos, and Loja account for the largest number of people who have migrated to other parts of the country, especially to the poles of attraction of Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca, due to their economic dynamics and production capacity. The latest *Revista Gestión census* (2024) shows that the province of Manabí leads this migratory trend with 503,394 internal migrants, followed by Guayas, with 299,734 migrants: Los Ríos, with 248,848, and Loja, with 219,202.

Internal migration in Ecuador has been linked to socio-economic factors that influence access to education. Economic inequality between the different regions of the country, especially between urban and rural areas, determines the educational opportunities available to internal migrants. Many of these migrants come from rural areas where poverty is more prevalent and where High Schools lack the necessary resources to provide quality education (Rendón, 2024). Similarly, when migrating to cities in search of better opportunities, migrant families often face additional challenges, such as a lack of documentation, which makes it difficult for them to access educational services, and problems of cultural and social integration affect their interaction in the local education system.

Changes in family structure due to internal migration, such as the displacement of one or both parents, impact on children's access and continuity in education (Delfin et al., 2021). Migrating families tend to have less economic resources, which may lead to a decrease in educational investment and, consequently, to school drop-out.

Similarly, the informality in which many migrants find themselves, characterized by unstable and insecure jobs, limits families' access to fixed incomes. This economic precariousness directly impacts their ability to cover the costs related to education, such as uniforms, school supplies, and transport (Bonal & González, 2021).

Impacts of Migration on the Education System

Internal migration in Ecuador has had a significant impact on access to education, generating both positive and negative effects on the country's educational system. This phenomenon has generated a series of impacts on the educational offer, quality, inclusion and equity, structural, pedagogical, administrative, and socio-emotional aspects of the education system.

- **Positive impact**

Many migrants move to urban areas where educational opportunities are more varied and accessible, allowing children and young people to benefit from better quality education with greater resources. This includes access to more appropriate school infrastructures, trained teachers and diversified educational programmers that promote integral learning (Rincón-Báez, 2024). The arrival of migrants has contributed to greater cultural diversity in classrooms, which enriches the educational environment and promotes values of inclusion and respect for traditions and customs.

Rincón-Báez (2024) argues that migrants often prioritize education as a fundamental tool to improve their quality of life, motivating their children to strive and reach higher educational levels. This approach results in increased enrolment and school attendance rates, especially in previously neglected areas. Internal migration has led to the creation of new schools and the strengthening of educational programmes, leading to public policies aimed at improving access to and quality of education.

- **Negative impact**

Because of internal migration, there are negative impacts on access to education, highlighting inequalities that affect both migrants and host communities. One of the adverse effects is family destabilization, as migration movements often lead to the separation of families, creating an environment conducive to school drop-out. Many young people mention that when moving with one of their parents, students must face complex processes of adaptation to new educational

contexts, which often lead to dropout situations that put their academic trajectory and future employment opportunities at risk (Lafaurie, 2021). In addition, the quality of education may be affected as institutions in host areas often do not have sufficient resources to cater to many students from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

An increase in the student population may lead to classroom overcrowding, limiting opportunities for personalised attention and negatively affecting students' academic performance. In addition, internal migrants are frequently subjected to discrimination and stigmatisation, because of their status as migrants but also due to the perceived quality of the education they received in their places of origin, which may foster experiences of marginalisation and social exclusion.

Education Policies in Response to Migration

In Ecuador, education policies have had to adapt to the reality of internal migration, which has significantly influenced access to education. The legal framework in the country establishes fundamental rights to education, reflected in the 2008 constitution, which recognizes education as a human right and an obligation of the state. In this context, specific strategies have been implemented to assist internal migrants, that is, "those who face structural and cyclical barriers that hinder their access to quality education at different educational levels" (Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2024).

Among the most relevant government initiatives are scholarship programs and financial support that seek to facilitate access to education in rural and urban areas affected by migration. Similarly, access to education depends on the existence of inclusive policies and their effective implementation in different provinces and local contexts, where socio-economic particularities influence the assimilation of internal migrants into the educational system. Jordán (2023) states that improving this situation requires policies that address the structural aspects of the education system, consider social integration and psychosocial support for migrants, thus promoting their permanence and academic success.

Migrant Perspectives on Education

Interviews with internal migrants in various regions of Ecuador reveal a multifaceted reality regarding access to education. For example, Maria, a mother who emigrated from the Sierra region to the coast in search of better job opportunities, said that the move directly affected the school enrolment of her children, who faced difficulties adapting to the new educational context due to differences in curriculum and resource availability (Illicachi, 2023).

In turn, Carlos, a young man who emigrated with his family, pointed out that the lack of information about High School s in his new place of residence complicated his registration process, which led him to miss a school year, but the interviews highlighted the resilience of this family, for example Ana, who, despite the specific difficulties she faced after migration, she got organized with other mothers in their community to create an educational support group that would facilitate the exchange of information on bursaries and school reinforcement programs (Jiménez & Loor, 2025). The testimonies highlight migrants' challenges in accessing education, show solidarity, and community effort as responses to a lack of geographic resources.

To improve access to education in the context of internal migration in Ecuador, it is essential to implement concrete recommendations that address migrants' barriers. The promotion of inclusive public policies is essential to ensure access, permanence, and educational success for migrant children and young people, overcoming legal, cultural, and socio-economic barriers that hinder their integration (UNESCO IIEP, 2021). Thus, guaranteeing their right to education without discrimination. This involves developing mechanisms to facilitate the validation of prior studies.

School support programs should be implemented to help these students adapt to their new educational environments and promote the training and awareness of teachers about the realities and needs of migrants, so that they can provide appropriate and contextualized support. It is essential to increase investment in educational infrastructure in migrant-receiving localities, ensuring that there are sufficient quality schools to accommodate the growing student

population, and implementation of bursaries must be considered to the implementation of bursaries and financial aid programs to alleviate the financial burden of education for migrant families, and the promotion of accessible school transport.

It is imperative to strengthen coordination between different government institutions to ensure a comprehensive approach in the care of migrants, thus promoting their equitable access to education and contributing to the social and economic development of the country.

Conclusions

Educational inclusion requires much more than the existence of legal norms or abstract principles; it requires profound and sustained changes in institutional culture, pedagogical practices, and the infrastructure of education systems. Invisible barriers such as prejudice, stigma, methodological shortcomings, or lack of resources continue to limit access and full participation for students with diverse needs. Recognizing and breaking down these barriers is essential to achieving equitable education that truly responds to human diversity and guarantees the right of every person to develop fully.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is presented as a pedagogical and ethical response to the challenges of diversity in the classroom. Its proposal, based on neuroscience and curriculum flexibility, seeks to anticipate the needs of all students, avoiding late interventions that perpetuate exclusion. Nevertheless, its implementation is neither automatic nor simple: it requires strong teacher training, accessible teaching resources, and a change in mentality that sees difference as a value rather than a problem.

Internal migration produces positive and negative impacts on the Ecuadorian education system. On the one hand, migrant families find in urban areas greater opportunities for access to a diversified and better-quality education, also enriching the cultural diversity in the classroom. However, they also face significant challenges such as curriculum adaptation, the saturation of educational infrastructure, and the persistence of discrimination and social stigmatization. It

reveals the urgent need for public policies that guarantee physical access to education and comprehensively accompany the process of cultural, emotional, and academic integration of migrant students.

The stigma and myths surrounding disability persist in a worrying way, fueling social and educational discourses that limit the possibilities of real inclusion. Misconceptions such as considering disability exclusively from a medical perspective or assuming that people with disabilities cannot be fully integrated into society perpetuate exclusions and deepen inequalities. Overcoming these conceptions implies a cultural transformation that values diversity as a wealth rather than a deficit. It is necessary to promote social awareness, teacher training in human rights, and the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices that break with deficient vision.

Comics

Invisible barriers

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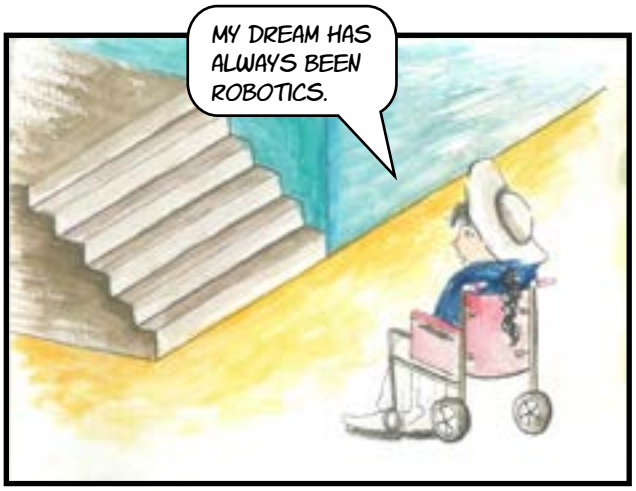
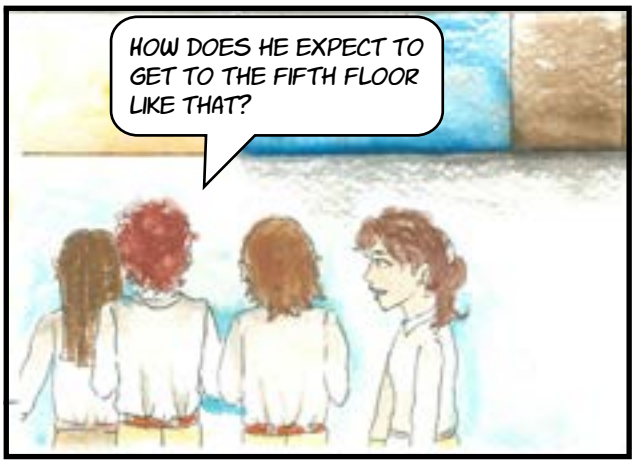
TAKING DREAMS BEYOND LIMITS

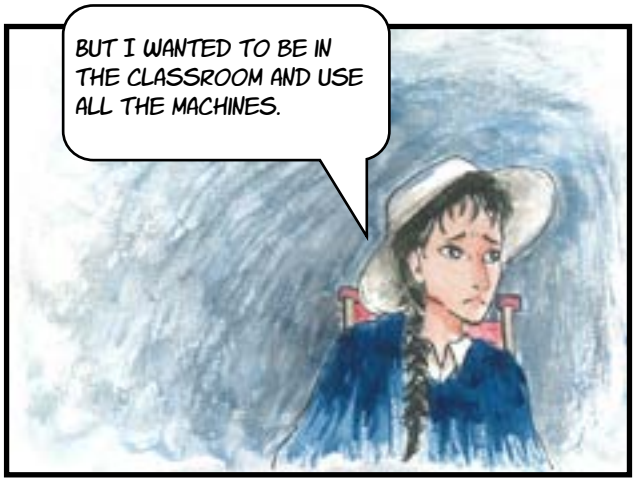
Mateo Quispe, 17, lives in a small town high in the Ecuadorian Sierra, where the cold wind and Andean landscapes have always been his home. He has been confined to a wheelchair since childhood, and it has defined who he is. Today, he lives with his godparents while his mother works to support his studies. Throughout his life, he has learned to cope with a world that often forgets people like him; he has been fascinated by technology since childhood. He spends hours disassembling radios, learning about circuits, and dreaming of building his own inventions. Now, upon taking the big leap to a public university, he discovers the existence of a robotics club, something he had always longed for. However, this new stage also brings him unexpected challenges, such as an environment that is not designed for accessibility, a more demanding pace, and the need to adapt without the support he was used to.

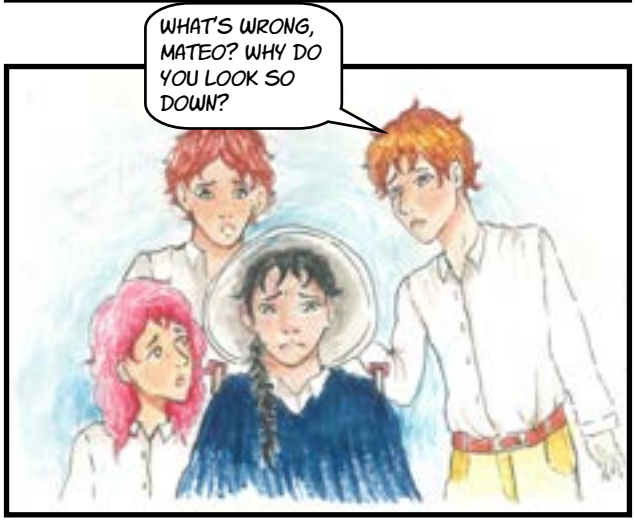

MY DREAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN ROBOTICS.


HOW DOES HE EXPECT TO GET TO THE FIFTH FLOOR LIKE THAT?

TODAY, I WANT TO SIGN UP FOR THE ROBOTICS CLUB.
THERE'S NO ELEVATOR IN THIS BUILDING. THE TEACHER DOESN'T OFFER ANY FLEXIBLE SOLUTION.

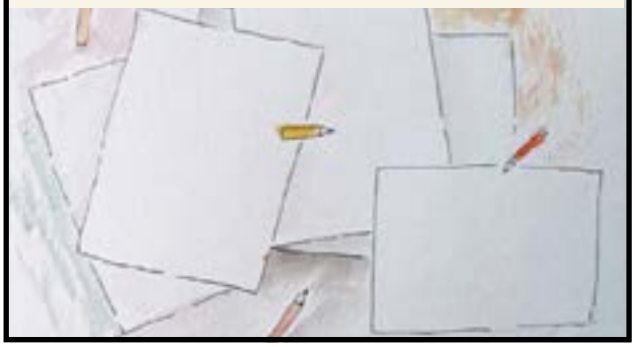
YOU COULD HELP US FROM DOWN HERE, BUT THERE'S NOTHING ELSE WE CAN DO.

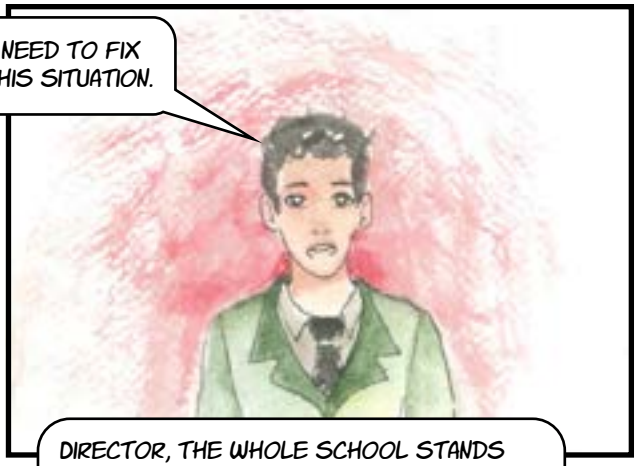

BUT I WANTED TO BE IN THE CLASSROOM AND USE ALL THE MACHINES.

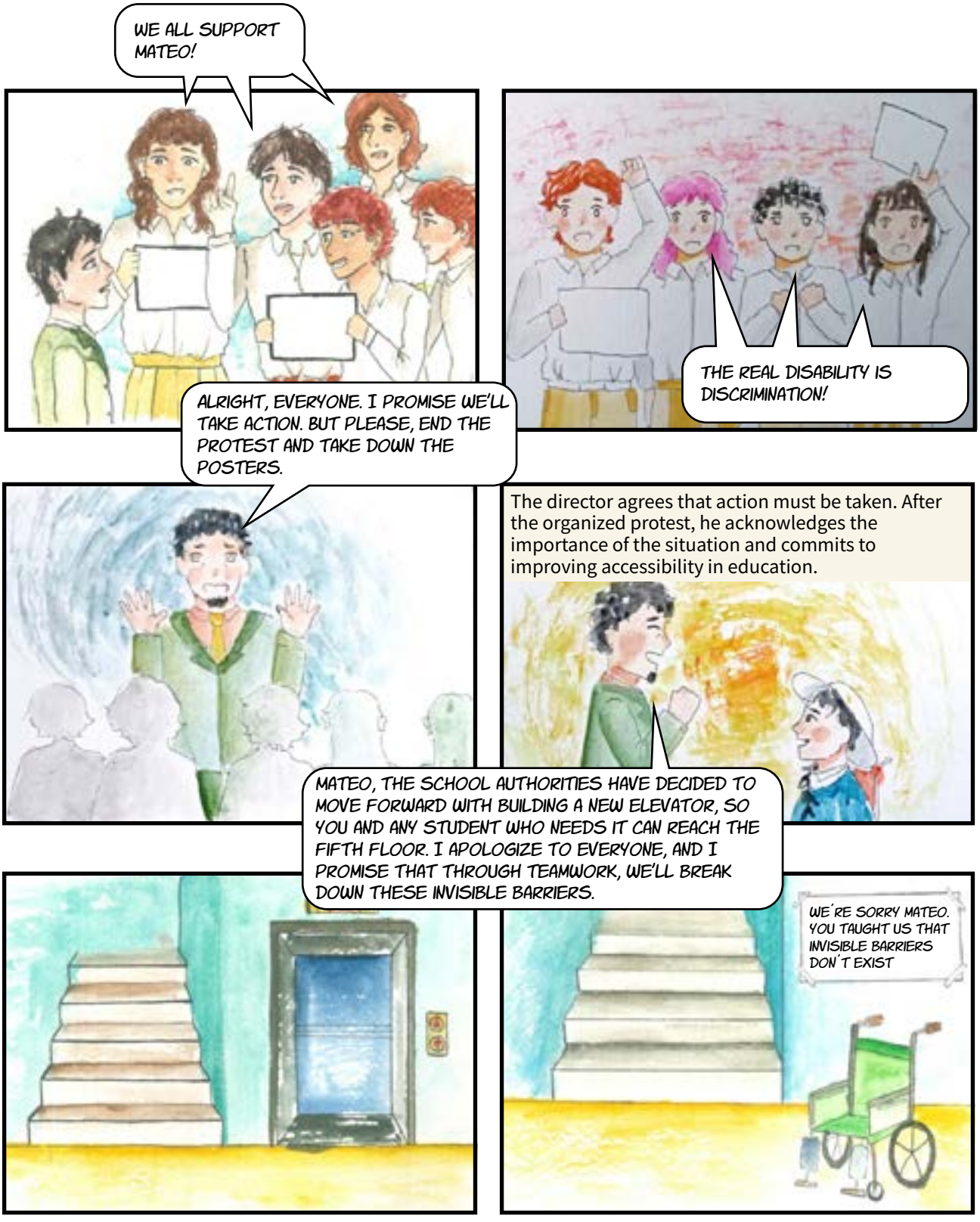

WHAT'S WRONG, MATEO? WHY DO YOU LOOK SO DOWN?

YOU CAN TALK TO US, WE'LL TRY TO HELP.
DON'T BE SAD.
IT ALL HAPPENED THIS MORNING.
I WANTED TO JOIN THE ROBOTICS CLUB, BUT THE PROFESSOR SAID I COULD ONLY STAY DOWNSTAIRS BECAUSE THERE'S NO WAY FOR ME TO GET UP.
THAT'S AWFUL!
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING. MATEO ISN'T THE FIRST STUDENT EXCLUDED AT THIS SCHOOL.
YES! LET'S DO IT!
I HAVE AN IDEA! WHAT IF WE MAKE SIGNS AND POSTERS SO EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHY IS THERE SO MUCH COMMOTION?
WHAT COULD BE GOING ON?

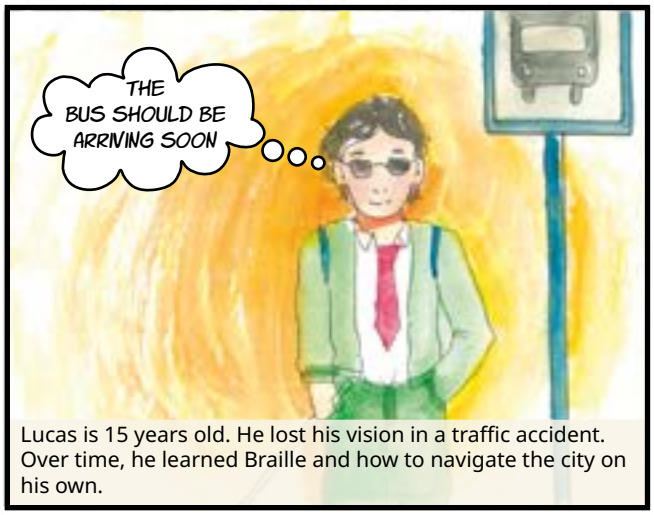
Mateo's friends quickly organized the protest, making sure every message was clear and inclusive. Together, they raised one united voice.



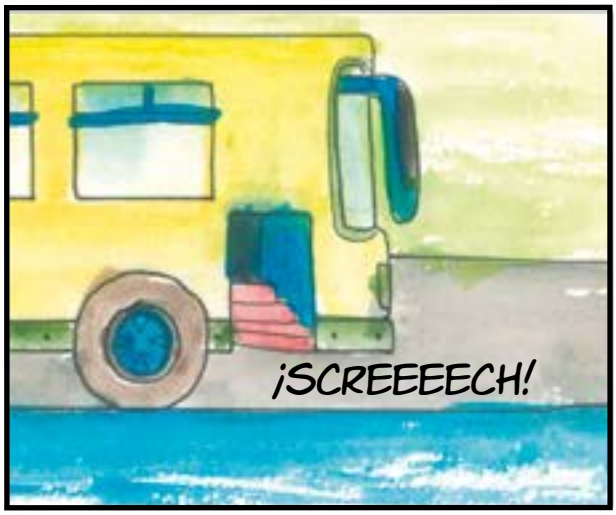



WE ALL SUPPORT MATEO!
THE REAL DISABILITY IS DISCRIMINATION!
ALRIGHT, EVERYONE. I PROMISE WE'LL TAKE ACTION. BUT PLEASE, END THE PROTEST AND TAKE DOWN THE POSTERS.
The director agrees that action must be taken. After the organized protest, he acknowledges the importance of the situation and commits to improving accessibility in education.
MATEO, THE SCHOOL AUTHORITIES HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH BUILDING A NEW ELEVATOR, SO YOU AND ANY STUDENT WHO NEEDS IT CAN REACH THE FIFTH FLOOR. I APOLOGIZE TO EVERYONE, AND I PROMISE THAT THROUGH TEAMWORK, WE'LL BREAK DOWN THESE INVISIBLE BARRIERS.
WE´RE SORRY MATEO. YOU TAUGHT US THAT INVISIBLE BARRIERS DON´T EXIST

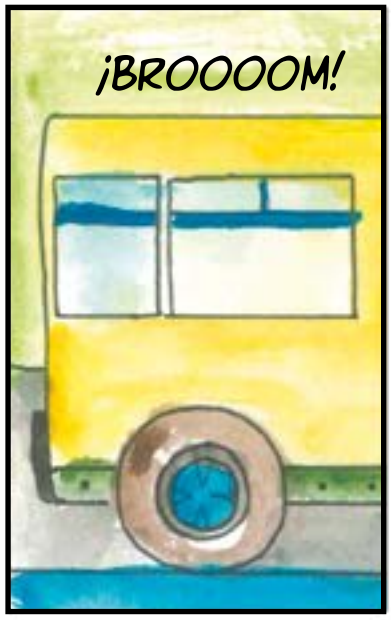
THE SEAT OF RESPECT



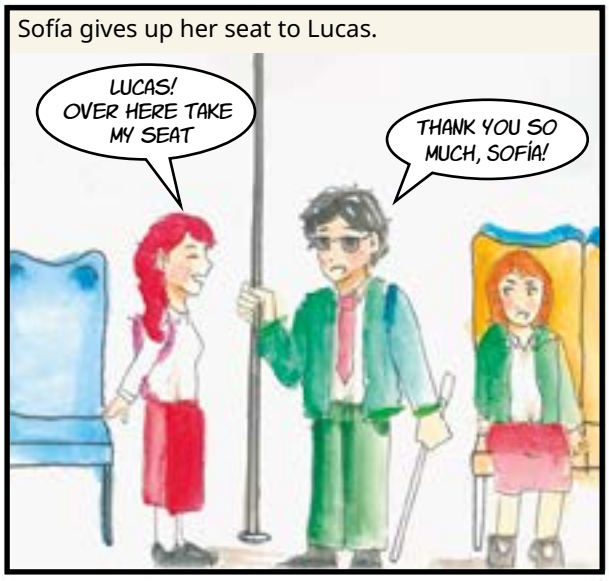
Lucas is 15 years old. He lost his vision in a traffic accident. Over time, he learned Braille and how to navigate the city on his own.



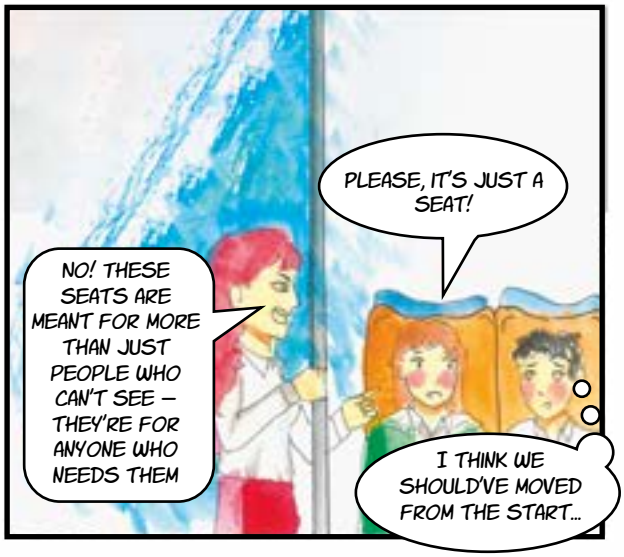
As Lucas boards, he accidentally touches a girl's shoe with his cane. She's sitting in one of the priority seats.

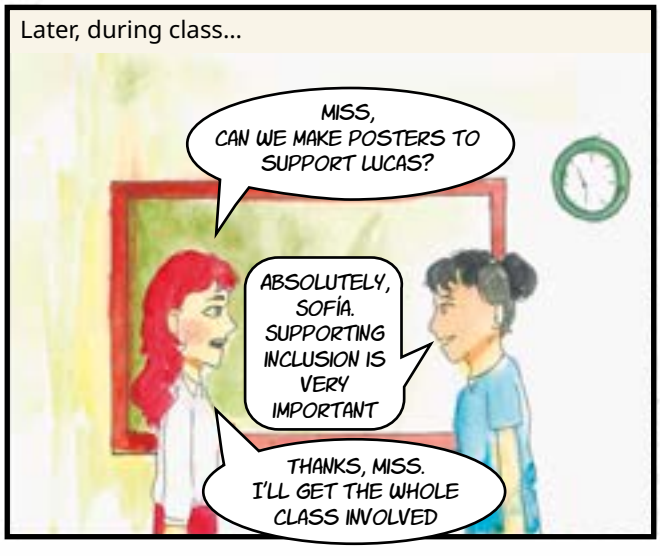


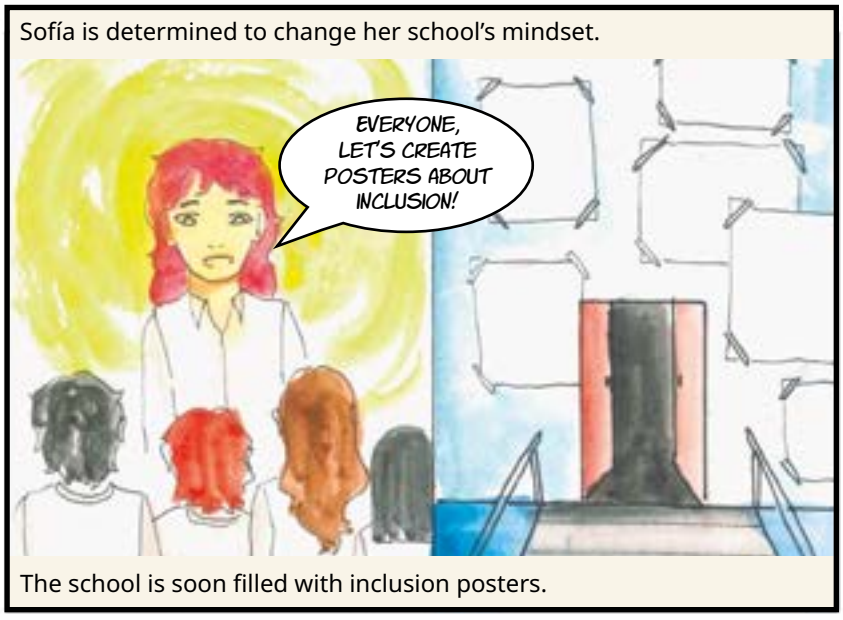
The students completely ignore Lucas. The bus moves fast, and he has to hold on tightly to stay upright.

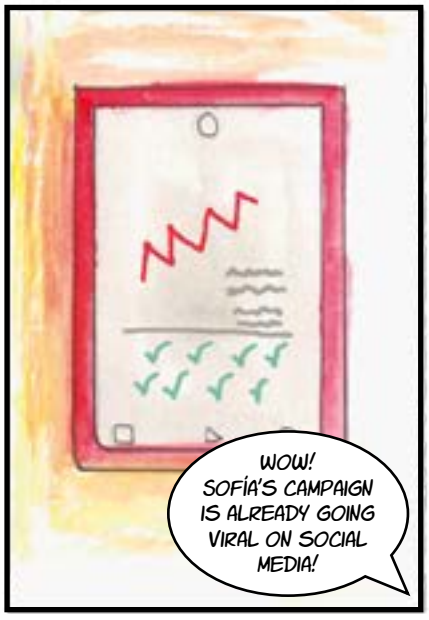

Sofía gives up her seat to Lucas.
LUCAS! OVER HERE TAKE MY SEAT
THANK YOU SO MUCH, SOFÍA!

UGH... WHAT A PAIN.
Sofía looks surprised at her classmate's reaction.


PLEASE, IT'S JUST A SEAT!
NO! THESE SEATS ARE MEANT FOR MORE THAN JUST PEOPLE WHO CAN'T SEE – THEY'RE FOR ANYONE WHO NEEDS THEM
I THINK WE SHOULD'VE MOVED FROM THE START...


Later, during class...
MISS, CAN WE MAKE POSTERS TO SUPPORT LUCAS?
ABSOLUTELY, SOFÍA. SUPPORTING INCLUSION IS VERY IMPORTANT
THANKS, MISS. I'LL GET THE WHOLE CLASS INVOLVED


Sofía is determined to change her school's mindset.
EVERYONE, LET'S CREATE POSTERS ABOUT INCLUSION!
The school is soon filled with inclusion posters.

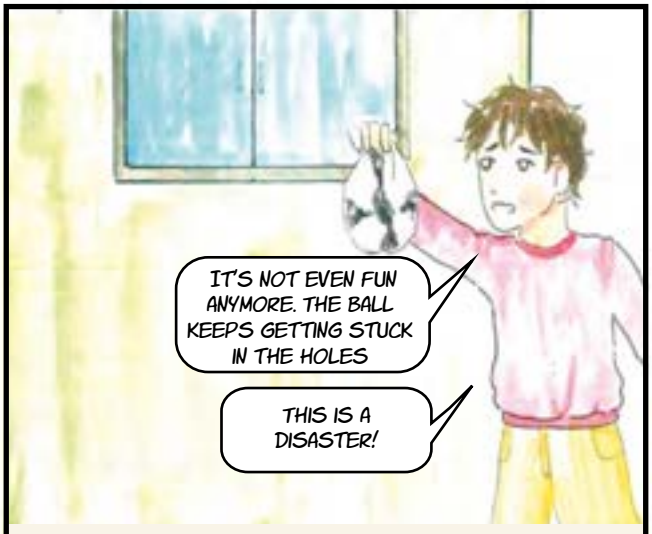

WOW! SOFÍA'S CAMPAIGN IS ALREADY GOING VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

A few days later...
I FEEL LIKE TODAY'S GOING TO BE A GREAT DAY!
HEY LUCAS, OVER HERE!
SI LUCAS, AHORA GRACIAS A SOFÍA NOS ENTENDEMOS MUCHO MEJOR
WE'RE SORRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THE OTHER DAY, LUCAS
IT'S OKAY, GUYS. ALWAYS REMEMBER TO RESPECT PEOPLE, NO MATTER THEIR CONDITION
¡SCREEECH!
TAKE THIS SEAT, PLEASE
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
Little by little, the students became more aware not just with Lucas, but with everyone.
I FEEL GOOD KNOWING I DID THE RIGHT THING
THANK YOU, SOFÍA, FOR CARING ABOUT INCLUSION
We want to thank all of you, kids. Small actions can change the world
"One seat at a time, for everyone."
THE END

PLAYING WITH DIVERSITY

A sunny morning on the school playground...Sumak and Danny watch the game from the edge of the field.

The heat and losing the game left the students feeling frustrated...



Martin complains about the condition of the field.

Sumak looks at his "tortas" (large beans) and remembers a game from his community.

Sumak shyly approaches his classmates and suggests playing chunkana with "tortas", a traditional game in his community.

The classmates are curious.

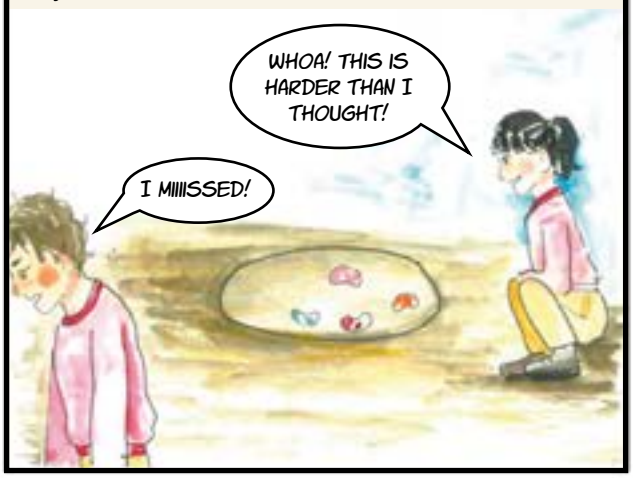
Sumak draws a circle on the ground and explains the rules of the game to his classmates.

Carlos confiado, piensa que el juego es fácil.

Jennifer enthusiastically challenges Martin.

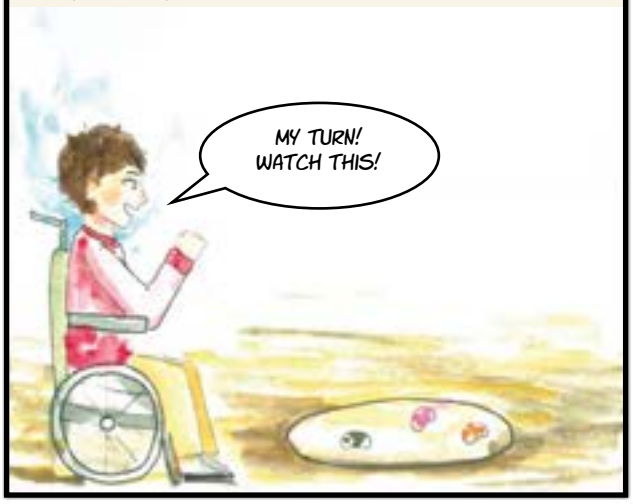
Sumak throws first and manages to knock Carlos' torta out of the circle.

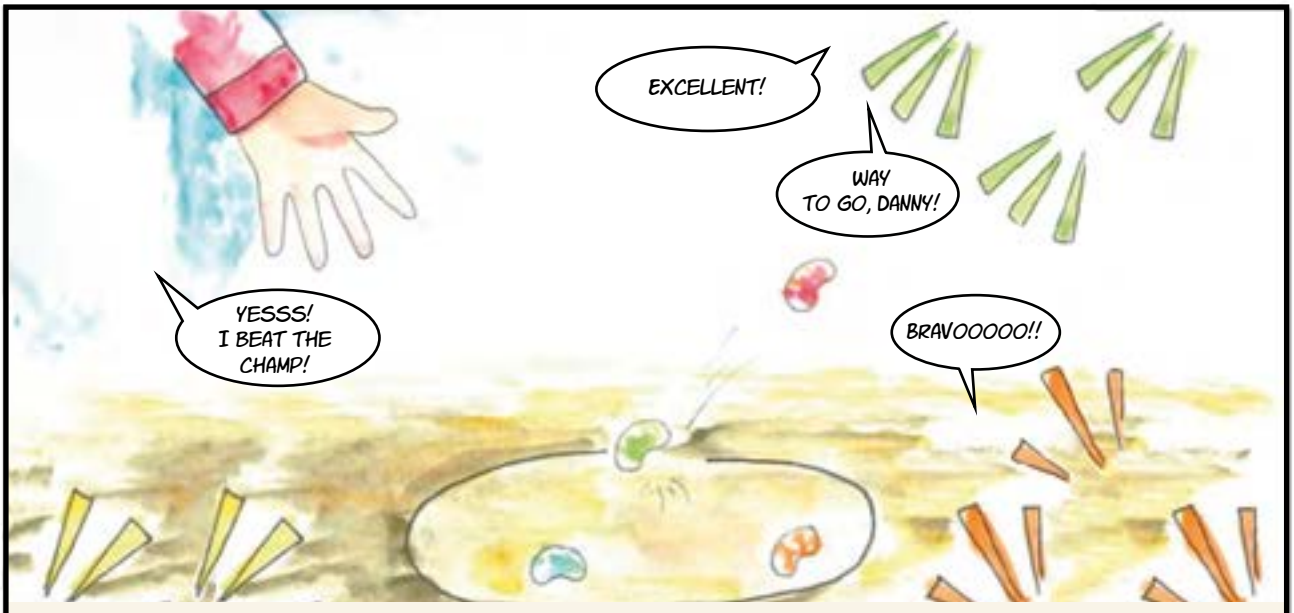
Jennifer and Martin are surprised and try to throw, but they miss.



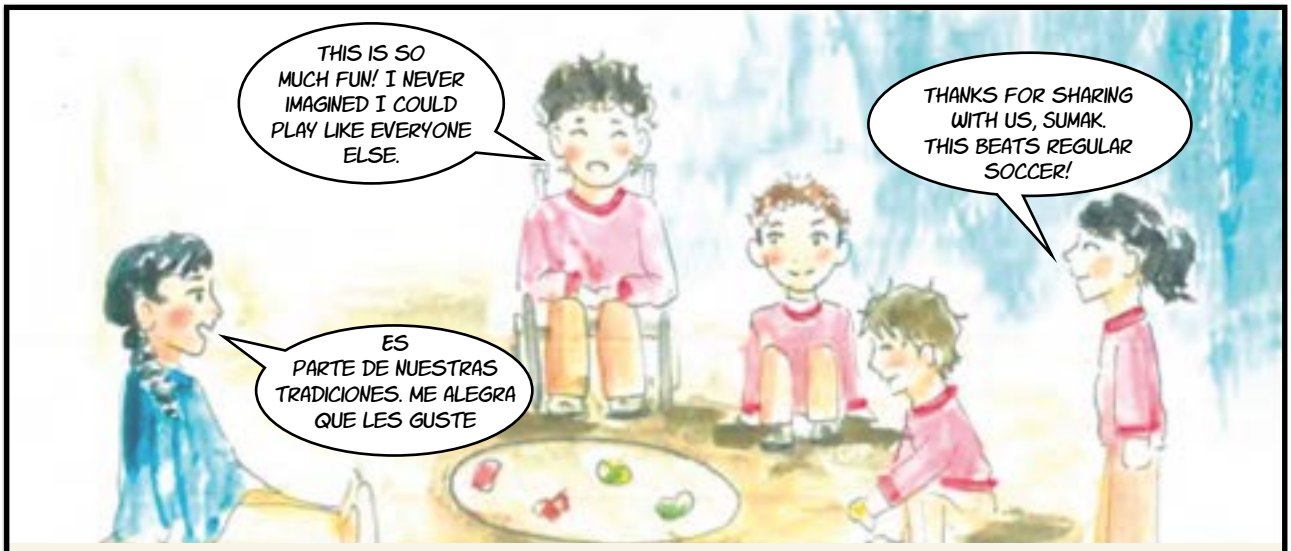
Carlos manages to knock a torta out.

Danny excitedly announces it's his turn.





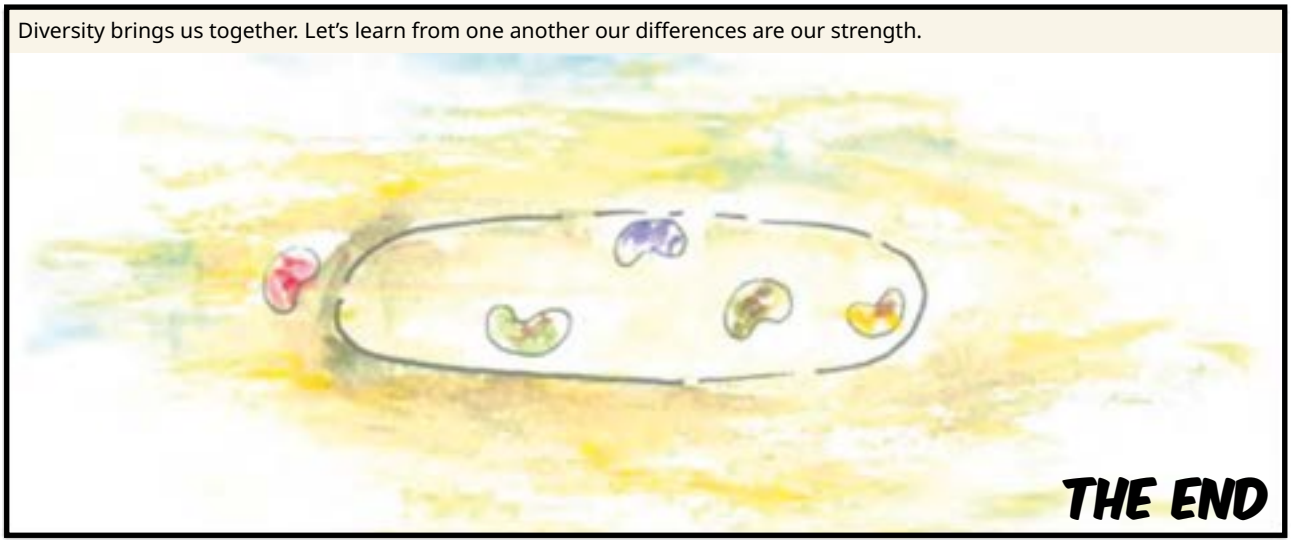
Danny manages to knock out a torta, and everyone applauds his achievement..



The children keep playing with enthusiasm, celebrating each shot. Danny, participating for the first time, feels part of the group.

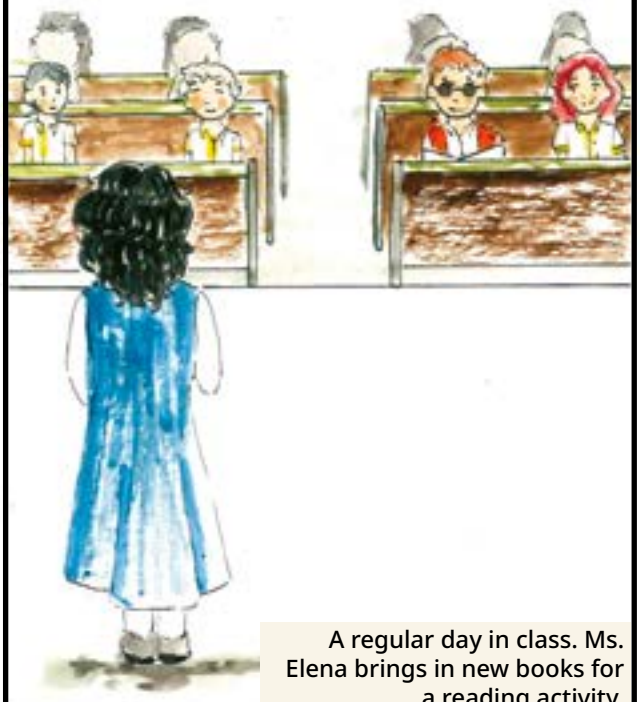
The children rest after the game, talking about the experience.

Diversity brings us together. Let's learn from one another our differences are our strength.



BOOK FOR EVERYONE

The book problem



A regular day in class. Ms. Elena brings in new books for a reading activity.

Ms. Elena enters the classroom carrying a stack of books

Students excitedly receive the books and begin to read.

Carlos touches the pages, frowning.

CARLOS, WHAT'S WRONG? DON'T YOU LIKE THE BOOK?

IT'S NOT THAT... I CAN'T READ IT. THERE'S NO BRAILLE OR AUDIOBOOK VERSION.

REALLY? I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT THAT... HOW CAN YOU TAKE PART IN THE ACTIVITY?

I USUALLY HAVE TO WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO READ IT TO ME OR MISS OUT ENTIRELY.

THAT'S NOT FAIR! WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
YEAH... LET'S TALK TO THE TEACHER AFTER CLASS.

During recess, the three friends plan to speak with their teacher

CARLOS, HAVE YOU EVER HAD A BRAILLE BOOK AT SCHOOL?
NO... I ALWAYS HAVE TO ASK FOR HELP. BUT I'D LOVE TO BE ABLE TO READ ON MY OWN.

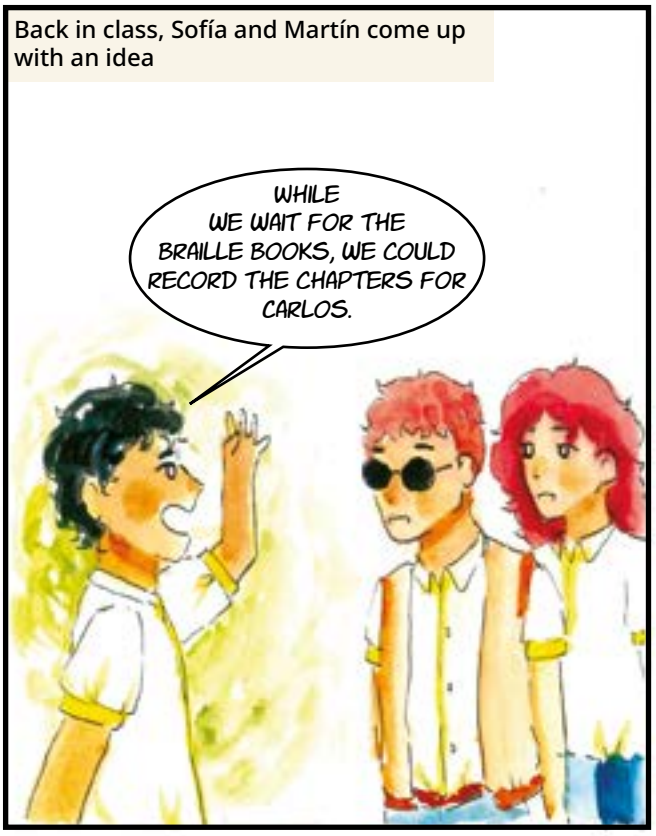
After class, the three approach the teacher's desk.

Ms. Elena looks for ways to make the class more inclusive.

Ms. Elena in the teachers' lounge, doing research on her computer.

In the principal office, talking to principal Ramirez.

Back in class, Sofía and Martín come up with an idea



Ms. Elena returns, smiling.

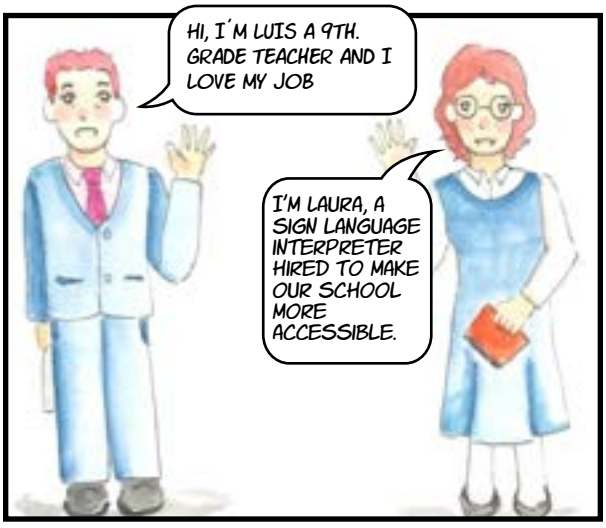
The students eagerly raise their hands.

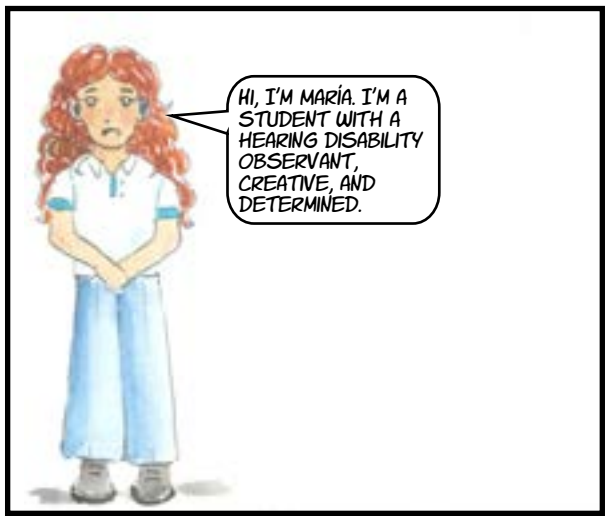
The whole class joins in to make reading accessible in a new setting, the school's recording studio.

Sofía and Martín recording audio for the book.

Carlos listening to the audio on his tablet, smiling.

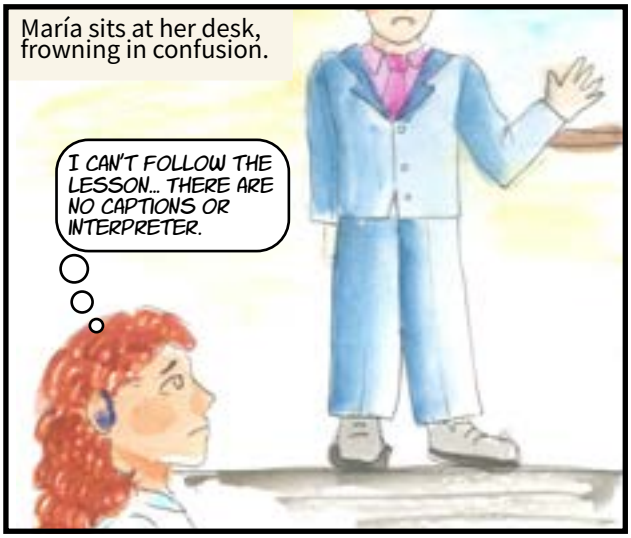
LEARNING TOGETHER





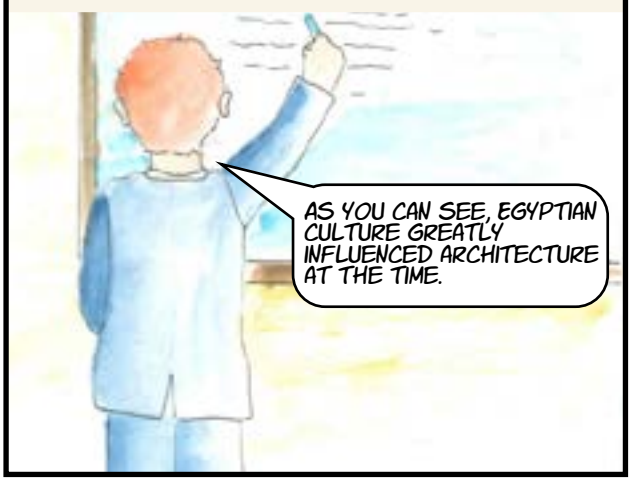
Scene 1: The Challenge in the Classroom

The classroom is full of attentive students. Mr. Luis is explaining ancient civilizations using the board, but he only speaks there are no visuals or captions.



Juan notices her frustration and gently touches her arm.)

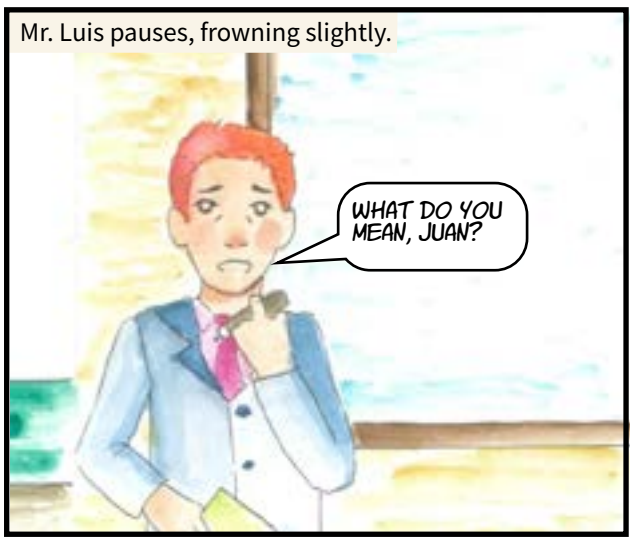
Mr. Luis continues talking and writing on the board.

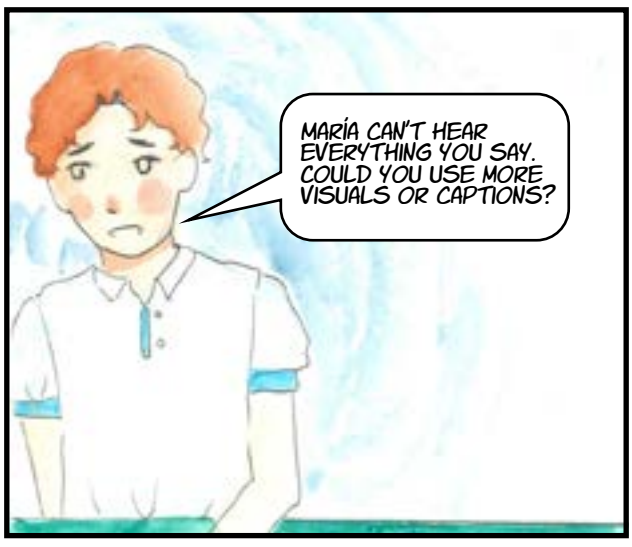


María sighs, stops taking notes, and looks around. Her classmates are writing without any issue.

Juan raises his hand.

Mr. Luis pauses, frowning slightly.

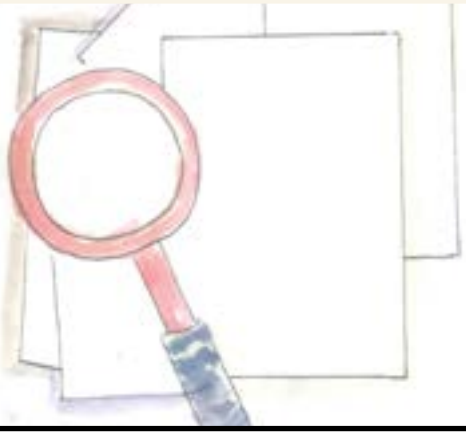


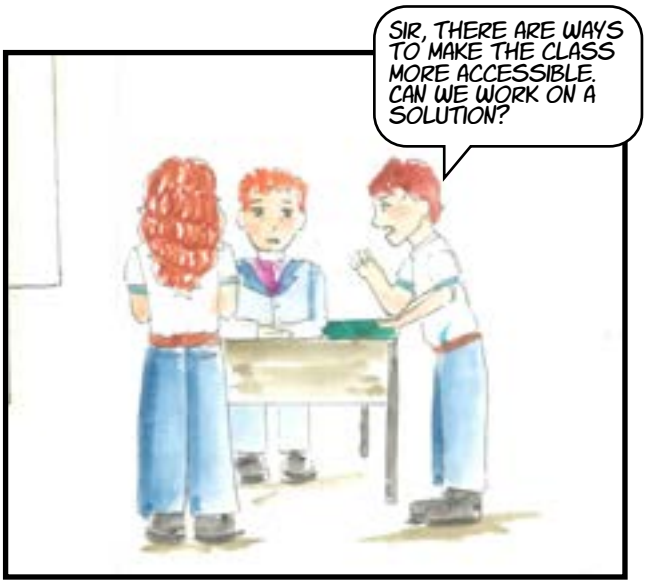


Mr. Luis looks thoughtful.

Finding Solutions

After class, Juan and María approach Mr. Luis to talk about the issue.





Mr. Luis searches on his computer and finds the option to hire a sign language interpreter.

Juan smiles excitedly and shares the news with María using sign language.

Scene 3: Implementing Changes

A few days later, someone new walks into the classroom with the teacher.

Laura stands beside Mr. Luis and starts interpreting as he speaks.

Mr. Luis teaches happily, knowing María now has support.

María follows along easily, taking enthusiastic notes.

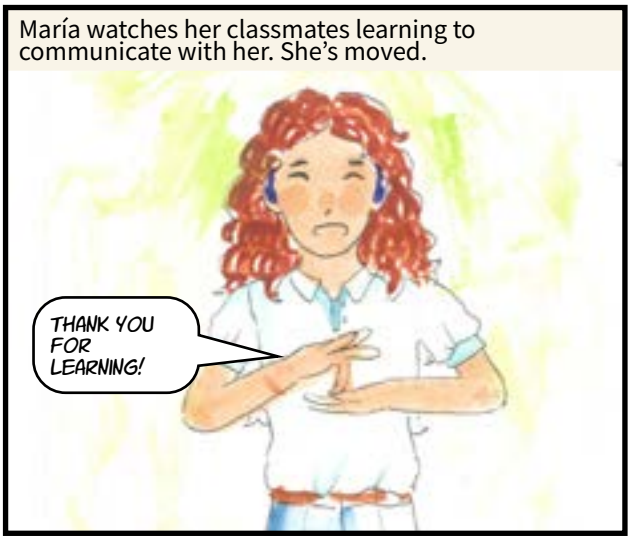
Juan smiles at her and shows his notebook.

Scene 4: Change for Better Learning

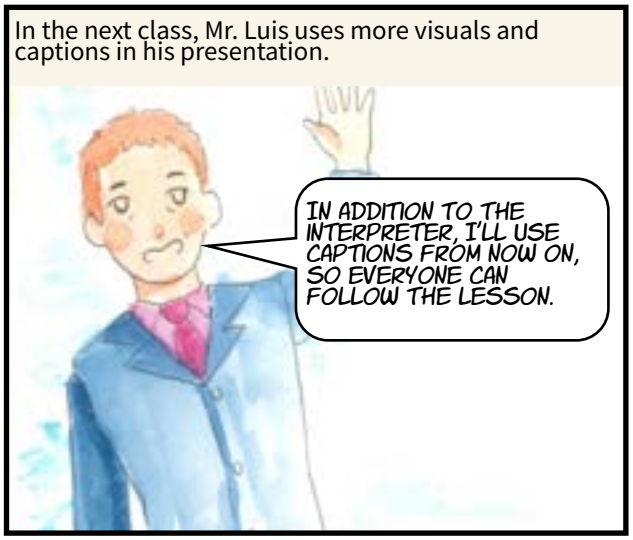
After the change, all students are happy.

At recess, Juan and other classmates talks to Laura

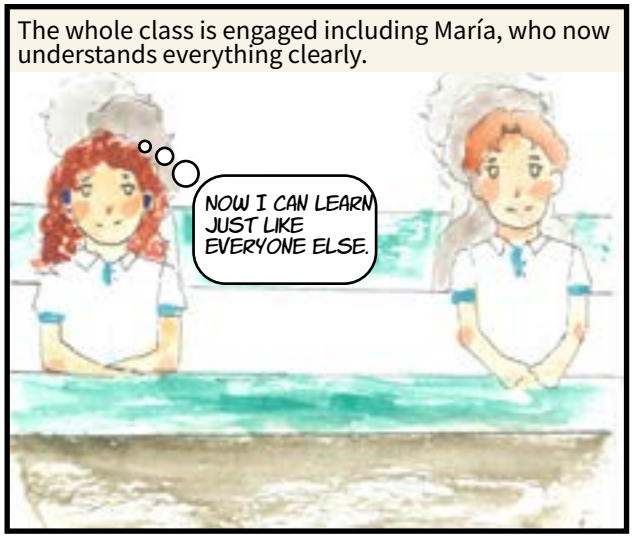
María watches her classmates learning to communicate with her. She's moved.



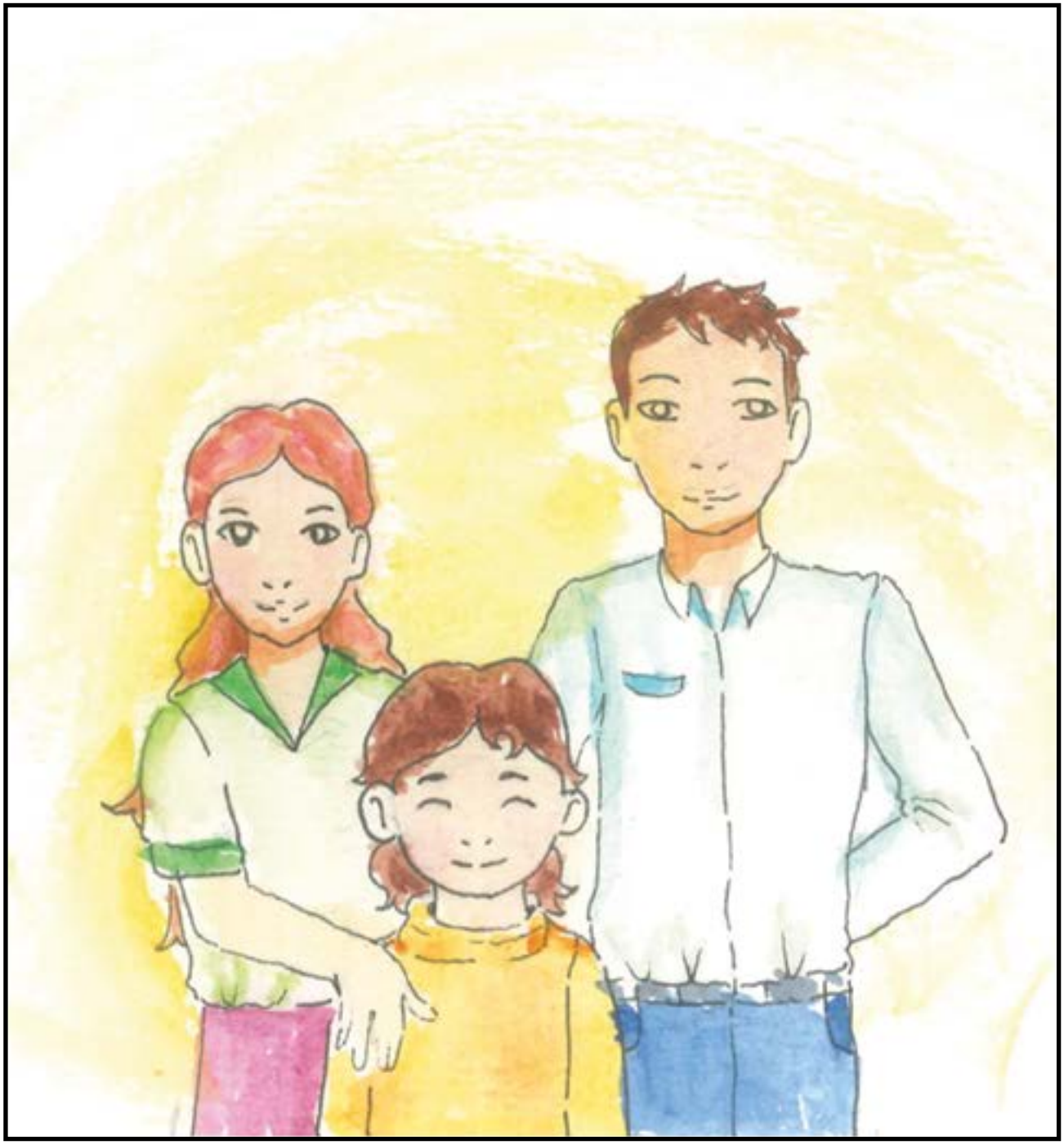
In the next class, Mr. Luis uses more visuals and captions in his presentation.

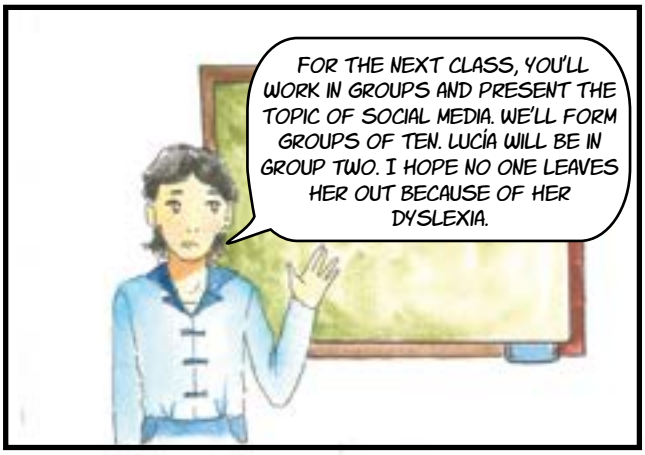


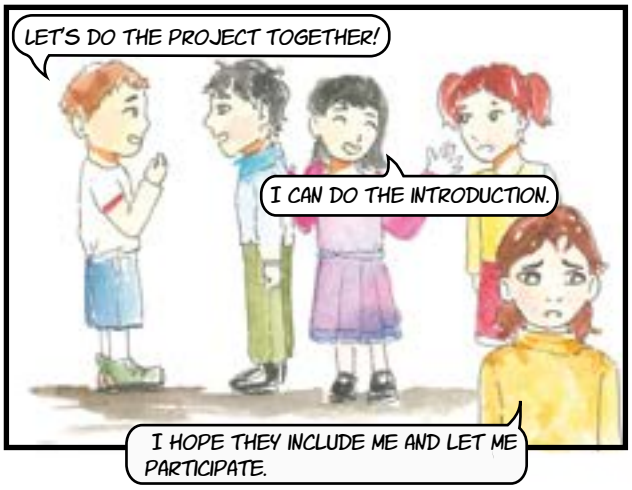
The whole class is engaged including María, who now understands everything clearly.



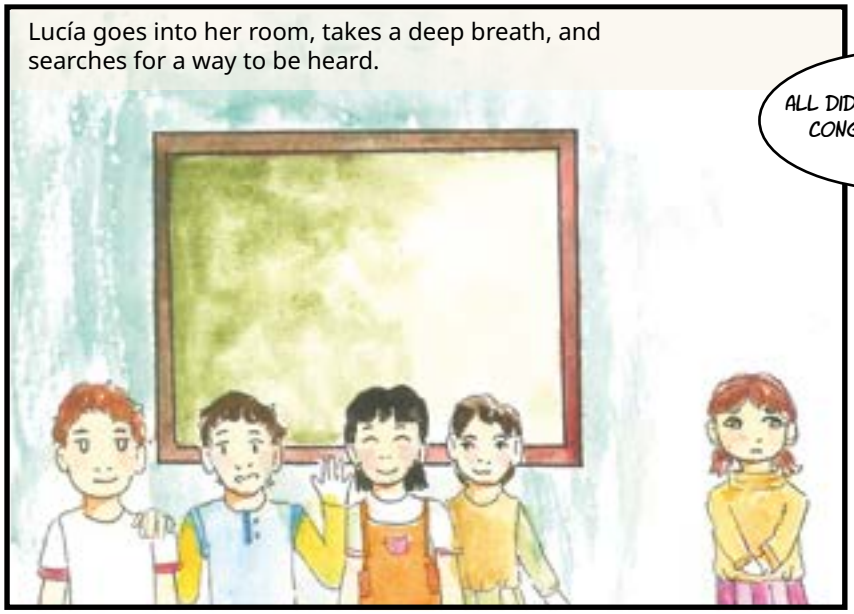
LETTERS DANCING TO THE RHYTHM OF A NEW WORLD



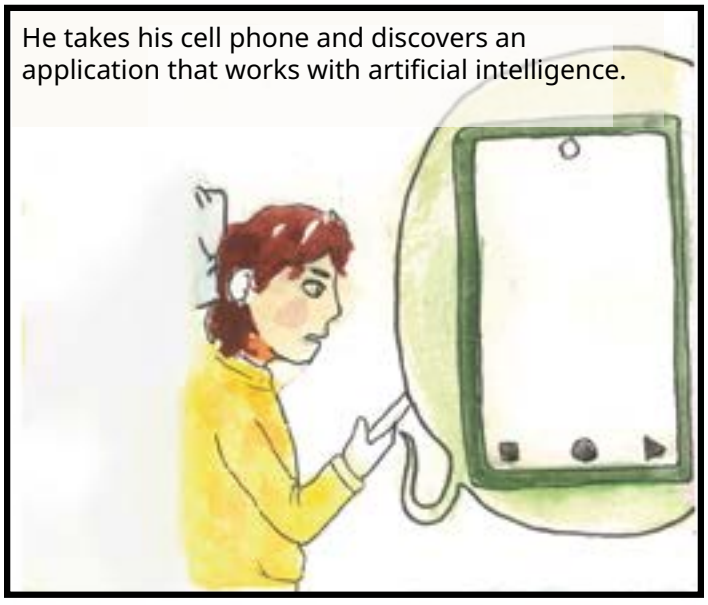


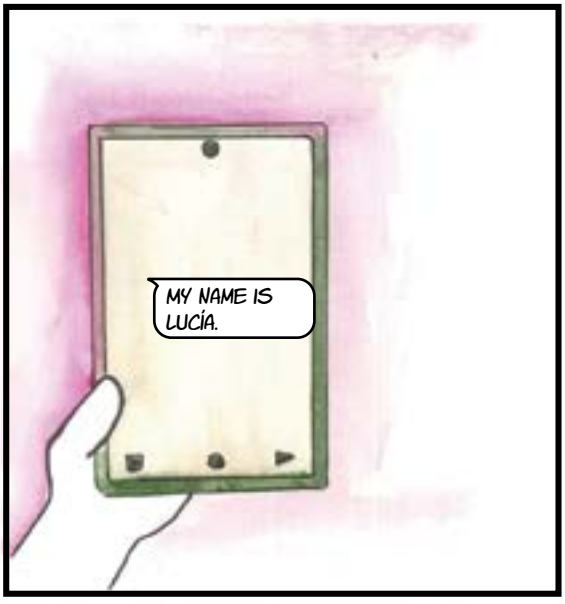


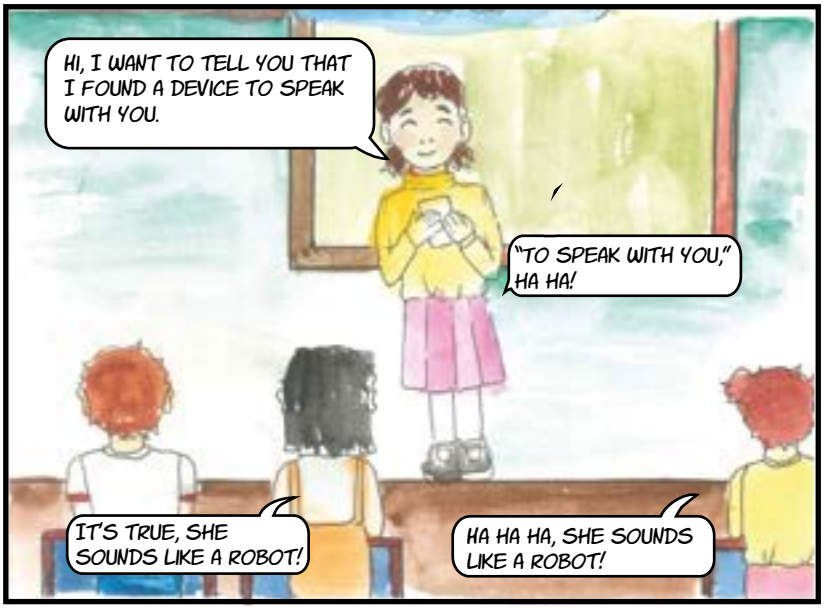
Lucía goes into her room, takes a deep breath, and searches for a way to be heard.

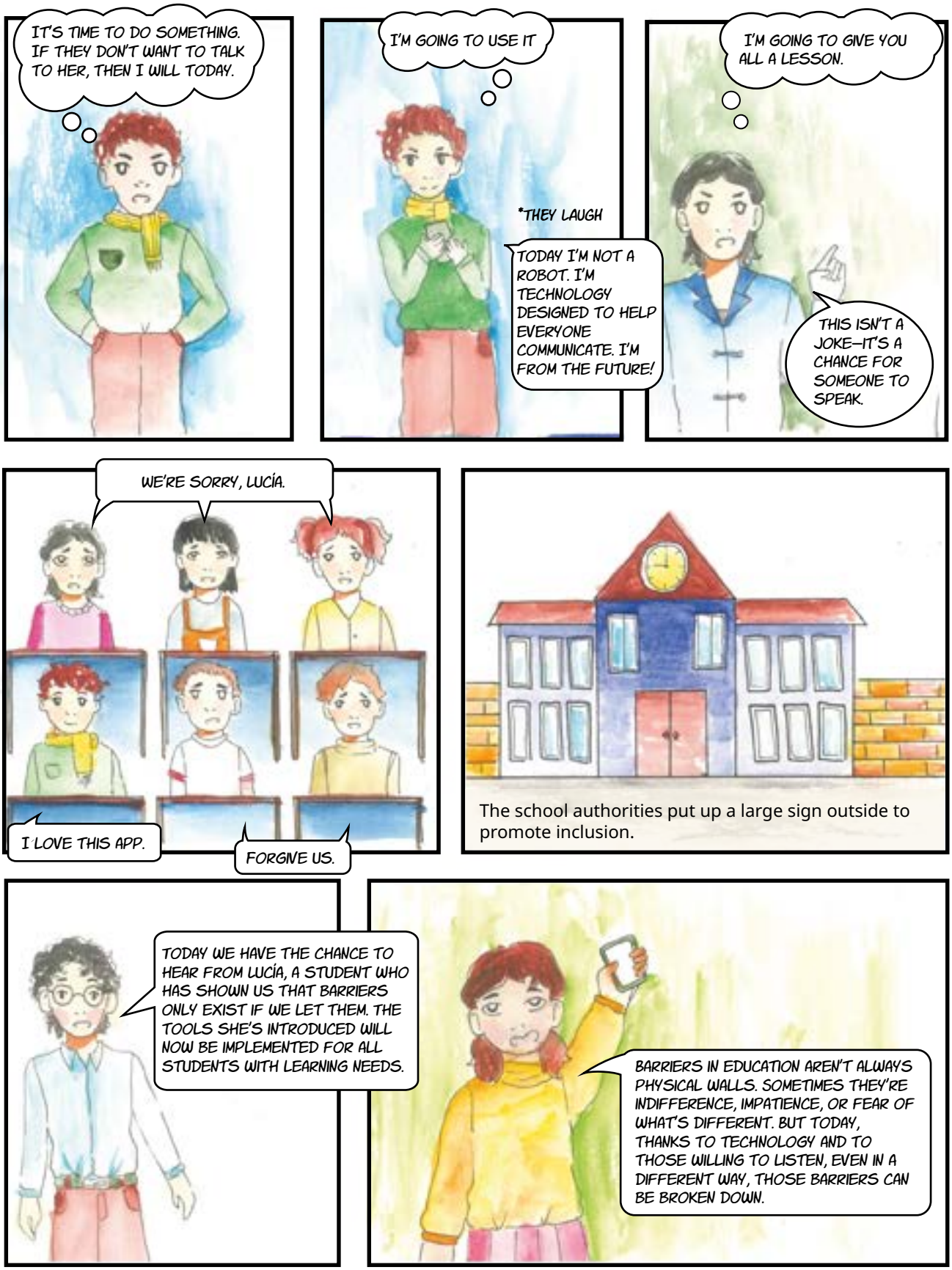


He takes his cell phone and discovers an application that works with artificial intelligence.

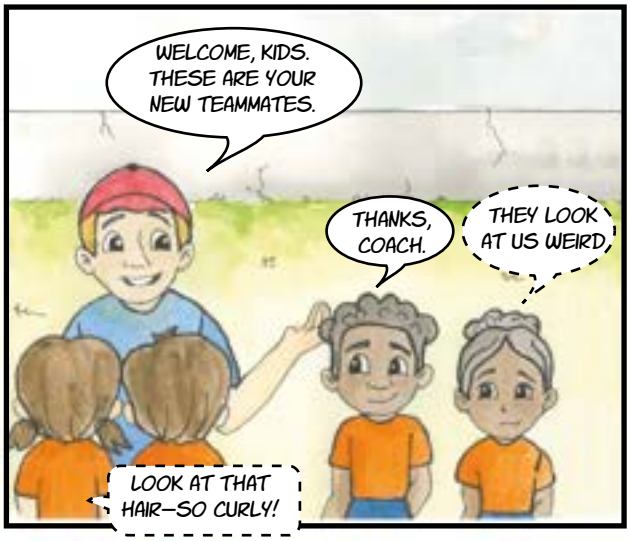


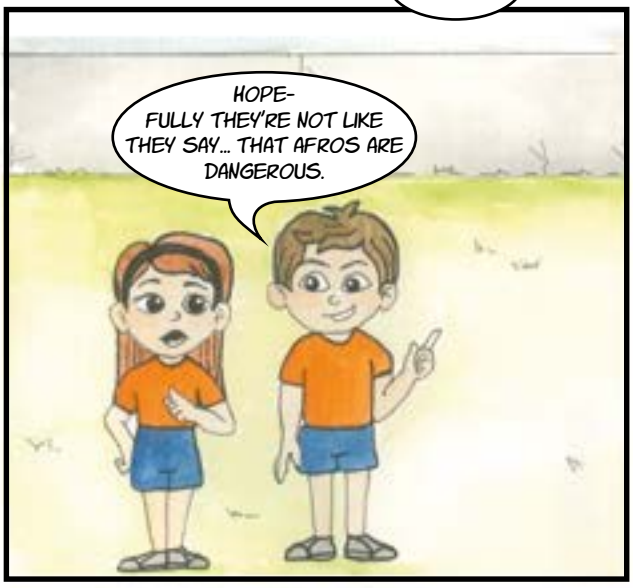


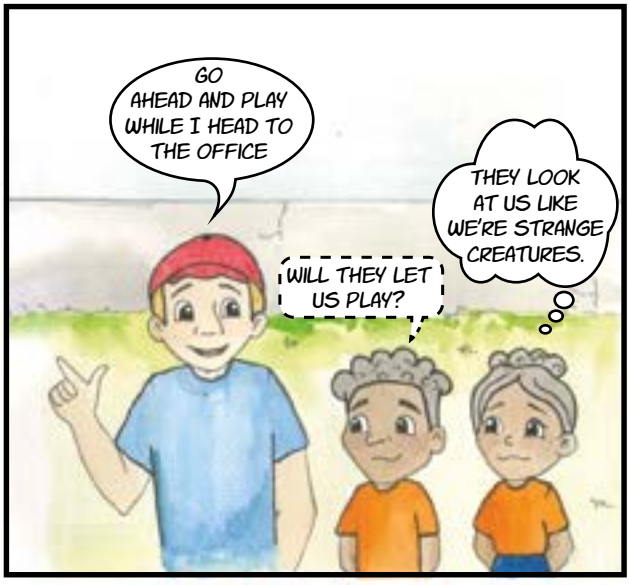


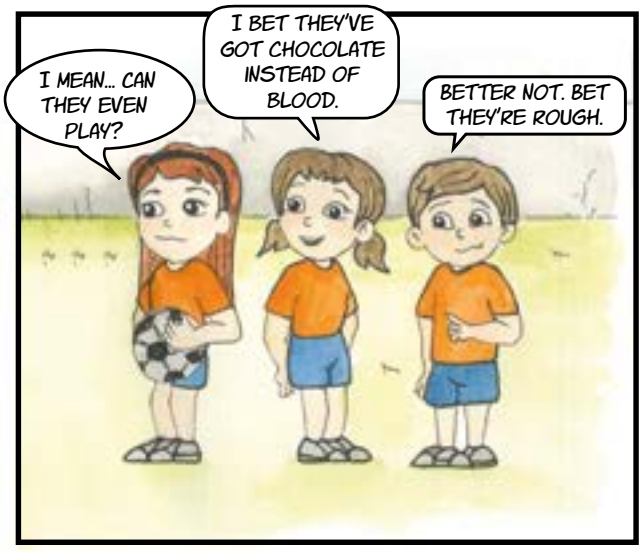

IT'S TIME TO DO SOMETHING. IF THEY DON'T WANT TO TALK TO HER, THEN I WILL TODAY.
I'M GOING TO USE IT
*THEY LAUGH
TODAY I'M NOT A ROBOT. I'M TECHNOLOGY DESIGNED TO HELP EVERYONE COMMUNICATE. I'M FROM THE FUTURE!
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU ALL A LESSON.
THIS ISN'T A JOKE—IT'S A CHANCE FOR SOMEONE TO SPEAK.
WE'RE SORRY, LUCÍA.
I LOVE THIS APP.
FORGIVE US.
The school authorities put up a large sign outside to promote inclusion.
TODAY WE HAVE THE CHANCE TO HEAR FROM LUCÍA, A STUDENT WHO HAS SHOWN US THAT BARRIERS ONLY EXIST IF WE LET THEM. THE TOOLS SHE'S INTRODUCED WILL NOW BE IMPLEMENTED FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING NEEDS.
BARRIERS IN EDUCATION AREN'T ALWAYS PHYSICAL WALLS. SOMETIMES THEY'RE INDIFFERENCE, IMPATIENCE, OR FEAR OF WHAT'S DIFFERENT. BUT TODAY, THANKS TO TECHNOLOGY AND TO THOSE WILLING TO LISTEN, EVEN IN A DIFFERENT WAY, THOSE BARRIERS CAN BE BROKEN DOWN.
THE END

NEW HORIZONS





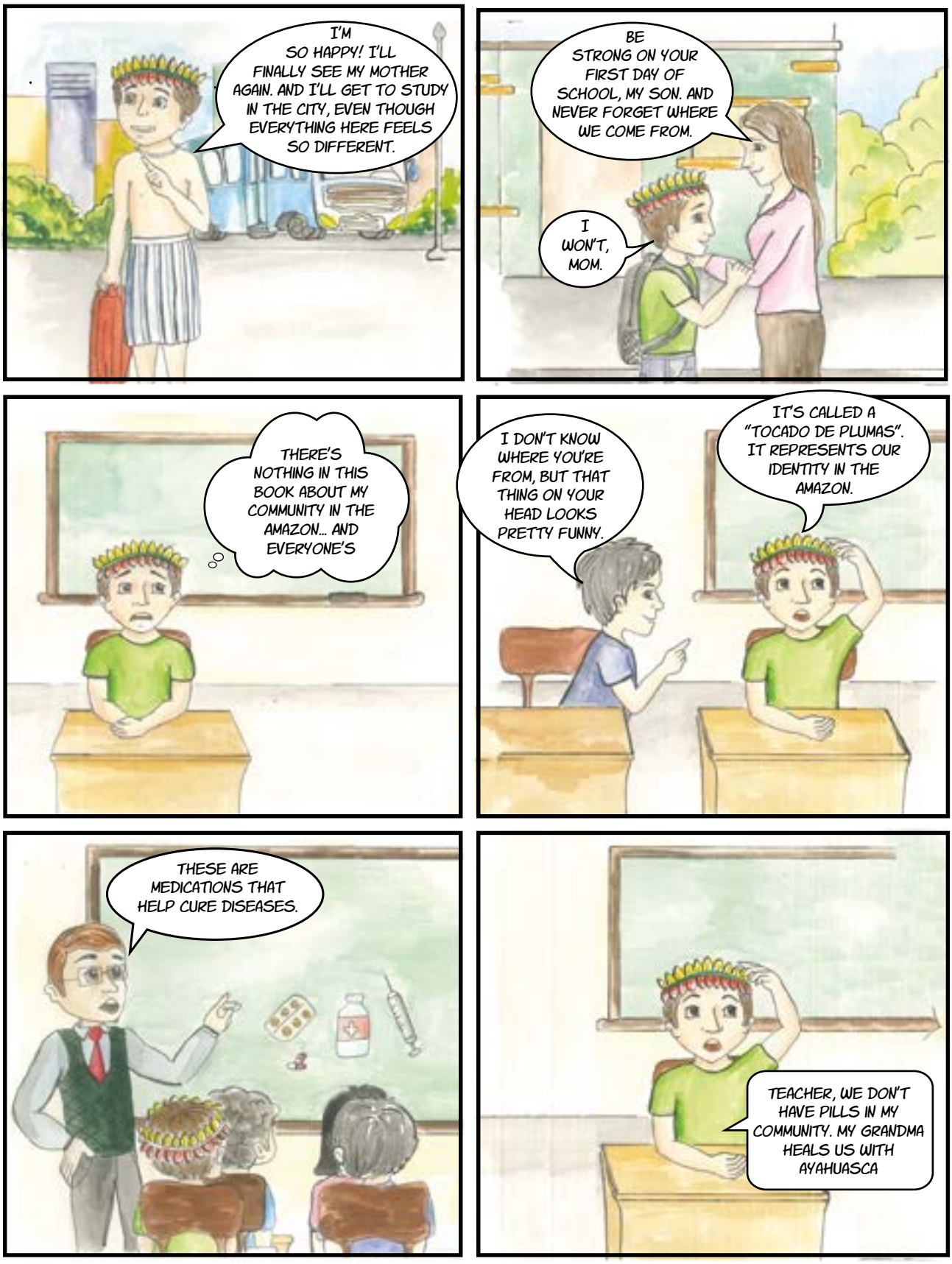


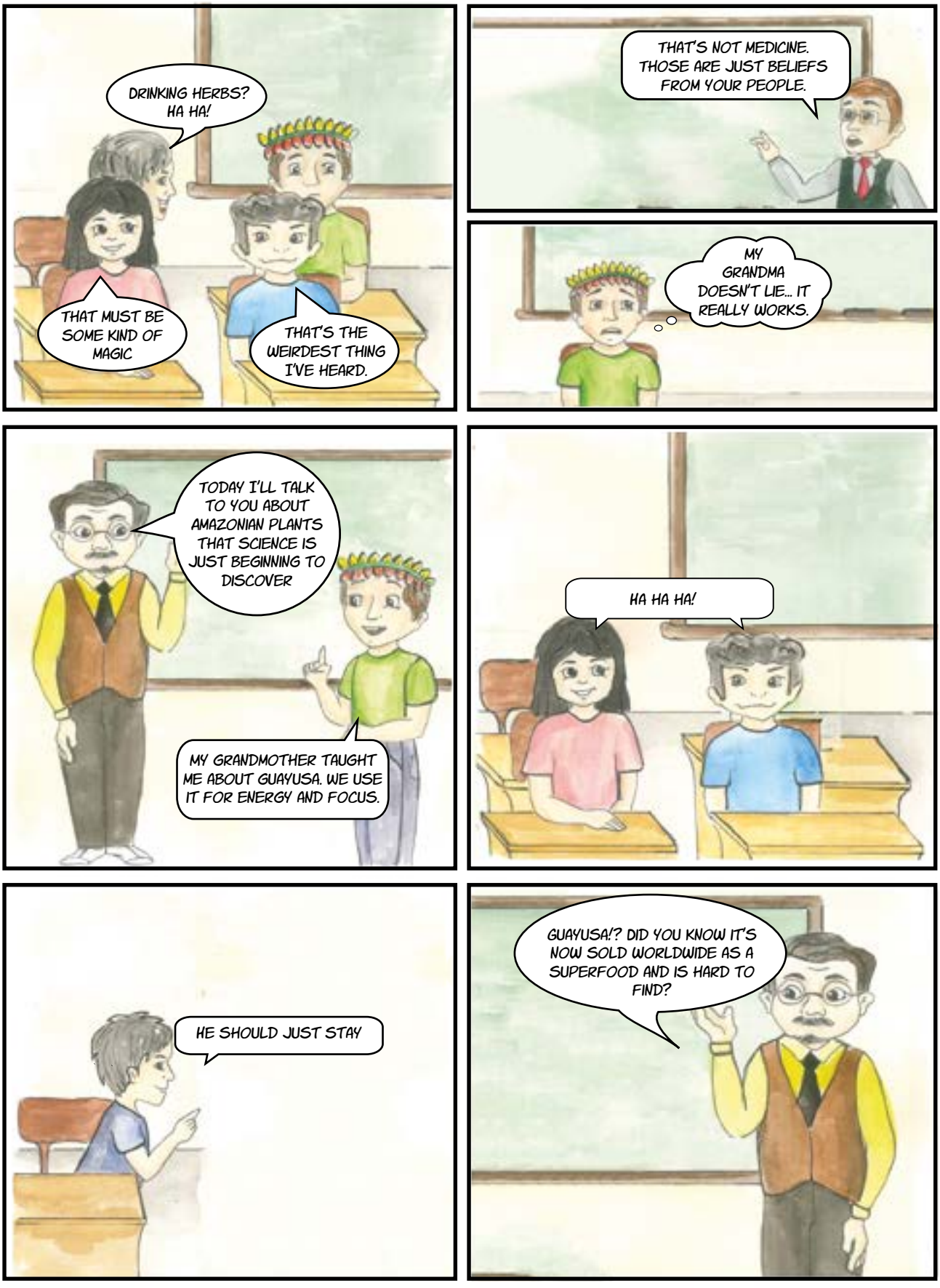


WE JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN...
JUST GIVE US A CHANCE. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, WE'LL LEAVE
ALRIGHT... GO AHEAD.
ENOUGH! JUDGING PEOPLE JUST BY HOW THEY LOOK?
THEY'RE NOT CRIMINALS!
I GUESS NOT...
EVERYONE DESERVES A CHANCE.
I AGREE.
WE ALSO WANT TO BE PART OF THIS TEAM
WE JUST WANT FRIENDS.
ALRIGHT, LET'S PLAY!
LET'S SEE WHAT THEY'VE GOT.
YOU DID IT, BROTHER!
GOOOOAL! DID YOU SEE THAT?!
THEY'RE REALLY GO

INCREDIBLE! WHERE'D YOU LEARN THAT?
I LEARNT IN MY TOWN. WE PLAYED EVERY DAY.
THIS IS HOW WE CELEBRATE GOALS. WANT TO LEARN?
YOU'RE AWESOME!
YES, SHOW US!
SORRY. YOU GUYS JUST WANTED TO BE FRIENDS.
AND US SHOW WHO WE REALLY ARE.
HEY, WAIT!
WE LEARNED NOT TO JUDGE BY APPEARANCES
THANK YOU! THAT MEANS A LOT.
DIFFERENCES SHOULDN'T KEEP US APART.
EXACTLY!
WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.
THE END

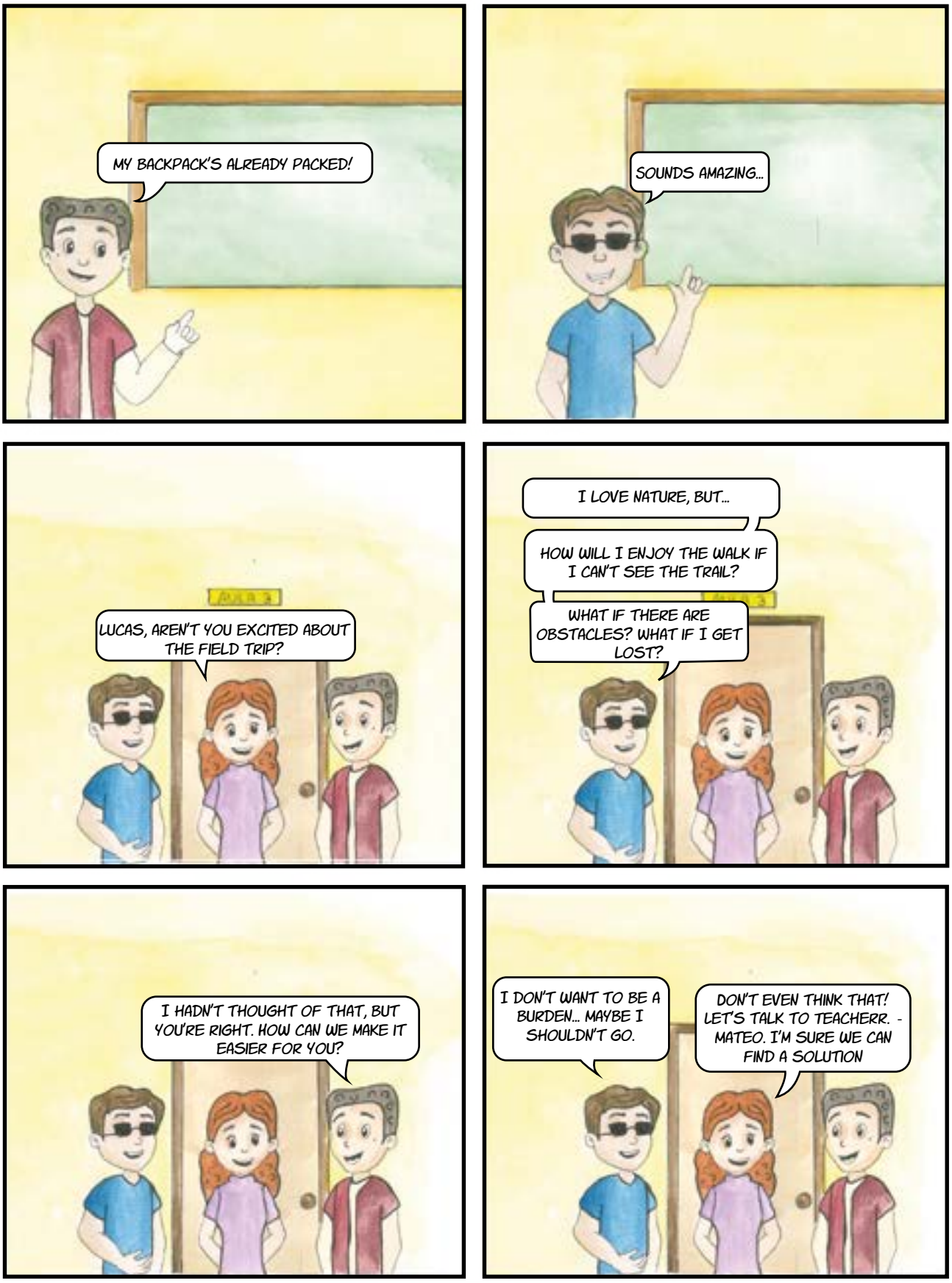
ANCESTRAL VISIONS

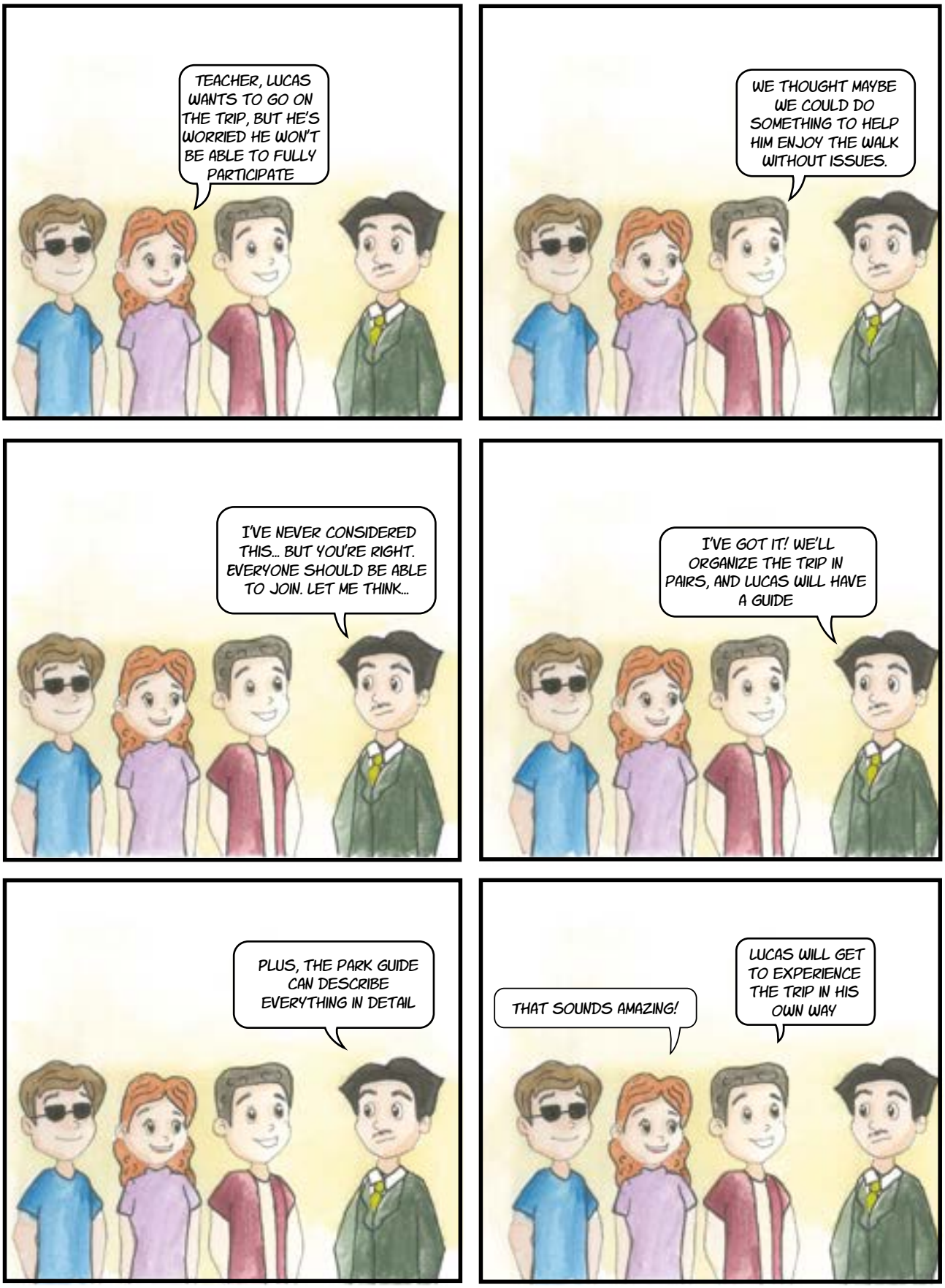


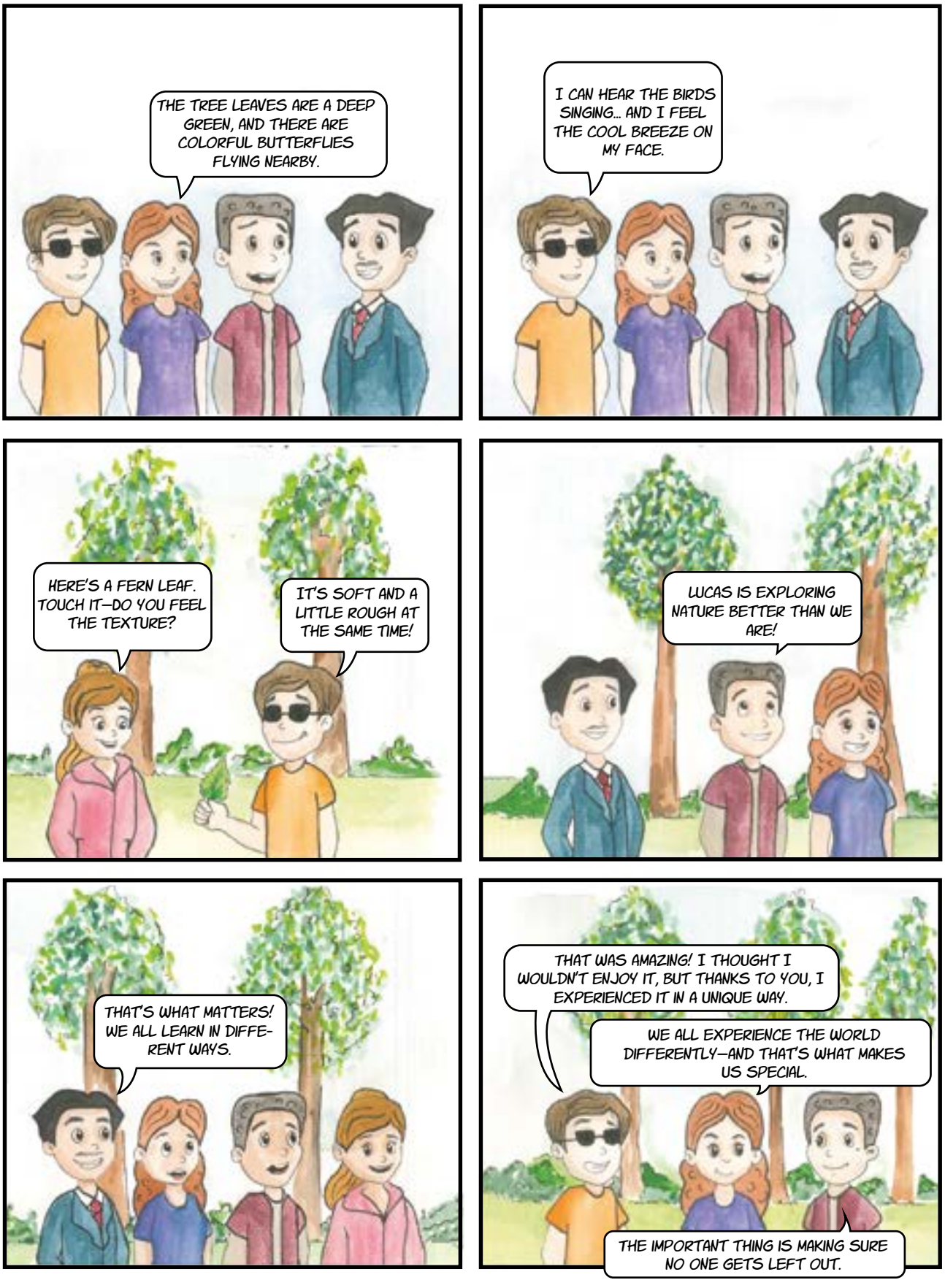

DRINKING HERBS? HA HA!
THAT MUST BE SOME KIND OF MAGIC
THAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING I'VE HEARD.
THAT'S NOT MEDICINE. THOSE ARE JUST BELIEFS FROM YOUR PEOPLE.
MY GRANDMA DOESN'T LIE... IT REALLY WORKS.
TODAY I'LL TALK TO YOU ABOUT AMAZONIAN PLANTS THAT SCIENCE IS JUST BEGINNING TO DISCOVER
MY GRANDMOTHER TAUGHT ME ABOUT GUAYUSA. WE USE IT FOR ENERGY AND FOCUS.
HA HA HA!
HE SHOULD JUST STAY
GUAYUSA!? DID YOU KNOW IT'S NOW SOLD WORLDWIDE AS A SUPERFOOD AND IS HARD TO FIND?

WE ALSO USE CAT'S CLAWS TO BOOST THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND DRAGON'S BLOOD TO HEAL WOUNDS
THIS IS AMAZING! DID YOU KNOW MANY MODERN MEDICINES COME FROM THIS KNOWLEDGE? BIG PHARMACEUTICAL LABS PAY MILLIONS TO RESEARCH IT!
I'M SHOCKED THIS ISN'T TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS. THIS IS REAL KNOWLEDGE, NOT MAGIC!
YOU'RE RIGHT. OUR CURRICULUM INCLUDES NOTHING ABOUT THE AMAZON. WE NEED TO CHANGE THAT...
PRINCIPAL, WE NEED TO RETHINK HOW WE TEACH. WE CAN'T KEEP IGNORING SUCH VALUABLE WISDOM.
BAYRI, I WANT TO APOLOGIZE IN FRONT OF EVERYONE. NO ONE APPRECIATED YOUR KNOWLEDGE OR THAT OF YOUR REGION.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO JUST LISTEN TO ME... I WANT YOU TO HEAR ALL THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN IGNORED, EVEN THOUGH THEY ALWAYS HAD VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE.
THE END

EXPLORING TOGETHER


MY BACKPACK'S ALREADY PACKED!
SOUNDS AMAZING...
LUCAS, AREN'T YOU EXCITED ABOUT THE FIELD TRIP?
I LOVE NATURE, BUT...
HOW WILL I ENJOY THE WALK IF I CAN'T SEE THE TRAIL?
WHAT IF THERE ARE OBSTACLES? WHAT IF I GET LOST?
I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. HOW CAN WE MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU?
I DON'T WANT TO BE A BURDEN... MAYBE I SHOULDN'T GO.
DON'T EVEN THINK THAT! LET'S TALK TO TEACHERR. - MATEO. I'M SURE WE CAN FIND A SOLUTION

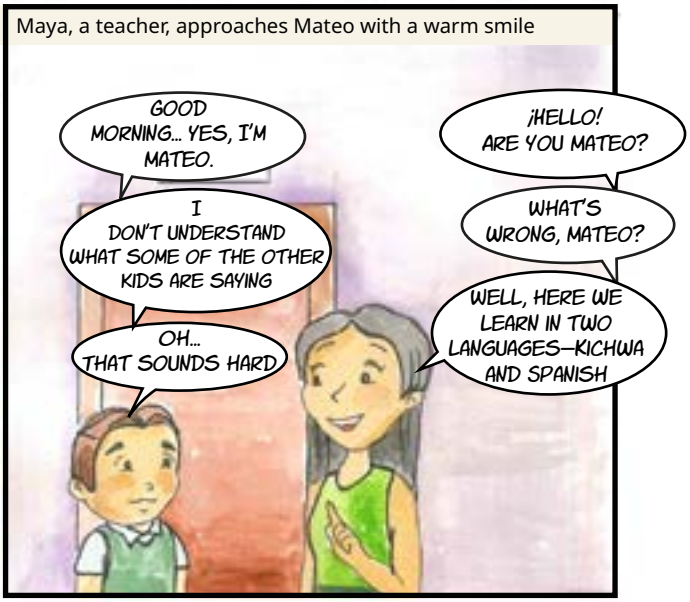

TEACHER, LUCAS WANTS TO GO ON THE TRIP, BUT HE'S WORRIED HE WON'T BE ABLE TO FULLY PARTICIPATE
WE THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD DO SOMETHING TO HELP HIM ENJOY THE WALK WITHOUT ISSUES.
I'VE NEVER CONSIDERED THIS... BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO JOIN. LET ME THINK...
I'VE GOT IT! WE'LL ORGANIZE THE TRIP IN PAIRS, AND LUCAS WILL HAVE A GUIDE
PLUS, THE PARK GUIDE CAN DESCRIBE EVERYTHING IN DETAIL
THAT SOUNDS AMAZING!
LUCAS WILL GET TO EXPERIENCE THE TRIP IN HIS OWN WAY


THE TREE LEAVES ARE A DEEP GREEN, AND THERE ARE COLORFUL BUTTERFLIES FLYING NEARBY.
I CAN HEAR THE BIRDS SINGING... AND I FEEL THE COOL BREEZE ON MY FACE.
HERE'S A FERN LEAF. TOUCH IT—DO YOU FEEL THE TEXTURE?
IT'S SOFT AND A LITTLE ROUGH AT THE SAME TIME!
LUCAS IS EXPLORING NATURE BETTER THAN WE ARE!
THAT'S WHAT MATTERS! WE ALL LEARN IN DIFFE-RENT WAYS.
THAT WAS AMAZING! I THOUGHT I WOULDN'T ENJOY IT, BUT THANKS TO YOU, I EXPERIENCED IT IN A UNIQUE WAY.
WE ALL EXPERIENCE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY—AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS MAKING SURE NO ONE GETS LEFT OUT.
THE END

BRIDGING BARRIERS, SEPARATING DIFFERENCES

Mateo and his family just moved from Quito to Loreto, a city in the Amazon, because his parents found better jobs. Today is his first day at a new school

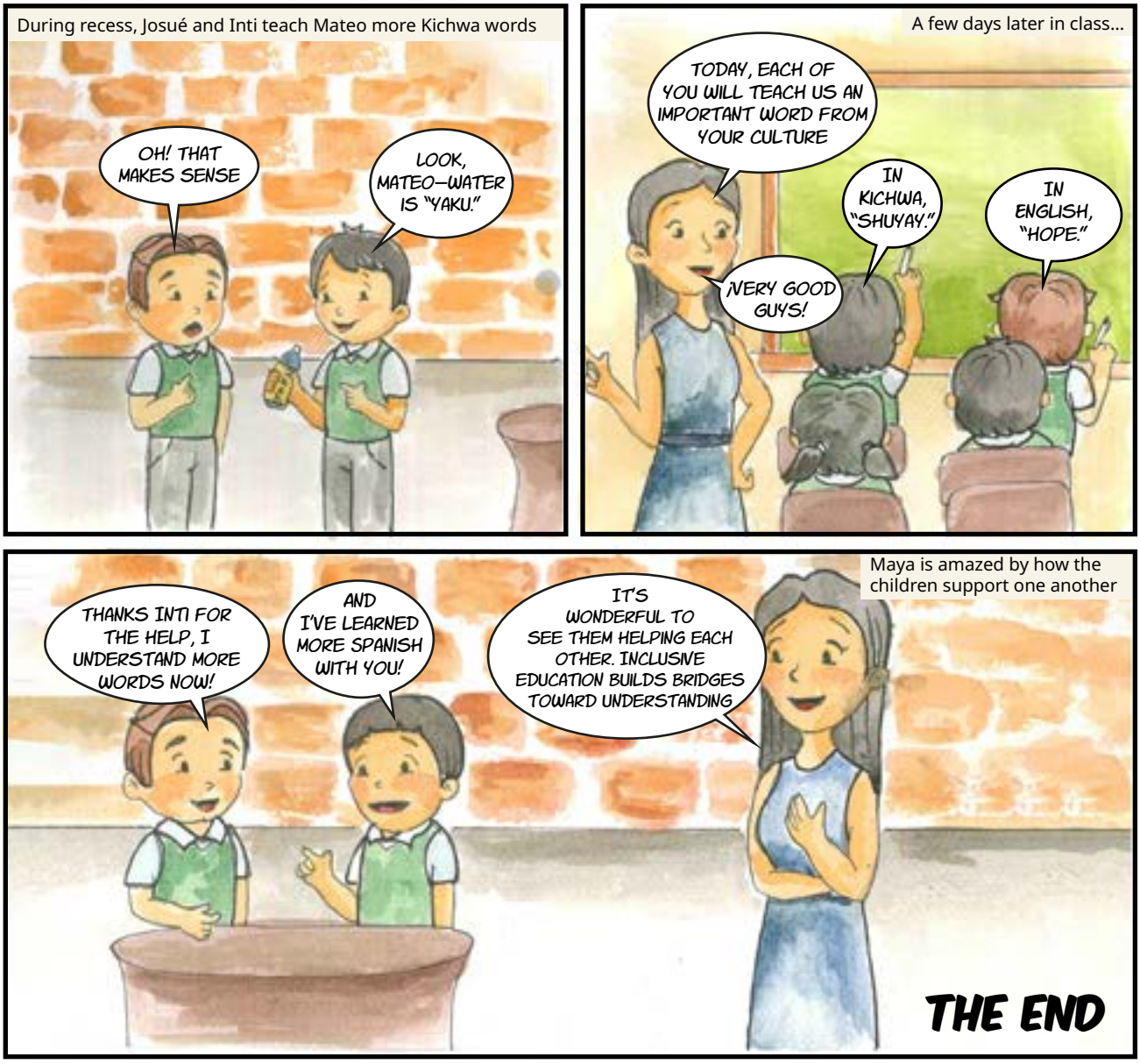
Maya, a teacher, approaches Mateo with a warm smile



A few hours later...

Little by little, Mateo learns to speak Kichwa, and it starts to make more sense to him

En el recreo Josué le enseñan a Mateo muchas palabras más.


During recess, Josué and Inti teach Mateo more Kichwa words
OH! THAT MAKES SENSE
LOOK, MATEO—WATER IS "YAKU."
A few days later in class...
TODAY, EACH OF YOU WILL TEACH US AN IMPORTANT WORD FROM YOUR CULTURE
IN KICHWA, "SHUYAY."
IN ENGLISH, "HOPE."
¡VERY GOOD GUYS!
THANKS INTI FOR THE HELP, I UNDERSTAND MORE WORDS NOW!
AND I'VE LEARNED MORE SPANISH WITH YOU!
IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE THEM HELPING EACH OTHER. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION BUILDS BRIDGES TOWARD UNDERSTANDING
Maya is amazed by how the children support one another
THE END

EVERY VOICE MATTERS

In 2023, a Kichwa student from Otavalo received a scholarship to study at a school in Quito. He and his family moved excitedly to the city, unaware of the challenges he would face. His native language is Kichwa, and he struggles with Spanish. He has signs of dyslexia, which affects his communication and makes him a target of ridicule from some of his classmates.

Escena 1: First Week of School

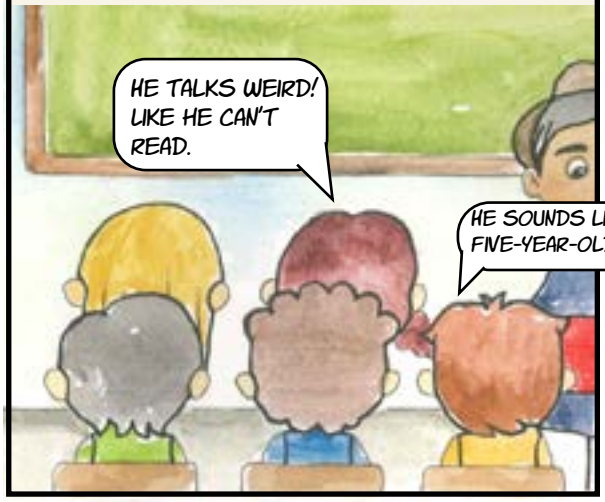
Language and Literature Classroom.
It was a quiet morning in the classroom; sunlight streamed through the windows, illuminating the faces. Laura, the Language and Literature teacher, had organized a reading aloud activity. One by one, the students came forward to read a passage from the assigned text. Some did so confidently, others somewhat timidly, but none seemed to have any trouble... until it was Sayri's turn.

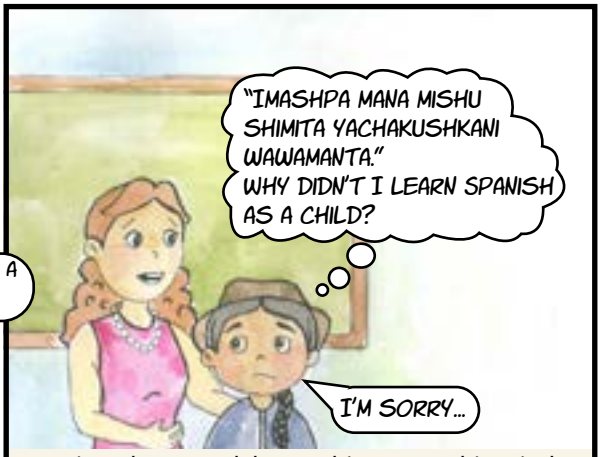
One morning in class, Teacher Ana asks for a reading.

Sayri takes the book with both hands and takes a deep breath.

Sayri begins to read, but pronounces each word with difficulty.

A murmur spreads





Sayri, embarrassed, lowers his gaze. In his mind, he asks himself with frustration, Why didn't I learn English as a child?

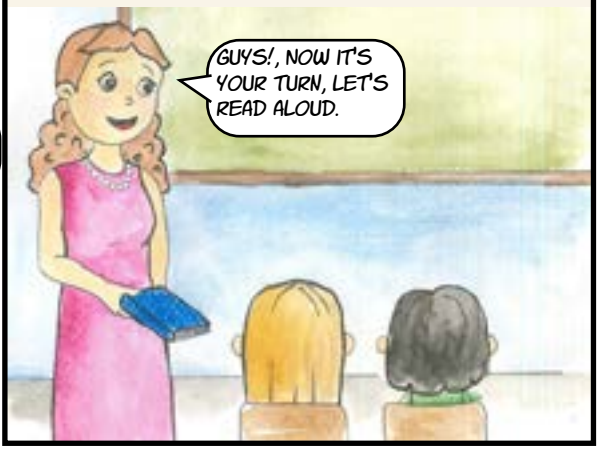
Just as laughter begins to fill the classroom, the teacher's firm voice interrupts the activity, drawing everyone's attention. She explains that Sayri is learning and that it's his second language, making them reflect on how they would feel in his place.

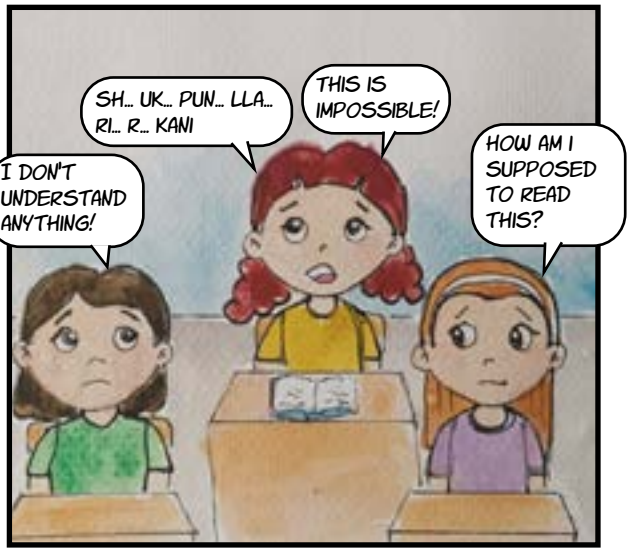
Sayri, with tears in his eyes, feels that for the first time someone understands him.

The classroom falls silent

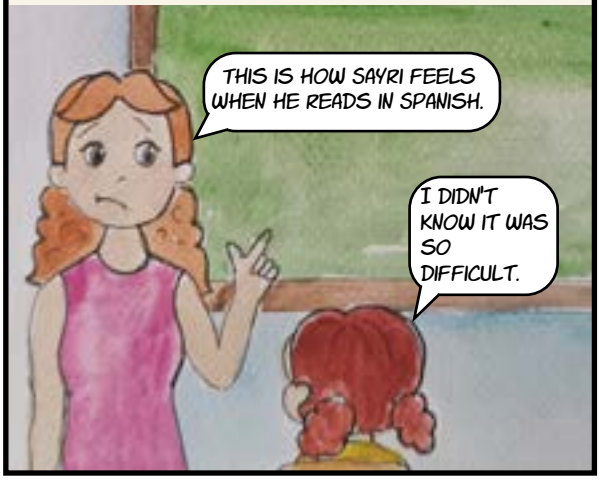
their

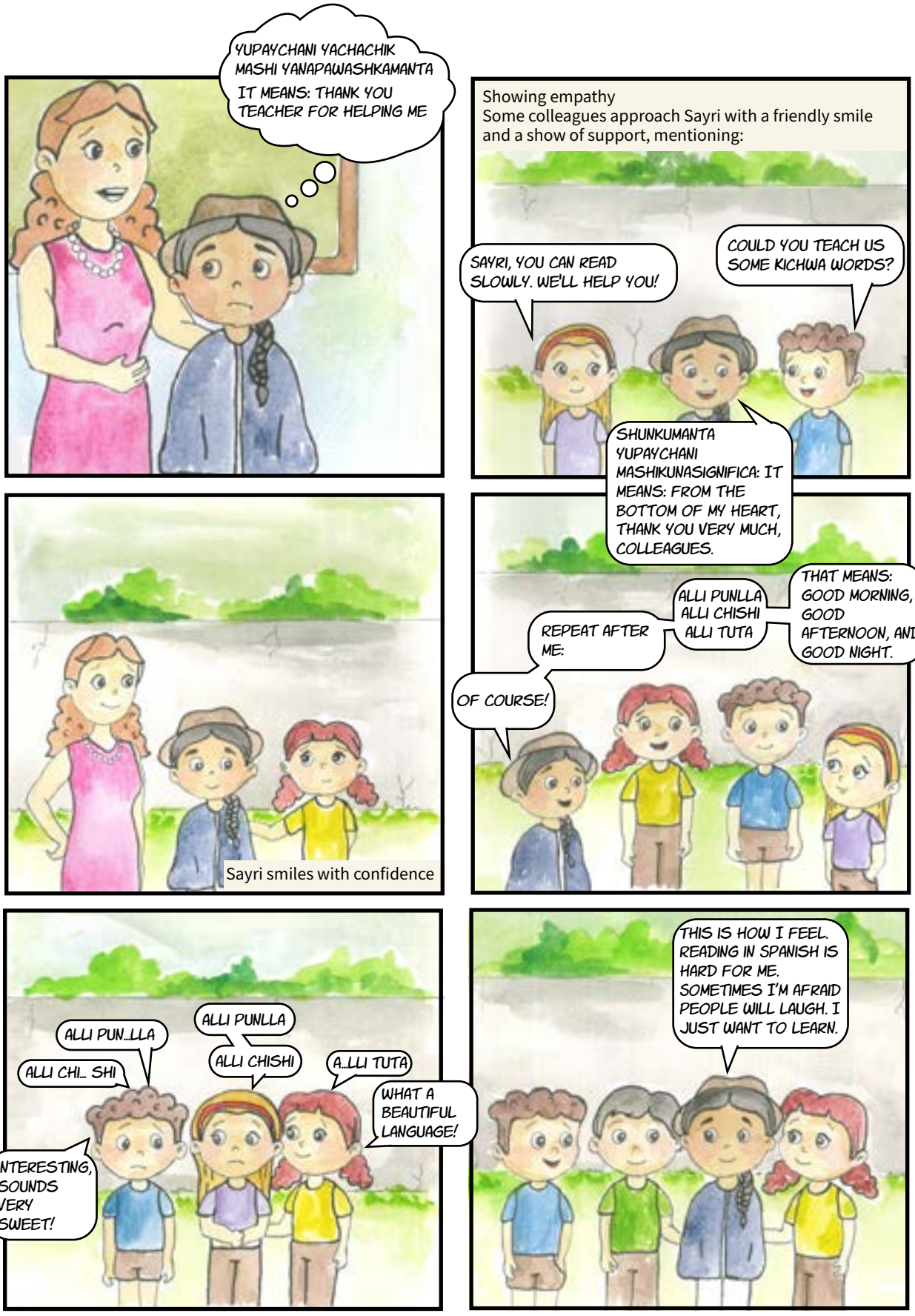
The experiment
Professor Laura, with a defiant smile, hands them a text written in Kichwa.

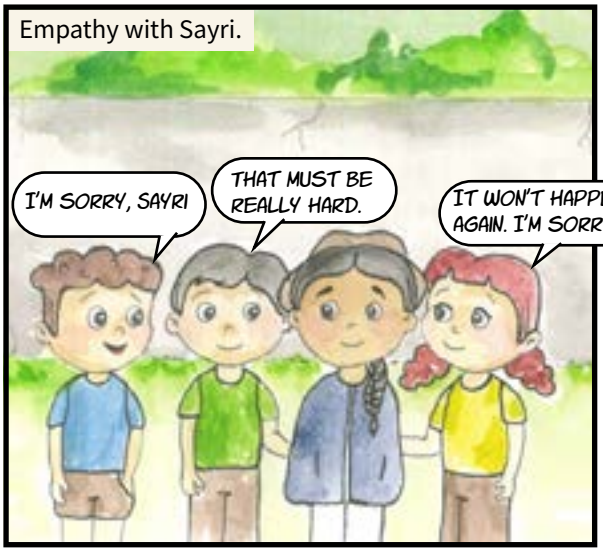




Professor Laura breaks the silence with a reflection.



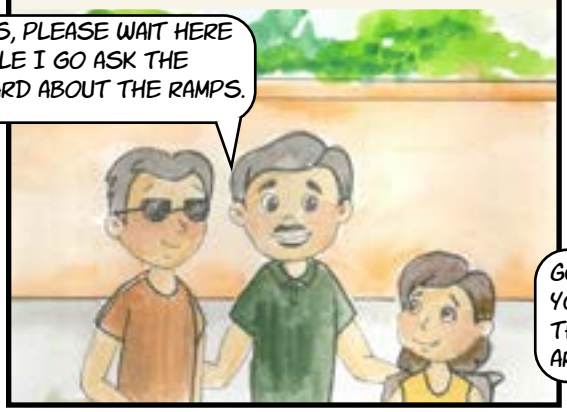

YUPAYCHANI YACHACHIK MASHI YANAPAWASHKAMANTA
IT MEANS: THANK YOU TEACHER FOR HELPING ME
Showing empathy
Some colleagues approach Sayri with a friendly smile and a show of support, mentioning:
SAYRI, YOU CAN READ SLOWLY. WE'LL HELP YOU!
COULD YOU TEACH US SOME KICHWA WORDS?
SHUNKUMANTA YUPAYCHANI MASHIKUNASIGNIFICA: IT MEANS: FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, COLLEAGUES.
Sayri smiles with confidence
OF COURSE!
REPEAT AFTER ME:
ALLI PUNLLA ALLI CHISHI ALLI TUTA
THAT MEANS: GOOD MORNING, GOOD AFTERNOON, AND GOOD NIGHT.
ALLI PUN...LLA
ALLI CHI... SHI
ALLI PUNLLA
ALLI CHISHI
A...LLI TUTA
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE!
INTERESTING, SOUNDS VERY SWEET!
THIS IS HOW I FEEL. READING IN SPANISH IS HARD FOR ME. SOMETIMES I'M AFRAID PEOPLE WILL LAUGH. I JUST WANT TO LEARN.


Empathy with Sayri.
I'M SORRY, SAYRI
THAT MUST BE REALLY HARD.
IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN. I'M SORRY.

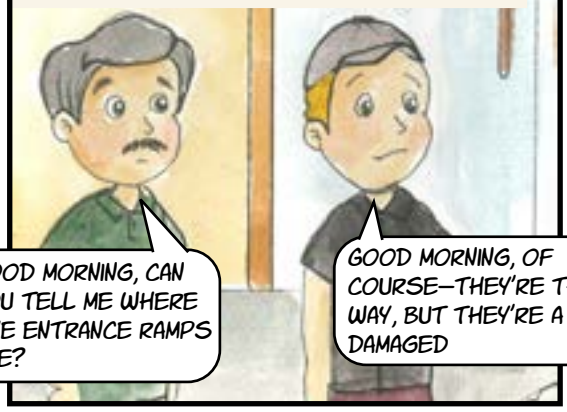
Inclusion and reflection.
THANK YOU, ANDREA. I DON'T FEEL ALONE ANYMORE.
EVERYONE DESERVES RESPECT.
WORDS CAN HURT, BUT THEY CAN ALSO HELP

A SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Liam and Camila go shopping with their father at an older mall that doesn't meet accessibility standards.

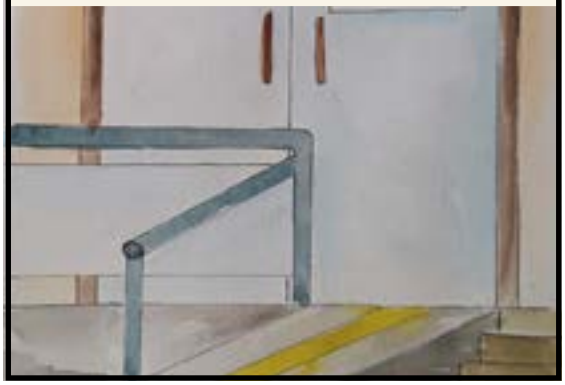


Liam and Camila have had special abilities since they were born, and their parents are looking for the security guard.

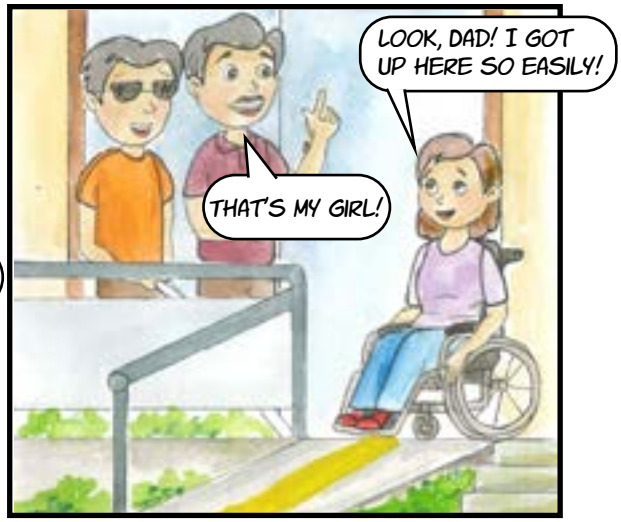


Camila and her father are shocked by the condition of the ramp.

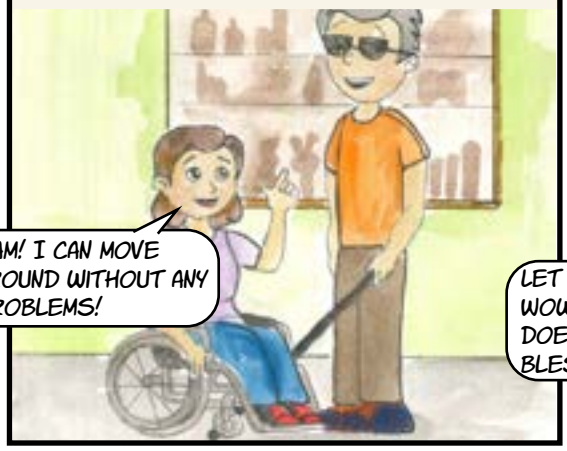
After an anonymous complaint, the mall undergoes renovations. Some time later, it reopens with new ramps, automatic doors, and Braille signage

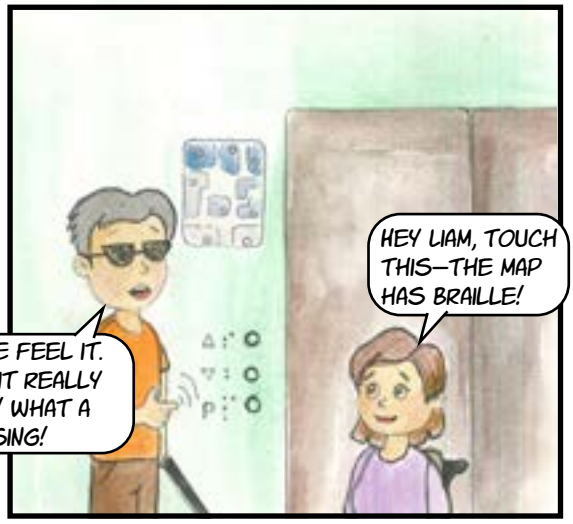


Liam, Camila, and their father return to the mall and find a surprise.



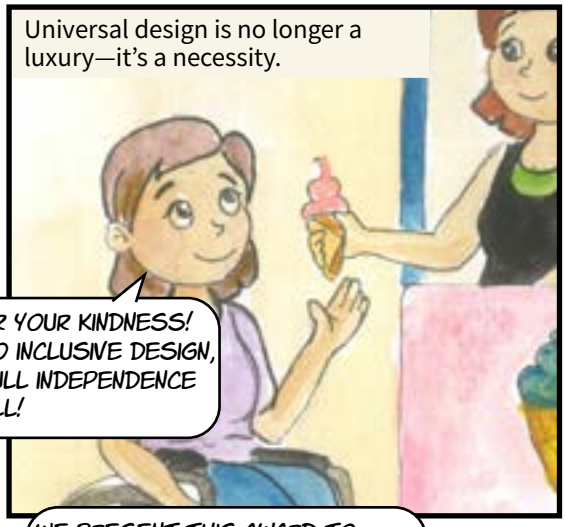
Liam and Camila feel good because they now have full access.



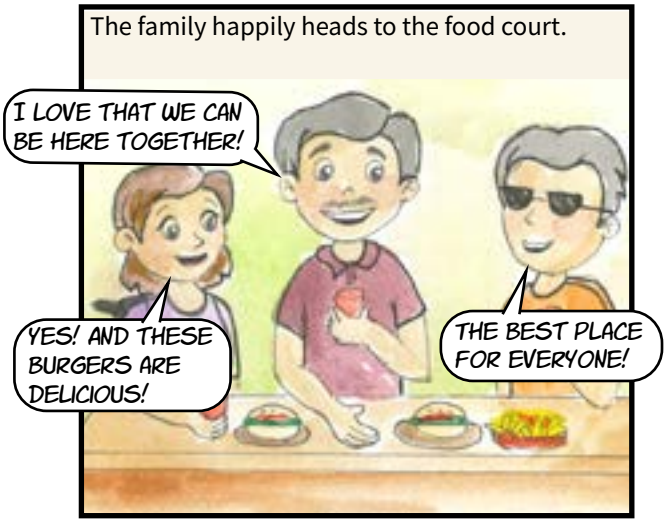


A kind woman speaks with Camila.

Universal design is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity.



The family happily heads to the food court.



Inclusion isn't just about ramps or elevators. It's about creating spaces where everyone feels welcome and supported.

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Chapter 4

The language of respect

The language of respect

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Language constitutes a fundamental tool through which we may gain deeper insight into individuals and their surroundings. It enables us to delve into their lived experiences and cultural traditions, thereby fulfilling essential functions such as the expression of ideas, the sharing of emotions, the construction of identities, and the reinforcement of social bonds (Gómez-Casola & Arrocha-Rodríguez, 2021).

Ecuador is home to 18 Indigenous peoples and 15 nationalities, who preserve 14 mother tongues. Regrettably, Ecuadorian ancestral languages have gradually lost their value over time due to the limited communicative contexts in which they may develop, given that the predominant language in the country is Spanish (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador, 2022). Cabascango (2023) indicates that Kichwa is a heritage language spoken by the majority of Ecuadorian Indigenous families. This language functions as an intercultural communication channel that fosters harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, thus contributing to the building of national identity.

Kichwa, traditionally transmitted from parents to children, has begun to weaken, largely because parents themselves have prioritized learning foreign languages. Similarly, Cabascango observes that the educational sphere constitutes an additional obstacle; although children acquire their ancestral language at home, they receive instruction in a different language within educational institutions, which hinders both communication and the learning process.

Within this context, the notion of the language of respect becomes particularly significant as a means of safeguarding these ancestral tongues.

Recognizing and valuing cultural diversity necessitates concrete actions within the educational sphere. To improve intercultural communication and foster mutual respect, it is essential to implement pedagogical and social strategies that acknowledge the country's linguistic and cultural richness. Among these are the promotion of intercultural bilingual education, teacher training in inclusive approaches, and development of educational materials in indigenous languages. Participatory methodologies that value ancestral knowledge, such as community-based dialogue circles, serve to strengthen the bond between the educational community and its cultural context, enabling the sharing of knowledge, narratives, and local cultural expression (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019; Liga de Educación, n.d.; UNICEF, n.d.). These actions contribute to strengthening the self-esteem of Indigenous students and raise awareness within the educational community regarding the importance of respect (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, 2020).

To prevent cultural or linguistic conflicts, it is essential to incorporate cultural mediation programs within educational and community spaces. These initiatives enable tensions to be resolved peacefully using mother tongues, the recognition of diverse cultural codes, and the fostering of empathy, active listening, and reciprocity (Alcívar, n.d.; Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador 2023). School activities such as dramatizations, collaborative projects, and intercultural celebrations contribute to making the various identities present within the educational environments more visible; they promote harmonious coexistence based on respect, while sustaining a connection between cultures and generations (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2014, 2025).

This chapter explores various Kichwa-speaking Ecuadorian cultures, such as Otavalo and Zuleta, both located in the northern region of the country, within the province of Imbabura. These communities are characterized by a strong sense of identity, expressed through their traditional attire, language, and artisanal production, elements that can be observed in the renowned Plaza de Ponchos (Hdez, 2023).

The Zuleta culture, situated in the canton of Ibarra, is composed predominantly of those who engaged primarily in agriculture (Grupos Étnicos del Ecuador, 2013). Throughout this chapter, we accompany our characters on their adventures, where they share their language and customs; despite our differences, respect must always be present as a foundation for harmonious coexistence.

Loss of Ancestral Languages Causes and Consequences

The loss of ancestral languages, such as Kichwa, threatens the cultural identity of Indigenous communities due to factors including colonization, which imposed dominant languages, and migration, which distances speakers from their traditional environments. Discrimination and the lack of educational resources hinder their transmission to new generations, while globalization promotes majority languages. Preserving these languages is crucial for maintaining unique worldviews and fostering inclusion, thereby strengthening cultural diversity (Ramírez & Chaparro, 2021).

According to UNESCO (2010), one of the main factors contributing to this loss has been colonization, which prohibited or displaced many indigenous languages in favor of those of the colonial powers. The construction of nation-states has prioritized an official language as a symbol of national unity, relegating native tongues to marginal spheres. Another significant factor has been the education system, which for decades promoted monolingualism, discouraging the use of local languages both at home and in schools. Globalization has intensified the pressure to adopt international languages such as English or Spanish, which are perceived as more useful in professional and technological contexts. As a result, younger generations increasingly abandon their mother tongues, thereby weakening intergenerational transmission, an essential process for the survival of a language over time. The consequences of this loss are profound, as each language contains unique knowledge about nature, traditional medicine, spirituality, history, and the identity of a people. Thus, the disappearance of a language represents the irreversible loss of cultural knowledge and perspectives that cannot be replicated in another language. This process also negatively impacts social cohesion, since those who abandon their mother tongue often experience a

diminished sense of belonging, thereby weakening the bonds that hold the community together.

UNESCO warns that, unless urgent measures are taken, thousands of languages may disappear in the coming decades, drastically reducing the cultural diversity of humanity. To prevent this, it is essential for governments, communities, and international organizations to work collaboratively to revitalize endangered languages, promote their teaching, and encourage their use in everyday life, within official institutions, and in technological environments (UNESCO, 2010).

Indigenous languages represent a valuable cultural legacy that is currently at risk of extinction. Of the approximately 7.000 languages spoken worldwide, nearly half could disappear before the end of this century. These languages are not only tools of communication, but also custodians of identities, traditions, and unique bodies of knowledge, particularly within Indigenous communities which, despite comprising merely 6% of the global population, face disproportionately high levels of poverty (World Bank, 2019). In Latin America, home to more than 500 indigenous languages, linguistic diversity is vast, yet many of these languages are endangered due to globalization, discrimination, and the absence of effective protection policies.

Language and the Construction of Cultural Identity

Preserving these languages is essential for safeguarding cultural richness and ancestral knowledge, including agricultural systems and medical practices that have long enriched humanity. For instance, indigenous communities have transmitted knowledge about biodiversity that is now considered vital for sustainability. The decline in the number of speakers, particularly among younger generations, places this heritage at risk. In response, global initiatives are promoting revitalization through bilingual education, the documentation of vocabularies, and the use of indigenous languages on digital platforms (World Banck, 2019). Each language lost is a window to the past that is irrevocably closed, thereby limiting our understanding of shared history. Supporting Indigenous communities in the preservation of their languages is both an act of cultural justice and a commitment to diversity and to the planet's future.

Indigenous languages are essential for cultural diversity and human rights, yet many are at risk of disappearing. They represent much more than a means of communication; they encapsulate unique knowledge, such as the myriad words used to describe snow, reflecting an intimate connection with the environment. These languages form part of the identity, history, and culture of Indigenous peoples, who constitute more than 5% of the world's population but face high poverty levels (Educo, 2019).

Although there are nearly 7,000 languages, most spoken by Indigenous peoples, over half may become extinct by 2100 due to forced relocations, discrimination, economic migration, pressure to adopt dominant languages, and lack of legal recognition (UNESCO, 2020). These factors limit intergenerational transmission and the daily use of languages. To determine whether a language is endangered, aspects such as the number of speakers, generational transmission, the existence of educational materials, and official recognition are assessed. Preserving these languages is crucial to promoting peace, sustainable development, and social inclusion. Actions such as incorporating indigenous languages into education, public administration, and digital media, or creating study centers, can revitalize them. Examples include the success of native Hawaiians, who managed to include Hawaiian in public schools. In the Philippines and Guatemala, Educo promotes bilingual education projects that strengthen cultural identity and improve children's learning (Educo, 2019).

Kichwa, also called Quichua, is a pillar of Ecuador's cultural heritage, acting as a bridge that connects Indigenous communities with their traditions and sense of belonging. Beyond being a means of communication, Kichwa embodies the identity of various ethnic groups, transmitting worldviews and ancestral knowledge that enrich cultural diversity. Its teaching as part of bilingual education programs strengthens students' pride in their roots and fosters an environment of respect and inclusion (López Puente et al., 2023).

Integrating Kichwa into schools preserves this language and empowers new generations, helping them to value their legacy while participating in a multicultural society. However, challenges such as

migration to cities and the lack of appropriate educational materials threaten its survival. Therefore, it is crucial to promote initiatives that reinforce its use, from classrooms to community spaces, to keep this linguistic wealth alive (López Puente et al., 2023).

The revitalisation of Kichwa besides the fact that protects a language, strengthens cultural identity and promotes equity. By including education, it fosters intercultural dialogue that enriches all involved, celebrating diversity as a core value for Ecuador's future (López Puente et al., 2023).

The Kichwa language is a cultural treasure of Ecuador, deeply rooted in the identity of Indigenous communities. More than just a means of communication, it reflects worldviews, traditions, and ancestral knowledge that shape the lives of numerous ethnic groups. Its incorporation into bilingual education safeguards its richness, but also reinforces the cultural pride of the new generations, enabling them to connect with their heritage while engaging with a diverse world (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador, CONAIE, 2022).

In Ecuador, indigenous languages such as Kichwa face significant challenges due to urbanization, discrimination, and the lack of adequate educational resources. These factors have led to a decline in the number of speakers, particularly among younger generations, thereby endangering the survival of these languages. Nevertheless, initiatives such as intercultural bilingual education and community-led efforts aim to revitalize these languages by promoting their use in schools and public spaces, thereby sustaining their cultural relevance (CONAIE, 2022).

The preservation of Kichwa is not merely a linguistic endeavor; it constitutes an act of cultural resistance that strengthens Indigenous identity and fosters social inclusion. By valuing and teaching this language, Ecuador honors its diversity and builds bridges across cultures, ensuring that ancestral voices continue to resonate into the future (CONAIE, 2022).

According to Brodowicz (2024), language shapes the way individuals perceive and engage with the world, influencing both personal and

collective identity. For instance, the teaching of native languages in educational settings nurtures cultural pride and promotes inclusion, enabling speakers to navigate between their traditional identity and modern society. However, the loss of language is driven by globalization, or discrimination poses a threat to this cultural wealth, weakening the communal bonds that sustain it. Preserving languages such as Kichwa is therefore an act of safeguarding linguistic diversity and reinforcing cultural identity, promoting intercultural dialogue that enriches society. It is an expression of reverence for the history and traditions that shape communities.

Multilingualism and Second Language Learning

Multilingualism and second language learning are deeply interrelated phenomena that have been examined from various disciplines, including linguistics, psycholinguistics, and neuroscience. Multilingualism refers to the capacity of an individual or society to communicate in more than two languages, whereas the learning of a second language (L2) involves a process of acquisition subsequent to the mother tongue, whether naturally or through instruction (Chiang, Riveros & Torres, 2022). According to these researchers, multilingual development may give rise to linguistic interferences, particularly when the languages share similar structural features, which directly affect the speakers' linguistic competence.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, the critical period hypothesis posits that acquiring an additional language is significantly more effective during early developmental stages, particularly before puberty, due to heightened neural plasticity and ongoing brain lateralization (Hartshorne et al., 2018). Studies such as that conducted by Chiang et al., (2022) confirm that speakers who acquire multiple languages before the critical period exhibit a type of simultaneous and balanced bilingualism, which fosters a higher level of competence in several languages and reduces certain syntactic or phonological interferences. The relationship between the type of bilingualism- whether coordinated, compound, complete, or dominant- and the efficacy of second language learning is crucial for understanding the cognitive processes involved in multilingualism.

In the educational sphere, learning a second or third language entails significant cognitive and social benefits. As indicated in the article by Educo (n.d.), children who learn another language develop greater attentional capacity, cognitive flexibility, and communicative skills. Mastery of languages beyond one's native tongue broadens academic and professional opportunities in a globalized world. The acquisition of an L2 promotes intercultural awareness and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, key aspects in the formation of global citizens.

From a theoretical standpoint, models such as Selinker's (1972) interlanguage model and Krashen's (1982) monitor model elucidate the internal mechanisms that underlie L2 acquisition. According to Gonzáles and Asensio (1996), interlanguage is a transitory system formed in the learner's mind during the learning process, which may fossilize if not properly addressed. In contrast, Krashen underscores the importance of comprehensible input and the affective context in second language acquisition, which is particularly relevant in school contexts where exposure to the language may be limited.

It is noteworthy that learning an L2 differs from acquiring a third language (L3), since, as argued by Fessi (2015) and Salas (2016), the mechanisms employed to learn an L3 are not identical. Bilingual speakers tend to transfer knowledge and strategies acquired in previous languages, which may facilitate or hinder the process depending on linguistic typology and the sociocultural context. Thus, multilingualism broadens linguistic capacities and transforms individuals' cognitive and metalinguistic processes.

Multilingualism and second language learning must be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, considering both the internal factors of the learner and the external conditions of the environment. To harness its cognitive, cultural, and social benefits, it is essential to develop inclusive and sustainable educational policies that recognize the value of multilingualism. As Lozano (2015) points out, multilingualism is limited to the functional use of several languages; it represents a complex and enriching way of being in the world.

Use of ICT to Preserve Native Languages

Linguistic diversity faces a critical situation due to the weakened use of native languages and the rise of cultural homogenization processes in the XXI century (Bonilla, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). In response to this issue, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are emerging as a relevant tool for safeguarding and revitalizing this linguistic heritage, facilitating both its conservation and the transmission of knowledge across generations (Cruz, 2021; Miranda & Pérez, 2024).

In this context, the use of ICT provides new spaces for learning native languages and for strengthening the collective identity of Indigenous communities. According to Rubiano and Hernandez (2024), ICT demonstrates a contextualized effectiveness, evident in the design of platforms, videos, multimedia texts, and apps created in collaboration with the communities, thus increasing the interest of younger generations in learning their ancestral knowledge. This simultaneously reinforces the connection to their cultural roots, enhancing the sense of belonging and the valuation of Indigenous groups (Bonilla, 2018).

Digital multilingualism offers spaces for encounters and collective expressions, facilitating the maintenance of native languages in the face of pressure from dominant languages (Cabrera & Moreno, 2021). The use of ICT in multilingual contexts provides new arenas for both synchronous and asynchronous socialization, thereby increasing Indigenous communities' access to linguistic resources, texts, discussion groups, and online communities in various languages, thus raising interest in learning (Ríos, 2020).

According to Sandoval (2020) and Cipagauta (2023), the use of these technologies faces specific challenges, such as scarce technological infrastructure, limited internet access, and a lack of training among teachers and communities in managing new devices. Therefore, the design of pedagogical strategies mediated by ICT must take into account the sociocultural, linguistic and geographical context of each community (Díaz et al., 2024), as well as involve both teachers and

Indigenous groups in the joint construction of content, to prevent ancestral knowledge from becoming distorted or folklorised.

Ultimately, the use of ICT offers a valuable opportunity to protect and promote the safeguarding of native languages through new learning spaces and mechanisms for transmitting knowledge, thereby strengthening multilingualism and the maintenance of cultural identities in an increasingly globalized context (Colmenárez, 2020; Miranda & Pérez, 2024). Employing this strategy will enable younger generations to access, learn, and express their linguistic and cultural knowledge, thus increasing the appreciation of humanity's linguistic diversity.

Sign Language as a Tool for Inclusion

There are several languages spoken, each shaped by the cultural particularities of the country in which they evolve. Sign language shares these same linguistic and cultural characteristics. Its acquisition must occur in a manner comparable to that of spoken language, that is, from early childhood, so that deaf children may develop academically at the same pace as their hearing peers. Understanding that achievement depends fundamentally on the opportunities provided by the child's environment, it becomes essential for parents to receive support in acquiring a fluent command of sign language, which will be transmitted to the child. Likewise, the education system must offer and facilitate access to teachers and materials adapted to the needs of students with hearing impairments, enabling them to access inclusive, high-quality education that ensures their development as active global citizens (World Federation of the Deaf, 2018a). For this reason, the Declaration on the Linguistic Rights of Deaf Children outlines principles that promote the lifelong teaching of sign language, recognizing its centrality to the cognitive, social, and academic development of deaf individuals (World Federation of the Deaf, 2018b).

Ecuador, as a state party to the International Convention on Human Rights, is obliged to comply with the provisions set forth in this instrument. El Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (2013) refers specifically to Article 24, which concerns the right to education and establishes that all individuals, regardless of their educational needs, are entitled to an education that guarantees equality of opportunity

without discrimination. This right must be upheld throughout the individual's lifetime and must include the necessary curricular adaptations to ensure effective learning. Consequently, people with hearing impairments must receive an education that facilitates the learning of Ecuadorian Sign Language, with access to teachers trained in its instruction, as highlighted by the Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (2020):

> For individuals with prelingual hearing impairments, sign language serves as an effective tool for engaging their intellect and accessing knowledge. It is through sign language that deaf children and adolescents enrich their cognitive frameworks, express their emotions, construct their identity as deaf people, and establish fulfilling relationships with others. (p. 38)

Despite the inclusion mandates established in Ecuadorian legislation and the national curriculum, a study conducted by Ureta-Andrade and Donoso-Cedeño (2022) at the School 16 November, in the San Vicente canton, revealed a low level of proficiency in Ecuadorian Sign Language among the institution's teachers and even among the students with hearing impairments themselves. As a result, communication tends to occur on an improvised and empirical basis, which hinders the development of effective interaction between teachers and students, and vice versa, ultimately generating feelings of frustration among deaf learners. In this context, the implementation of ICT has been identified as a crucial tool for advancing towards a more inclusive educational model for deaf individuals.

In the current technological era, where the pursuit of new tools to support human development is paramount, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for inclusive educational purposes is crucial. The use of ICT has opened new opportunities for education by eliminating geographical barriers, facilitating collaborative work through improved communication, and fostering autonomous learning. For them to be effective, both teachers and students must know how to use these technologies appropriately. When educators identify the appropriate tools and apply them, it becomes possible to enhance the phonetics, lexicon, and morphosyntax of students with hearing impairments. The dynamic and engaging nature of ICTs encourages pupil participation and fosters the development of

literacy skills (Roing Osete, 2012). In Ecuador, significant advances have been made regarding inclusive education, with efforts directed at ensuring quality education for all. In this context, the relevance of ICTs has increased, as they help teachers to better adapt their lessons to the specific needs of each student, particularly those with special educational needs, thereby contributing to the development of equity within the educational system (Arteaga Tuba, 2024). It must be acknowledged, however, that despite considerable advances made using ICTs, there remains much room for further development. Garcia (2024) highlights the need to develop inclusive technologies for deaf individuals and affirms that:

> Although the use of ICTs has driven significant progress, there remains a vast field yet to be developed. It is necessary to create new information and communication technologies (NICTs) that are specifically adapted to the needs of deaf individuals. This requires the application of approaches such as universal design, user-centred design, and participatory design. Achieving genuine digital inclusion fundamentally depends on possessing a deep understanding of deaf culture and sign language. (p.40)

Within this context, it can be concluded that the learning and teaching of sign language constitute a vital tool that gives life to and strengthens inclusion within the classroom. Training in sign language for both teachers and students enhances inclusive communication in educational settings, fostering equity of opportunity and the development of socio-emotional skills (González et al., 2023). For this reason, the Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador has incorporated the teaching of Ecuadorian Sign Language for people with hearing impairments among its guiding principles, recognizing it as an essential component of the national education system.

Traditional Stories and Oral Narratives in Indigenous Languages as Didactic Resources

Latin America is a region characterized by the diversity of its Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, which makes an intercultural approach essential for the preservation of their cultures,

traditions, and languages. Within this framework, intercultural bilingual education has undergone sustained development over more than five decades, achieving significant progress. Initially, this educational model was limited to the mere translation of texts from Spanish into indigenous languages; however, it has since evolved into an approach that produces educational materials directly in those languages, integrating their own cultures and worldviews and promoting reciprocal teaching and learning processes. Such progress has not been regional, as certain areas still lack access to intercultural bilingual education (UNICEF, 2021).

In a country as culturally rich as Ecuador, it is vital to address multiculturalism and, more specifically, interculturality. Walsh (2005) defines interculturality as:

> A goal to be pursued, interculturality should be understood as a permanent process of relationship, communication, and learning among people, groups, knowledge, values, and different traditions, aimed at generating, constructing, and fostering mutual respect and the full development of individuals' capabilities, beyond their cultural and social differences. (p. 4)

Thus, the implementation of intercultural bilingual education becomes highly relevant, as it enables the full exercise of the rights of all peoples and nationalities residing in the country, and it guarantees their ability to transmit ancestral knowledge through quality education that fosters both cognitive and socio-affective development (UNICEF, n.d.).

The integration of storytelling as a didactic resource in the classroom opens new opportunities to engage in meaningful learning, thereby contributing to quality education in which learners participate actively. A study conducted by López (2023) in Oxapampa, Perú, revealed that the use of popular stories in the Yanesha language fosters meaningful learning by increasing student motivation and interest. Similarly, a study by Padial and Sáenz-López (2013) demonstrated that implementing storytelling as a pedagogical tool, through playful activities, benefits students by supporting both their

cognitive development and their socio-affective growth, allowing them to acquire new perspectives on the surrounding reality.

In this context, and with the aim of providing an education that integrates the cultural knowledge of Ecuador's diverse peoples and nationalities, legends, myths, and traditional stories are regarded as fundamental didactic resources for fostering quality education that reinforces cultural identity. According to Haro (2023), core aspects of culture such as history, traditions, language, and folklore play a crucial role in the formation and consolidation of identity. For this reason, the inclusion of Ecuadorian legends into the educational process enables students to engage more deeply with the country's cultural diversity, as they are exposed to new realities that, being linked to their own lived experiences, contribute to a strong formation of cultural identity. The use of such legends allows for the design of pedagogical activities that enhance learning, as these narratives facilitate broader knowledge and a deeper understanding of Ecuadorian cultures (Rojas, 2019).

Traditional stories and legends represent a valuable didactic resource for enriching intercultural bilingual education, particularly when conveyed in the country's indigenous languages. These narratives stimulate interest and facilitate learning among students while also strengthening cultural identity. They promote understanding of Ecuador's sociocultural diversity and foster mutual respect.

Analysis of Language Attitudes toward Kichwa, and other Indigenous Languages

Ecuador is a country marked by profound diversity in every sense. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (2023), among Indigenous peoples, Afro-Ecuadorians, Montubios, Mulatos, and Mestizos, the Consejo de Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (CODENPE) officially recognizes 14 nationalities and 18 Indigenous peoples across the country. Interculturality is understood as a condition that opens a path of possibilities towards pluractionality and is, in turn, complemented by a state of the same character, one that permits its expressions and acknowledges the existence of the other (Mosquera & Ayala, 2020).

Language attitudes refer to the opinions, beliefs, and prejudices that speakers hold regarding a language, its varieties, or its usage. They constitute a central topic within sociolinguistics owing to their significance in understanding phenomena such as linguistic variation, language awareness, and the notions of correctness and prestige associated with languages. Although all indigenous languages in Ecuador are considered vulnerable, both the degree of language used and the attitudes towards them may vary considerably even among neighboring communities that share the same language (Haboud, 2004).

In Ecuador, specifically in the province of Imbabura, there have been documented cases concerning the use of the Kichwa language. According to the publication by Guarin and Tovar (n.d.), it was found that non-indigenous female teachers value Kichwa and have even learnt the language as a result of the work carried out by the Casa de Pensamiento. In contrast, native speakers reported having shown a reluctant attitude towards Kichwa during their childhood due to experiences of discrimination. These findings illustrate that, although Kichwa was a marginalized language, it is now recognized even by those outside Indigenous communities as a component of cultural identity and is regarded with pride.

According to Yungán et al. (2019), attitudes may be either positive or negative, depending on values, beliefs, social environment, age, or education, as attitude reflects how an individual adapts to their surroundings and is the result of a cognitive, affective, and behavioral process. Those speakers build a network of values from which they understand their perceptions of language, whether their own or someone else´s. In this regard, Mejía (2021) argues that language awareness depends on the speaker's possession of functionally equivalent linguistic resources, and the availability of their social variation. Language awareness thus produces a sense of either security or insecurity in the speakers. Considering this, we can observe that children, even from an early age, develop an awareness of these language attitudes through their idiolect, whereby they come to value their language within the social sphere.

Within a broader context, that of education, the Kichwa language is represented as a symbol of Ecuador's pluricultural identity. Its

preservation is not only essential for Kichwa-speaking communities, but also for Ecuadorian society as a whole, in the construction of an inclusive and respectful society. According to Puente et al. (2024), in the educational sphere, the presence of Kichwa acquires relevance; its inclusion contributes to linguistic diversity and enables students to connect with their cultural roots, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in their Indigenous heritage. This implies that, within the Ecuadorian educational system, there are schools in which Kichwa is preserved and even integrated into the curriculum, to safeguarding the language and its cultural significance.

Linguistic practices and attitudes within educational institutions are of great importance even in major urban cities of Ecuador, as they underscore the significance of bilingualism both at the individual and societal levels. As Andrade (2016) states:

> The study of language attitudes and their relationship with the linguistic practices developed by speakers in relation to their language has attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, sociocultural studies, and language and educational planning. It is undeniable that attitudes, namely the beliefs and predispositions that individuals hold towards the Kichwa language, have a profound impact on its vitality, that is, on its maintenance or decline. (p. 19)

The Intercultural bilingual education constitutes one of the most significant accomplishments of Indigenous groups, as it has brought about an extensive sociocultural transformation in the country. According to Flores (2020), many Indigenous education initiatives have been implemented in the Andean region and parts of the Amazon region, to promote education among these communities through the teaching of both Kichwa and Spanish, thereby preserving ancestral knowledge, worldviews, and wisdom. With the support of the state, individuals, particularly children and adolescents, benefited from the implementation of Kichwa instruction, as it is one of the most widely spoken ancestral languages among Indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Efforts have therefore been made to ensure the preservation of the language in both the Sierra and Amazon regions.

Today, Indigenous communities in Ecuador remain the principal source of Kichwa language preservation; however, younger generations have increasingly shifted towards Spanish as their dominant language. As Chávez (2022) mentions, it is widely acknowledged that the survival of indigenous languages is under threat, not only in Ecuador but across the globe. Fortunately, many scholars have researched on the matter, and several governments and organizations have committed themselves to efforts aimed at revitalizing these languages.

Not all these efforts conduct to positive results. As Gauin (2024) mentions in her study on the importance of the Kichwa language at the Unidad Educativa Bilingue Ñuncachik Yachay, the institution faces considerable challenges in maintaining Kichwa among students in upper primary education. The lack of resources and insufficient teacher training makes it harder to use the implementation of effective methods and approaches for teaching Kichwa. Although efforts to sustain the Kichwa language within the educational environment persist, such efforts are rendered difficult by persistent barriers, particularly those concerning the implementation and development of pedagogical strategies in the classroom.

In educational communities, UNESCO (2016) mentions that linguistic improvement has some significant limitations. For example, even though both bilingual teachers and students speak the same language, district and school officials have tended to dismiss the importance of Kichwa and rural school. In this regard, Spanish should function solely as a medium of intercultural communication. This situation contributes to a diminished depreciation of the mother tongue among younger generations; indeed, some Kichwa speakers may even choose not to express their Indigenous identity, leading to a gradual erosion of the language´s perceived value.

Yanzapanta (2018) warns that the persistent lack of critical reflection on the relationship between linguistic phenomena and speakers value judgments gives rise to academic disinterest across various disciplines, including linguistics, language, planning, and sociocultural and educational studies. This institutional neglect negatively affects the development of language, attitudes, and communicative practices, thereby limiting the learning process. Consequently, it is essential

for students to become creative, participatory and reflective subjects capable of strengthening both their intellectual capacities and their attitudes towards language.

In Ecuador's Amazonian region, similar difficulties arise, particularly in relation to structural limitations and barriers that hinder the effective teaching of Kichwa. Vilema et al. (2025) mention that:

> In the Amazonian region of Ecuador, teachers face a set of sociocultural conditions that affect their professional practice. The geography of the region, marked by remoteness and limited access to educational zones, creates a challenging environment. In Pastaza Province, the parish of Río Tigre is home to six educational institutions that experience these difficulties. (p.7)

This highlights that the struggle to adapt and maintain the Kichwa language is affected by numerous factors, including sociocultural conditions, the lack of pedagogical resources, and notably a pronounced lack of interest among students in continuing the learning of Kichwa.

Conclusions

Language is not only a means of communication, but also a vital component of cultural identity, collective memory, and the worldview of Indigenous peoples. In Ecuador, languages such as Kichwa face ongoing threats stemming from historical processes of colonization globalization, and internal migration factors that have diminished their intergenerational transmission. Preserving ancestral languages requires unquestionable educational action, sustained public policies, and the active participation of communities, as each language carries unique forms of knowledge that enrich the human legacy and the cultural diversity of the country.

Intercultural bilingual education is important for maintaining indigenous languages and fulfilling Indigenous students´ right to

quality education that representative and respectful to their cultural identity. Reported experiences in both urban and rural contexts demonstrate that the integration of indigenous languages into school curricula fortify the sense of belonging, self-esteem, and social cohesion with communities. However, the implementation of this educational model continues to face challenges, including the lack of appropriate teaching materials, the deficiency of trained educators, and prevailing social attitudes that continue to reduce indigenous languages. Overcoming these barriers is fundamental to building an equal and genuine intercultural education system.

The incorporation of technological resources into the teaching and preservation of indigenous languages opens up new possibilities for their revitalization and dissemination among younger generations. The ICTs enabled the creation of interactive educational materials, digital platforms, and multimedia content in ancestral languages, thereby fostering student interest and active participation. The achievement of these strategies depends on overcoming limitations such as the digital devises, lack of connectivity, and insufficient technical training both among teachers and within Indigenous communities. It is essential that educational policies prioritize the development of inclusive and culturally appropriate technological solutions.

Profound educational interventions, spaces for intercultural dialogue, and policies that bring visibility to the value of ancestral languages in both public and everyday life are urgently needed. As a future line of research, it is proposed to examine innovative pedagogical strategies and cultural mediations that may promote lasting changes in societal attitudes, thereby fostering a culture of linguistic respect and equity in Ecuador.

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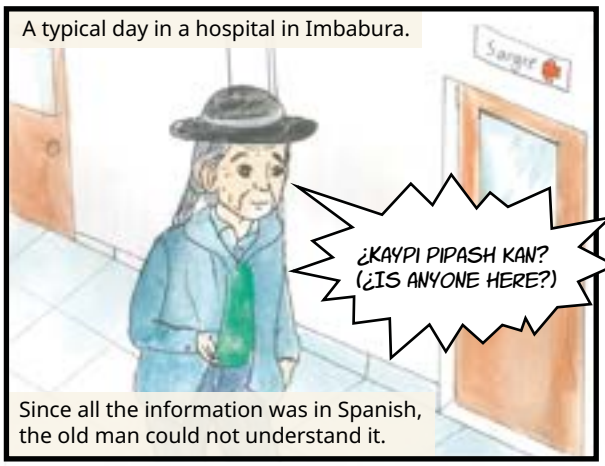
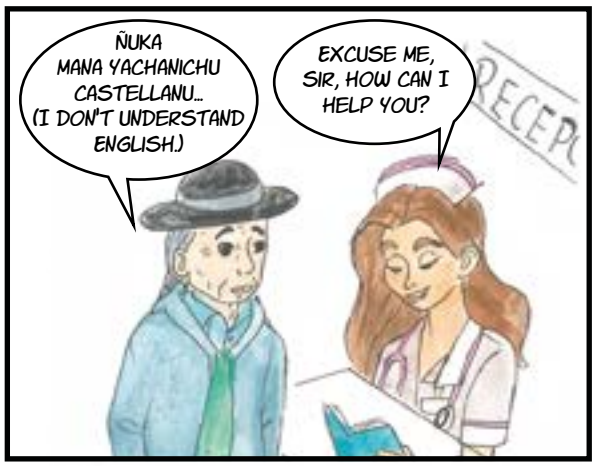
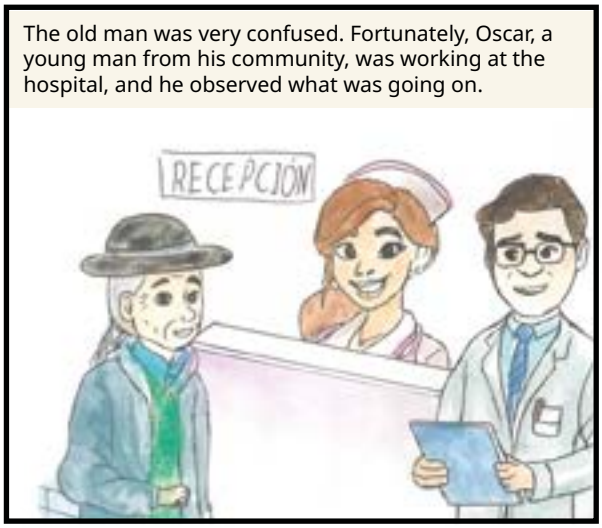
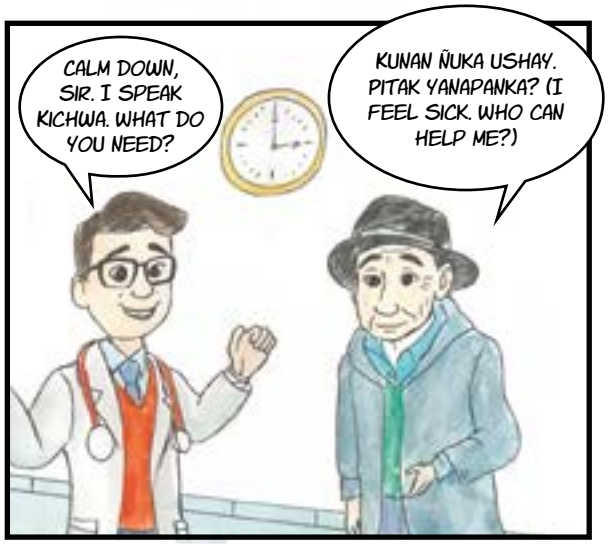
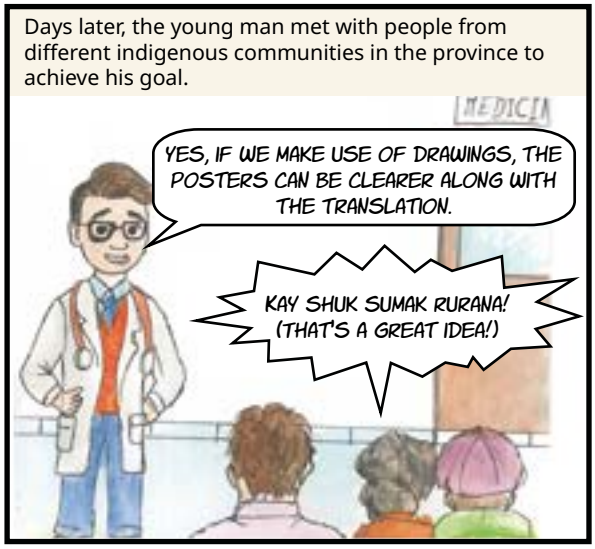
POSTERS FOR ALL











Days later, people from the community and hospital staff put up the new posters.

Some time later, an old lady from another distant Kichwa community arrived at the hospital. Fortunately, now, she had something to help her.

THE END

THE MUSIC OF MY ROOTS

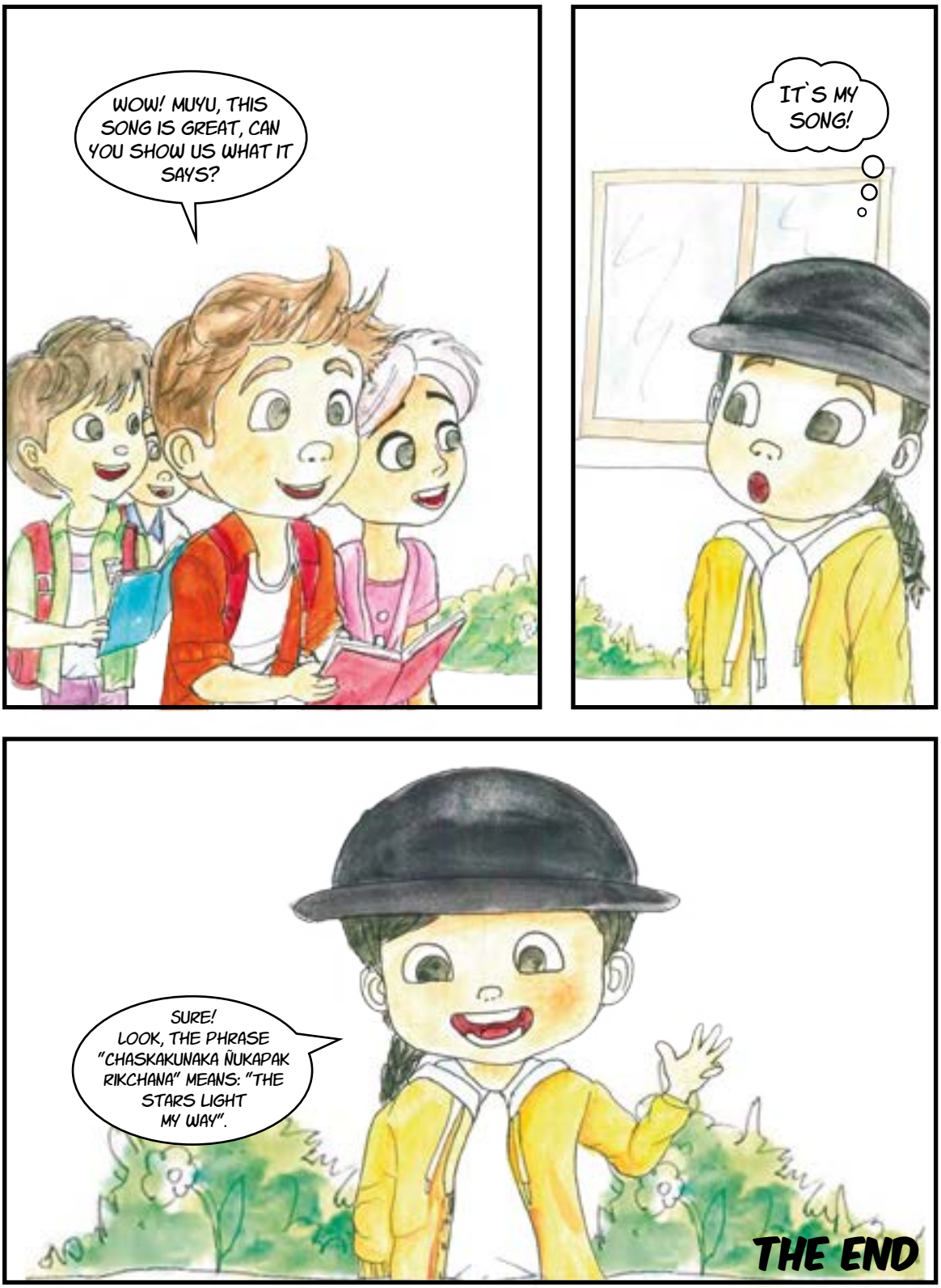
Muyu, a young indigenous boy, and his friends were listening to music in Spanish as usual.

The next day, Muyu was concentrating on his cell phone when his grandmother started singing a traditional song from his community.

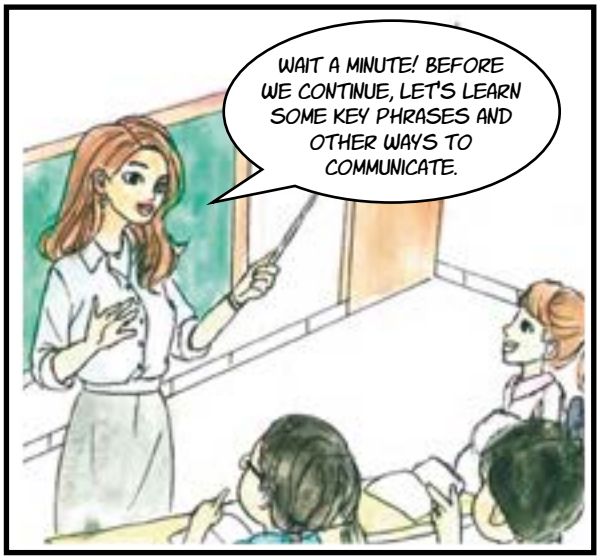
Quickly, Muyu began to record his grandmother 's song.

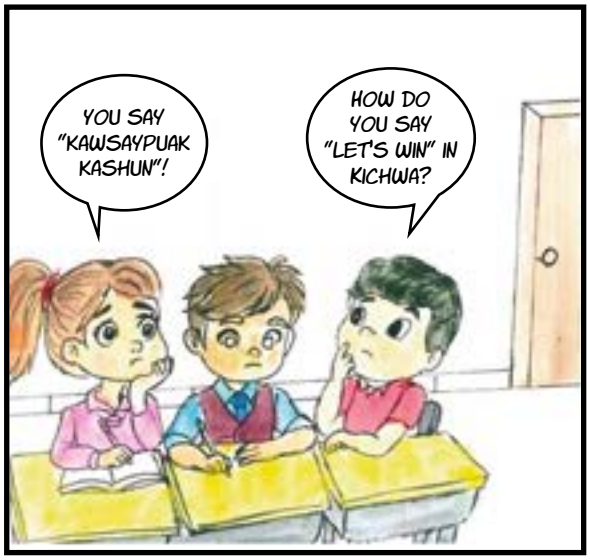
Right away, Muyu went to his computer to mix and edit the song. When he finished, he uploaded it on her social media.

The next day, Muyu arrived at school and noticed a group of classmates gathered around listening to something.


WOW! MUYU, THIS SONG IS GREAT, CAN YOU SHOW US WHAT IT SAYS?
IT`S MY SONG!
SURE! LOOK, THE PHRASE "CHASKAKUNAKA ÑUKAPAK RIKCHANA" MEANS: "THE STARS LIGHT MY WAY".
THE END

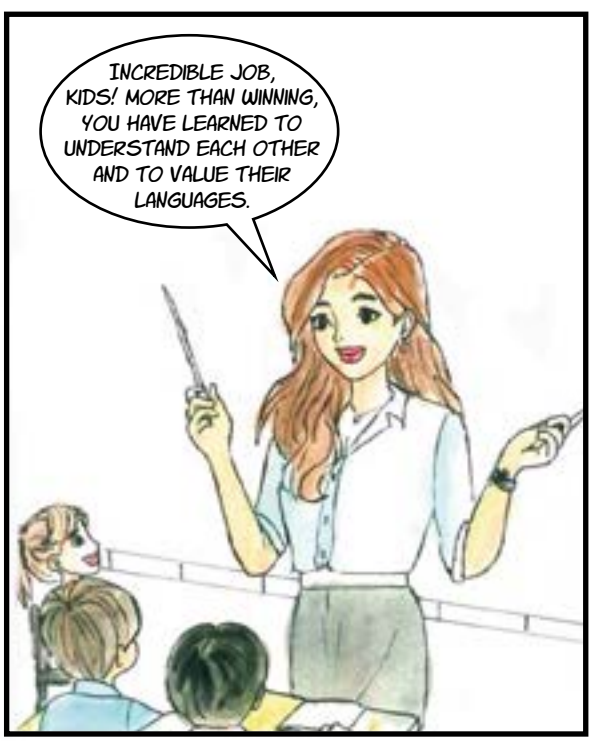
THE GAME OF LANGUAGES

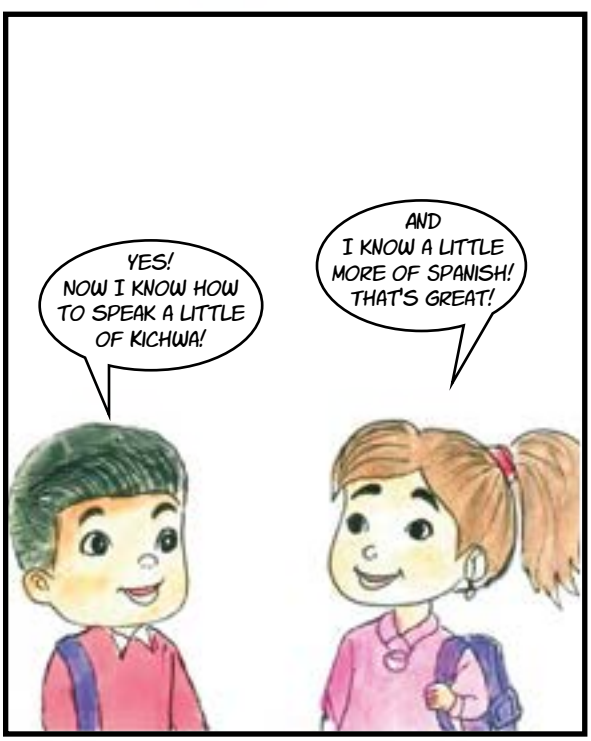




The children began to understand each other better. They even found more ways to communicate such as using drawings.

Children are shown actively participating and having fun.





THE END

THE FORGOTTEN SONG

A few years ago, in the city of Otavalo, at Grandma's house... Grandma sings a song in Kichwa as Wayra, her five-year-old granddaughter, nestles beside her.

A few days later, Wayra invites her friend over to play at Grandma's house. As they play, Grandma sings while sweeping the yard...

Hearing her, Wayra feels embarrassed. She glances sideways at her friend; afraid she might laugh.

Later that day, Wayra approaches her grandma...

Grandma, though confused, nods silently.

Five years later, a poster on the school bulletin board catches Wayra's eye.

In that moment, she remembers Grandma's song.

Wayra feels she'd be embarrassed to sing in Kichwa in front of her classmates...

The next day in class, the teacher encourages students to join the festival.

Wayra, though unsure, raises her hand.

On the day of the festival, Wayra performs her grandmother's song in the contest. Her voice trembles at first, but soon grows strong.

Contrary to her fears, the crowd, excited, applauds her.

Later that day, Wayra visits her grandmother to tell her what happened...

Grandma, filled with emotion, gazes at Wayra with tenderness and begins to sing again.This time, Wayra joins in—without fear. The language of their ancestors was never forgotten. It had only been waiting to be heard again.

THE LOST WORDS

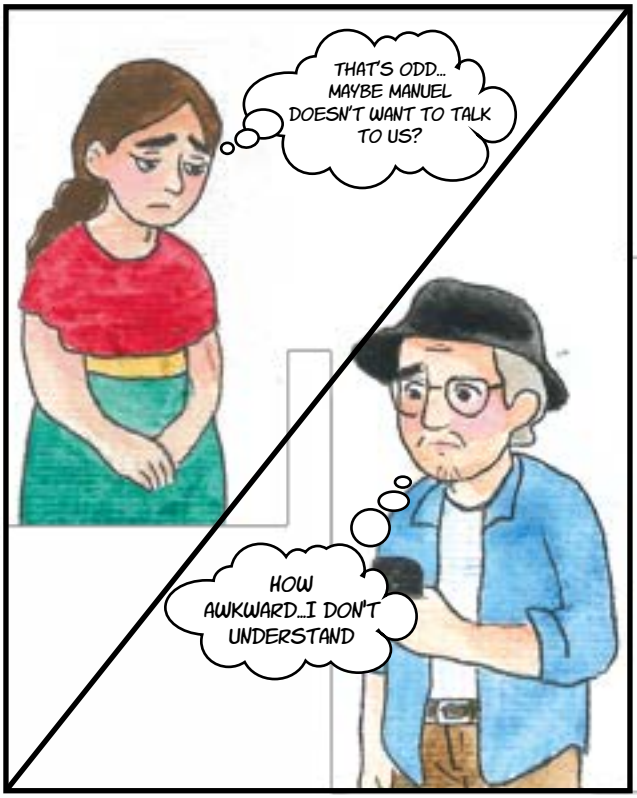
Manuel, an English teacher, returns to his hometown in Zuleta after ten years to visit his family.

When he arrives at his grandmother Paz's house, she receives him excitedly and welcomes him in her language, Kichwa.

Manuel, confused, smiles awkwardly because he doesn't understand her.

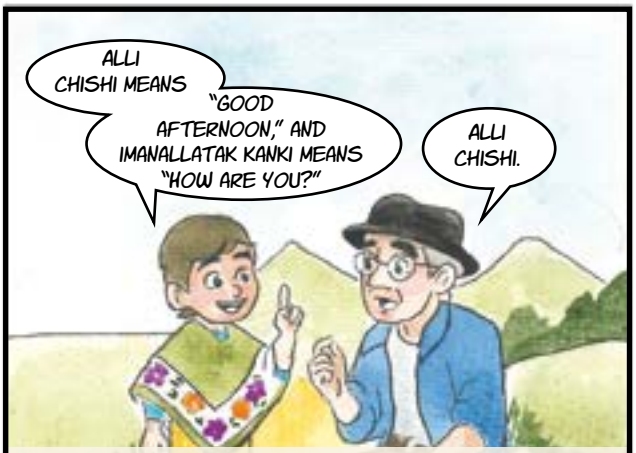
The whole family has gathered to welcome him; however, he cannot communicate with them because they speak Kichwa.

Not understanding much, Manuel just nods in confusion.



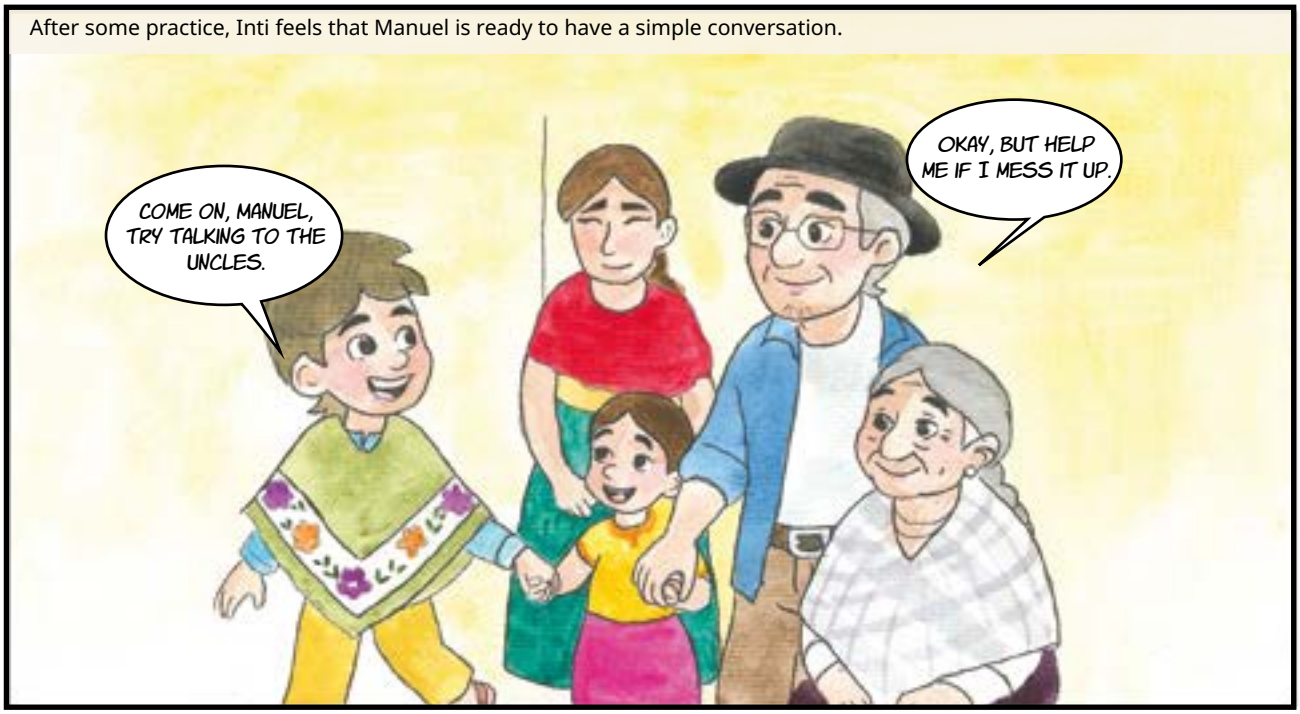
Unable to communicate with his family, Manuel gradually withdraws. While everyone else chats and catches up, he distracts himself with his phone.

Later, Inti, Manuel's youngest cousin who speaks both Kichwa and Spanish, notices his struggle and approaches to help.

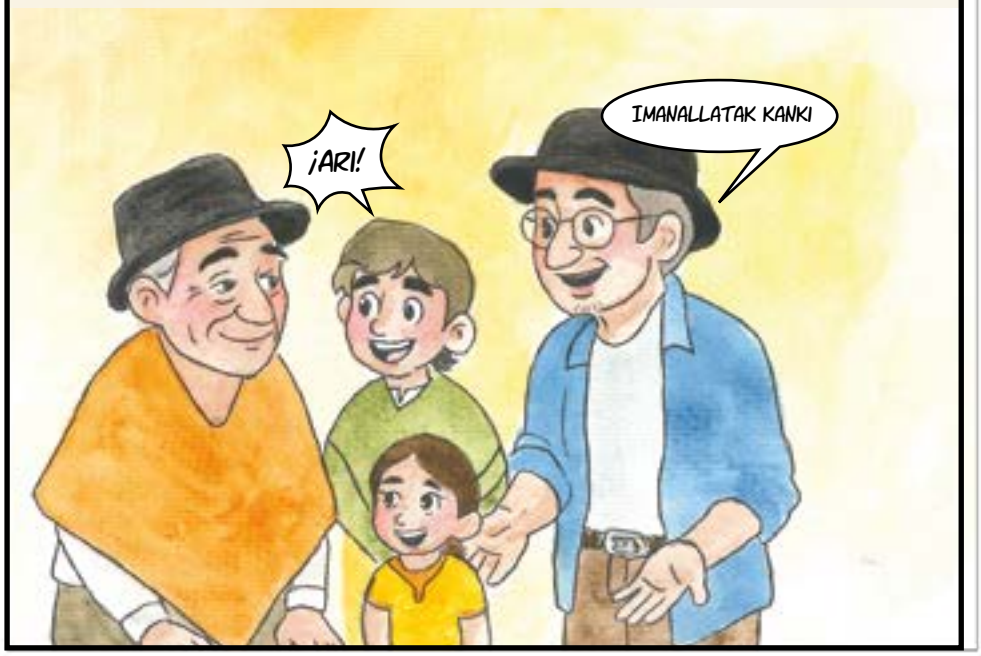


Inti teaches him some basic phrases so he can start a conversation with the family.

After some practice, Inti feels that Manuel is ready to have a simple conversation.



With Inti's support, Manuel talks to his uncles.



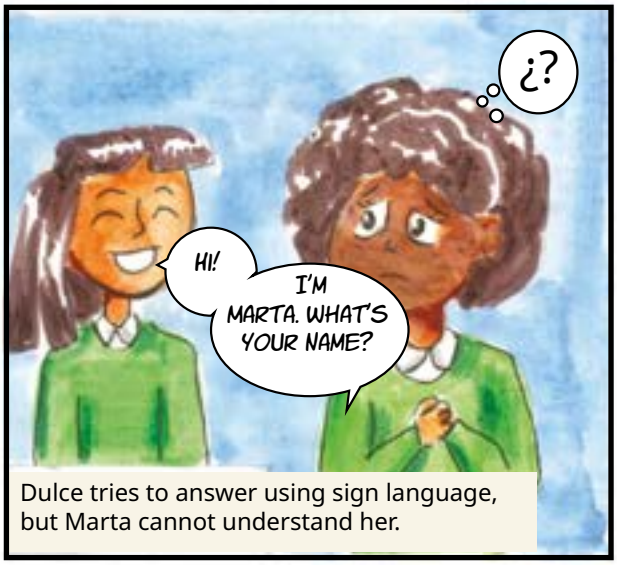
Learning his family's language helped Manuel reconnect with them.

The next day, Manuel, excited, approaches Inti.

THE STORY OF THE HANDS

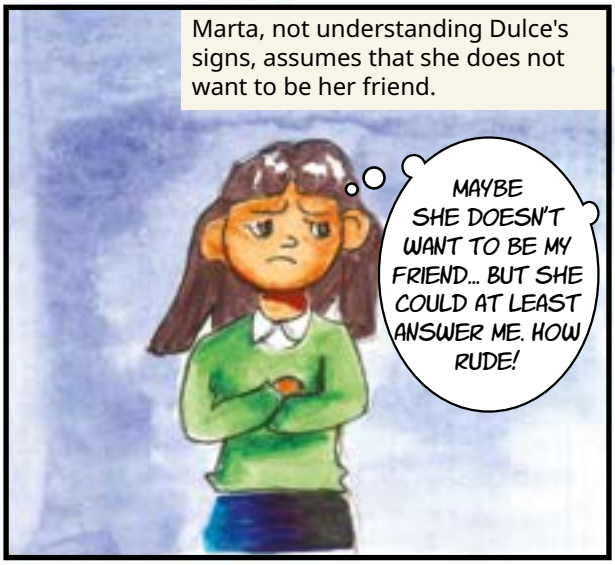
Dulce, an Afro-Ecuadorian girl with a hearing impairment, is very nervous because today is her first day at a new school.

Dulce, very nervous, enters her new class. Her classmates watch her with curiosity.



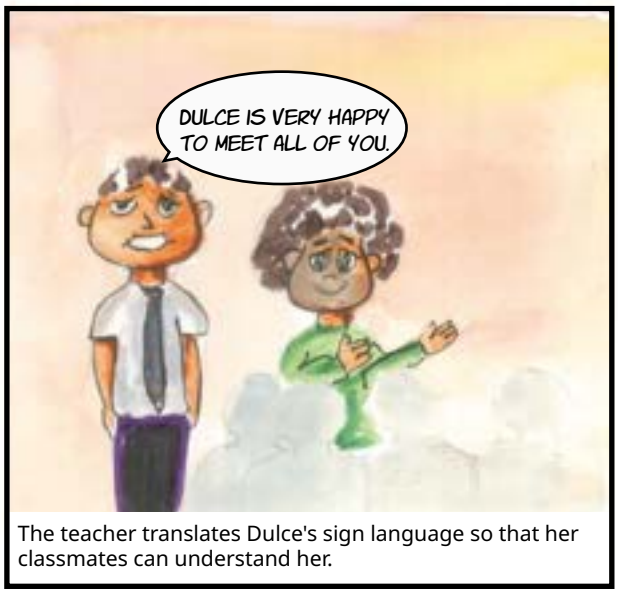
Dulce tries to answer using sign language, but Marta cannot understand her.

Marta, not understanding Dulce's signs, assumes that she does not want to be her friend.



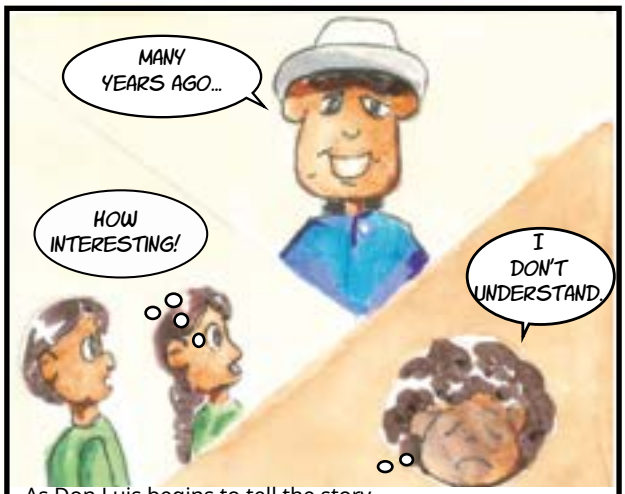
Marta walks away annoyed, while Dulce watches her sadly.

Dulce and the teacher communicate using sign language.



The teacher translates Dulce's sign language so that her classmates can understand her.

A few days later, during the reading festival, the teacher introduces a wise elder to the class.



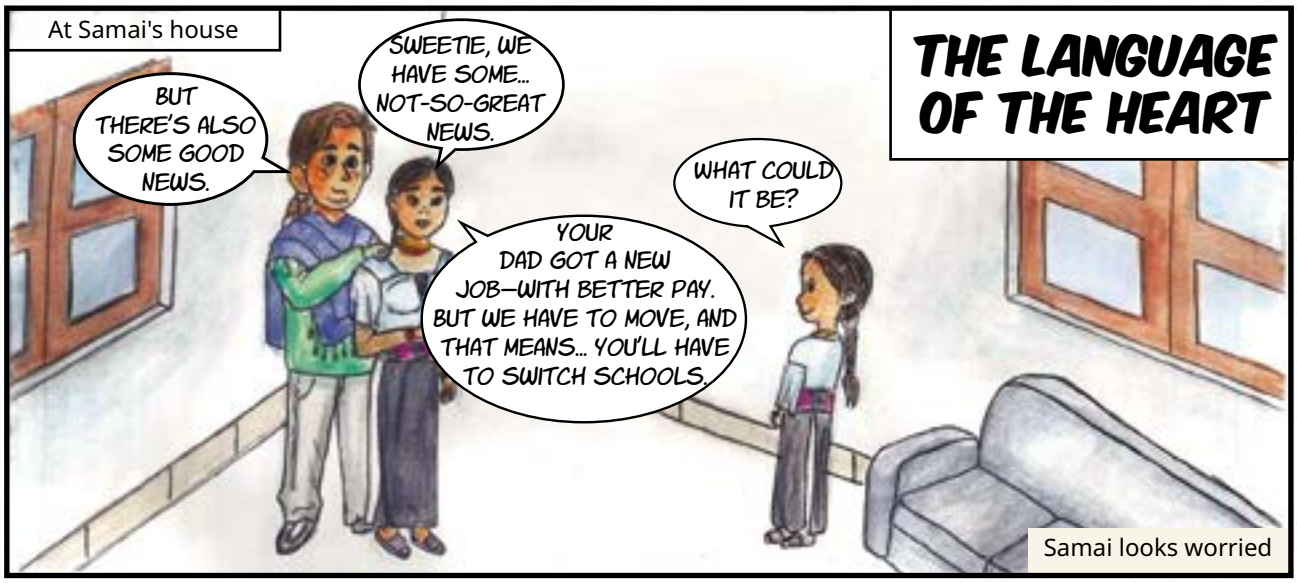
As Don Luis begins to tell the story.
However, Dulce, unable to understand, feels sad and confused.

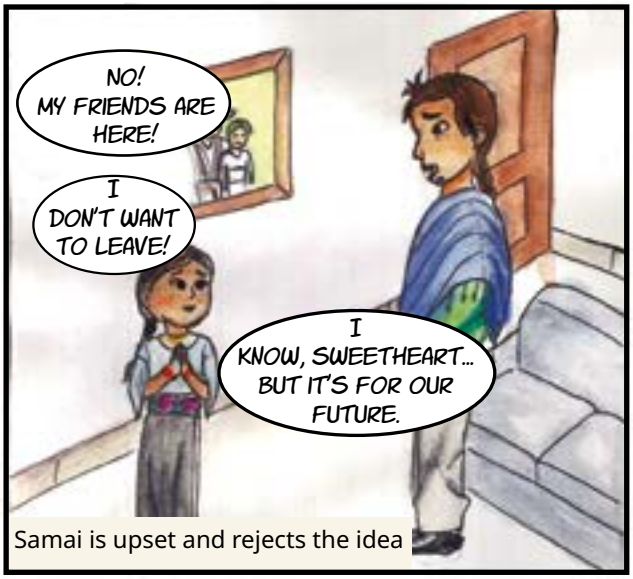
Don Luis, noticing the situation, begins to use mime, gestures and drawings on the board so Dulce can follow the story.

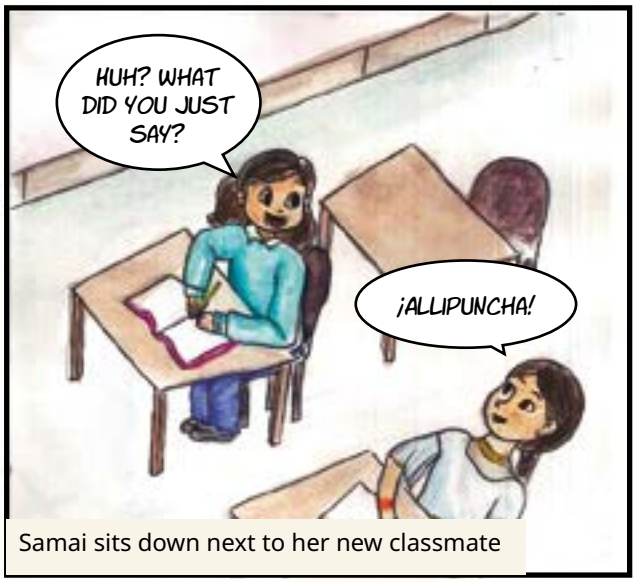
The next day, inspired by Don Luis, the children try to communicate with Dulce using gestures and drawings. Dulce responds by writing.

Over time, with the teacher's help, everyone found a way to communicate.

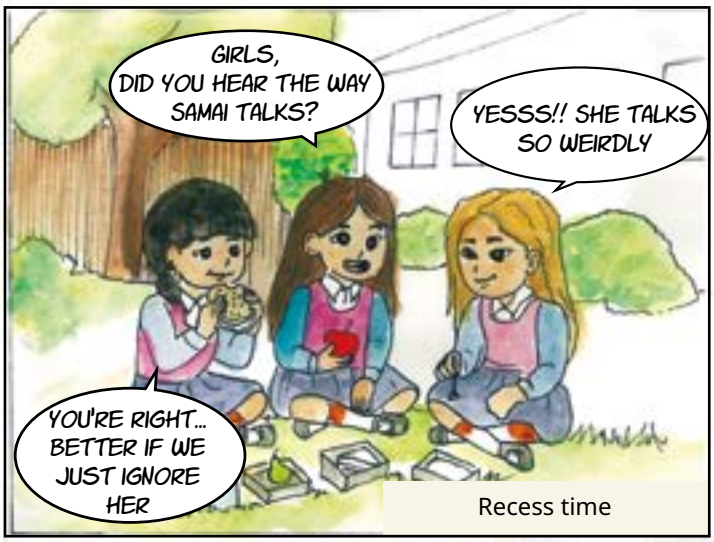
THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART



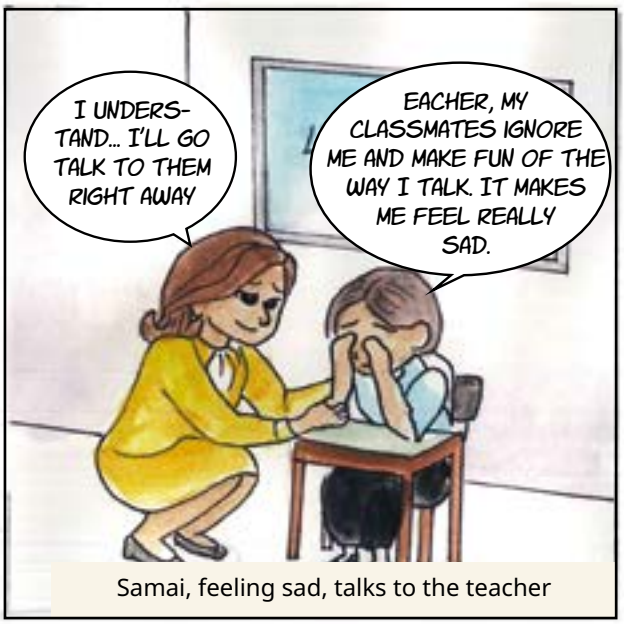




4x2÷5=?
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
SORRY... I DON'T SPEAK MUCH SPANISH
FROM ANGO-CHAGUA

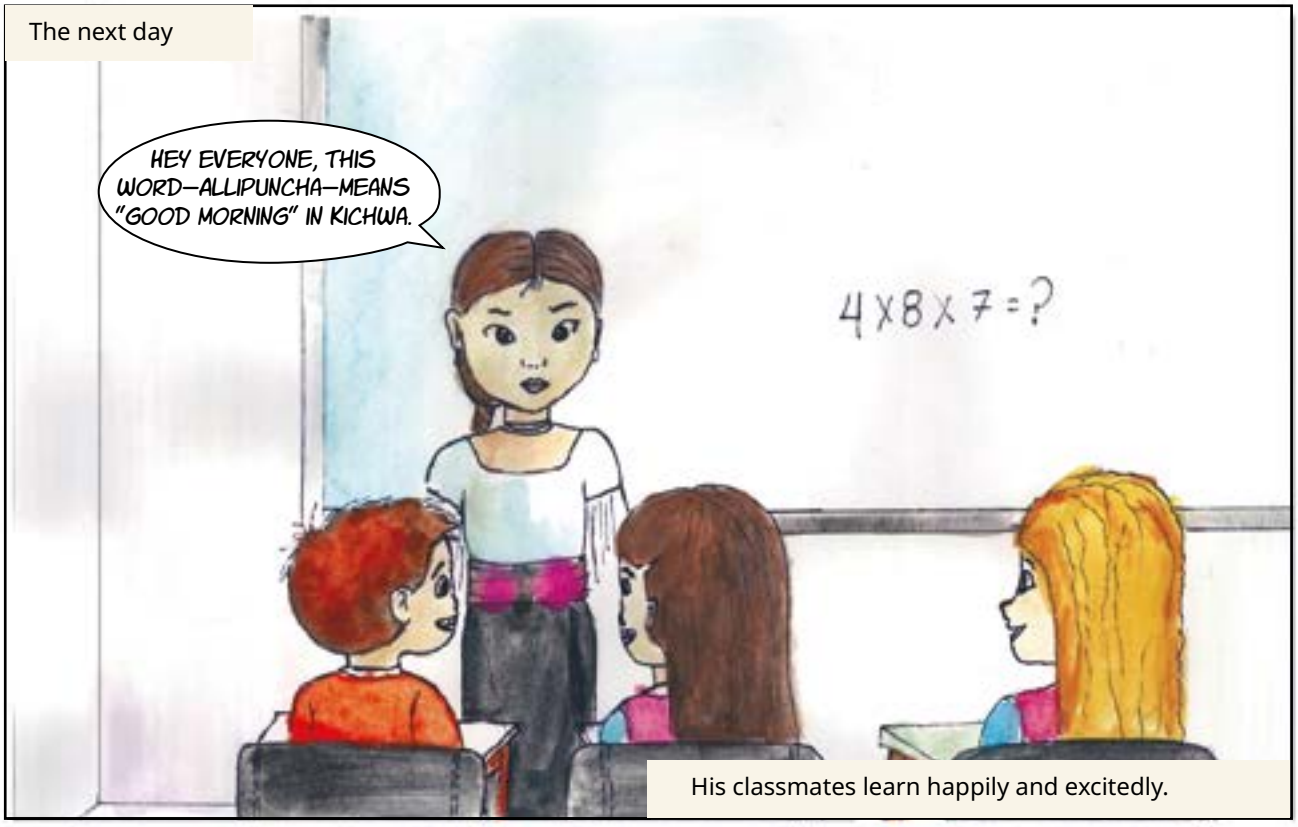

GIRLS, DID YOU HEAR THE WAY SAMAI TALKS?
YESSS!! SHE TALKS SO WEIRDLY
YOU'RE RIGHT... BETTER IF WE JUST IGNORE HER
Recess time

The next day
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE
LET'S JUST IGNORE HER
YEP, LET'S GO

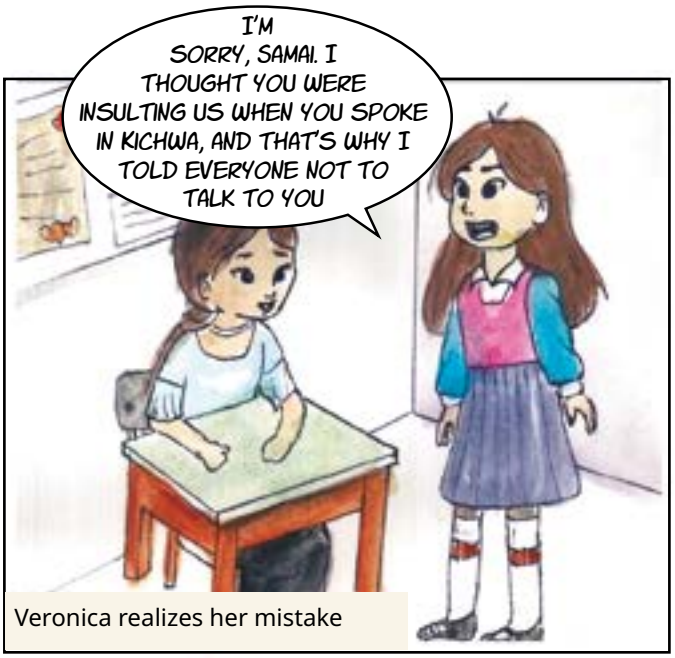

I UNDERS-TAND... I'LL GO TALK TO THEM RIGHT AWAY
EACHER, MY CLASSMATES IGNORE ME AND MAKE FUN OF THE WAY I TALK. IT MAKES ME FEEL REALLY SAD.
Samai, feeling sad, talks to the teacher

KIDS, LISTEN UP. SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN BEHAVING POORLY TOWARD YOUR CLASSMATE, AND YOU DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND HER LANGUAGE. SO, I CAME UP WITH AN IDEA—HOW ABOUT WE LEARN A NEW WORD IN KICHWA EVERY DAY BEFORE CLASS? SOUNDS GOOD?
YES! I'LL TEACH YOU!
GREAT IDEA!
After hearing everything, the teacher decides to talk to the students

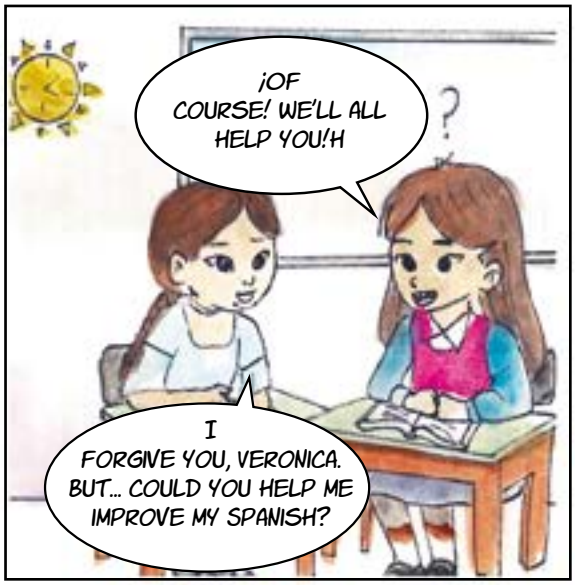
The next day



His classmates learn happily and excitedly.

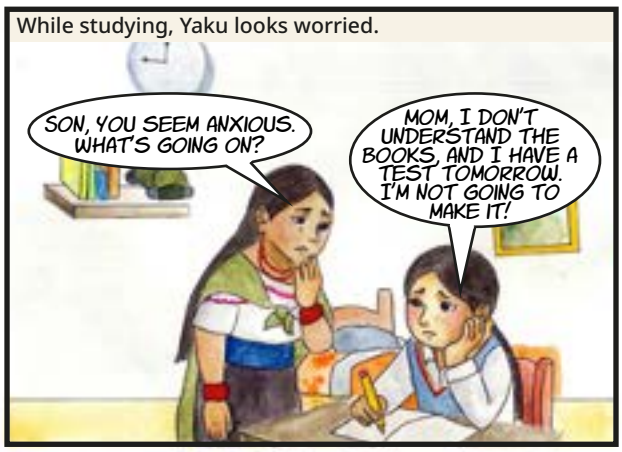


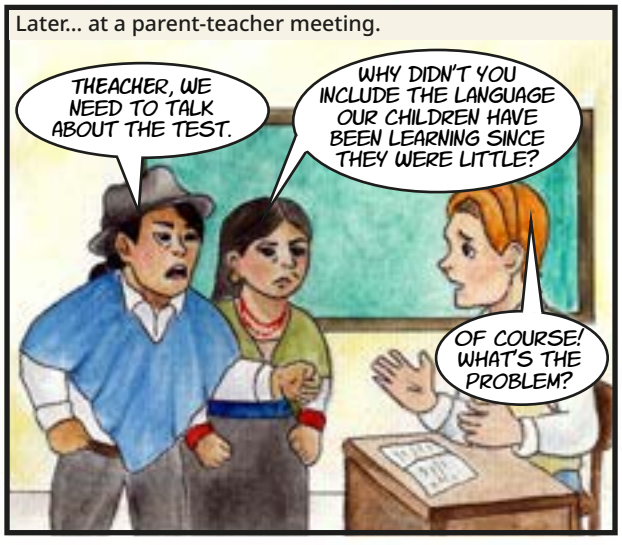
Veronica realizes her mistake

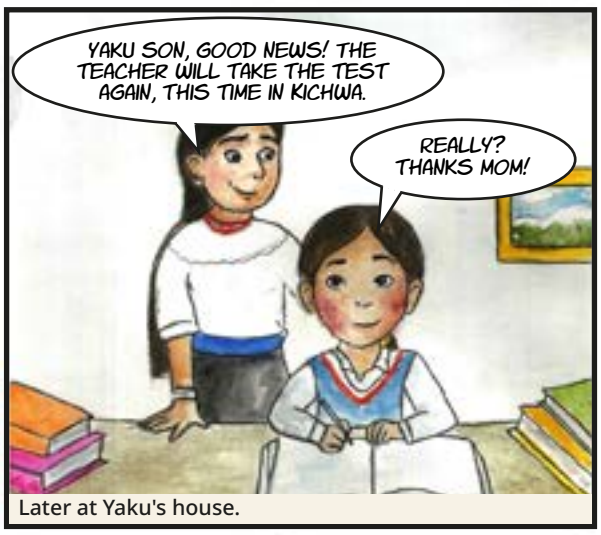


THE END!

THE MISSED TEST





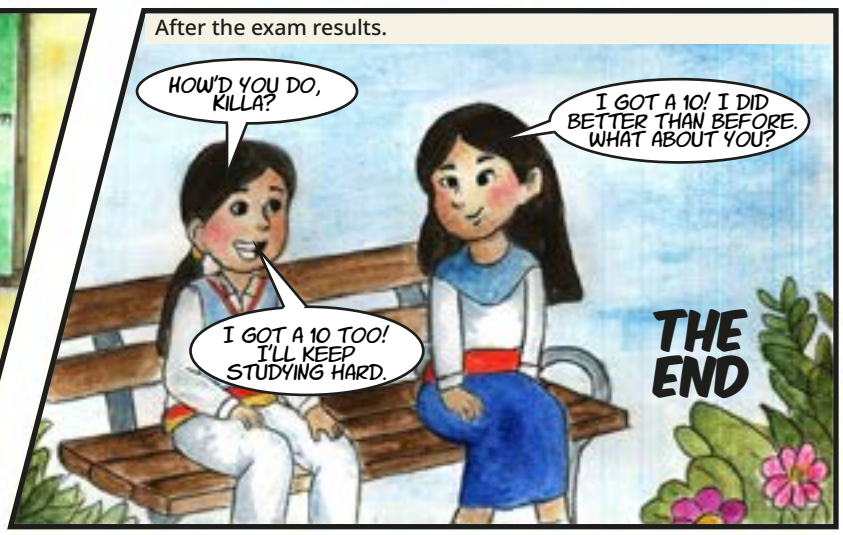


Later at Yaku's house.

The next day at school..

In class.

After the exam results.



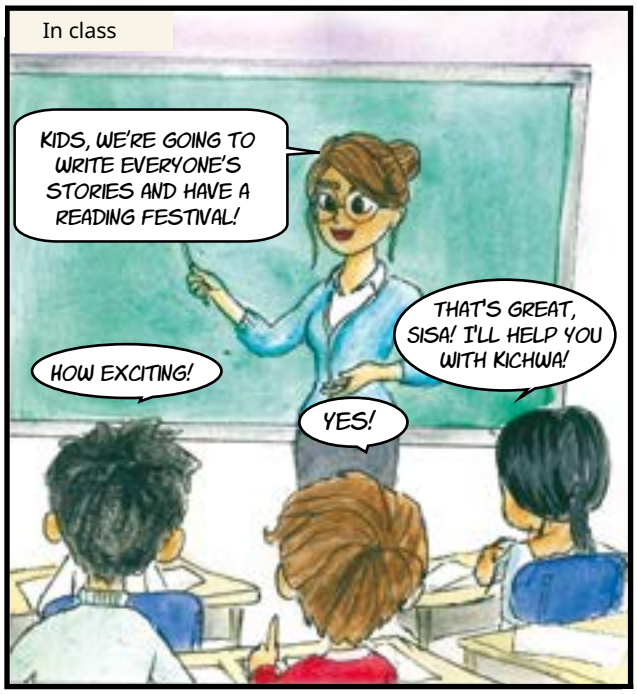
STORIES IN THE WIND

At Sisa's school

Sisa arrives home

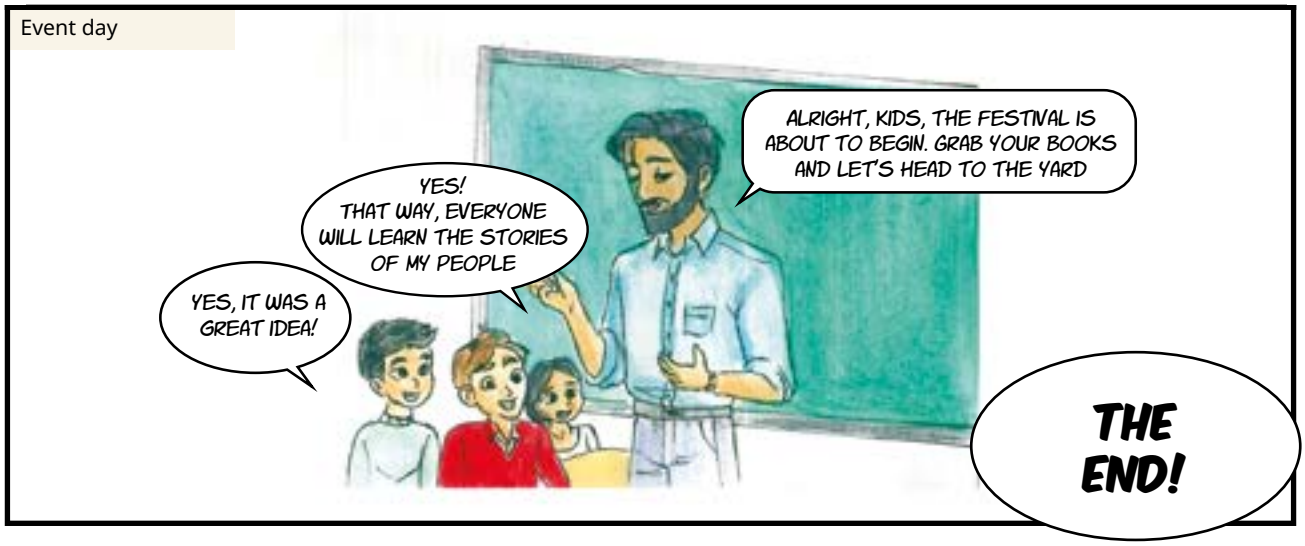
The next day at school

I UNDERSTAND, IN THAT CASE LET'S DO SOMETHING FUN
LET'S GO TO THE CLASS-ROOM!
MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME MANY STORIES, BUT THERE IS NO RECORD OF THEM IN SPANISH AND EVEN LESS IN KICHWA

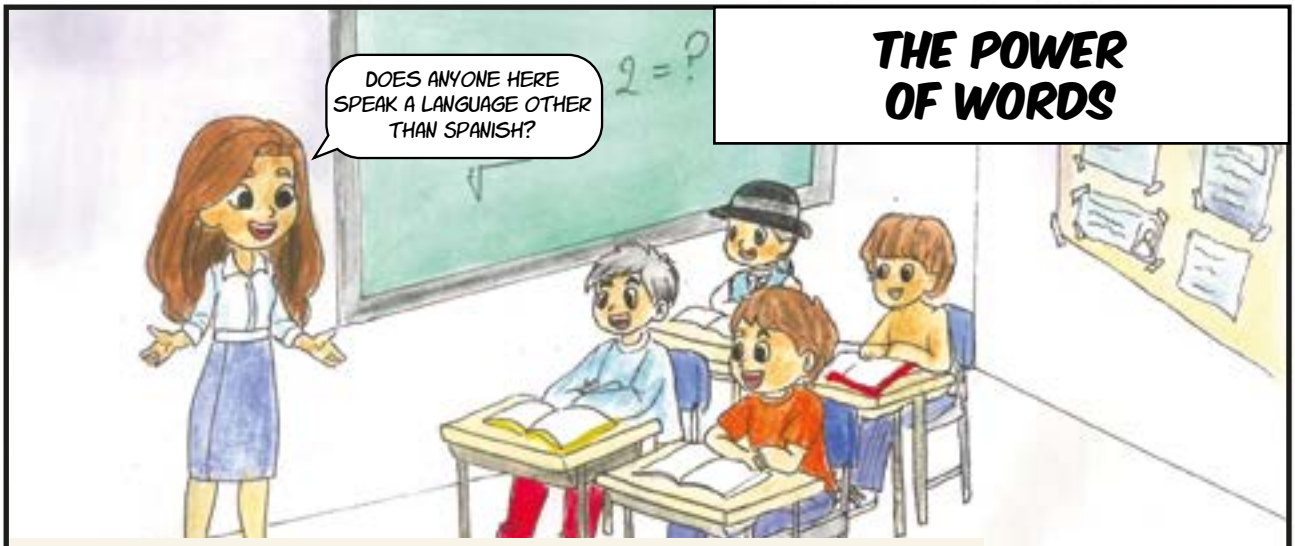

In class
KIDS, WE'RE GOING TO WRITE EVERYONE'S STORIES AND HAVE A READING FESTIVAL!
THAT'S GREAT, SISA! I'LL HELP YOU WITH KICHWA!
HOW EXCITING!
YES!

GRANDPA, I HAVE SOME REALLY GOOD NEWS! WE'RE GOING TO WRITE BOOKS WITH STORIES FROM OUR CULTURE, AND I'LL DO IT IN SPANISH AND KICHWA!
Back at Sisa's house

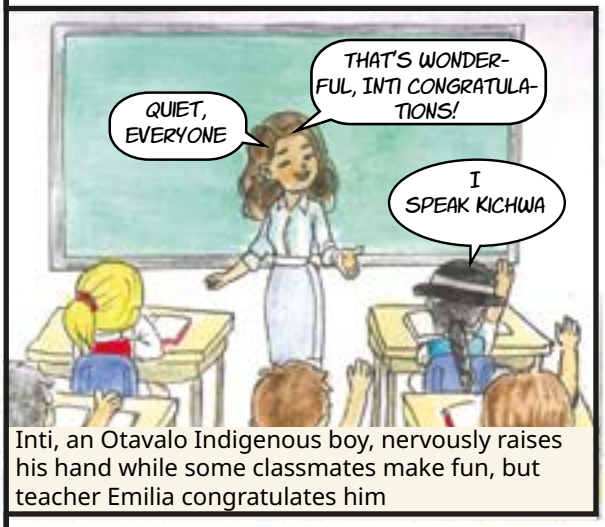
MANY YEARS AGO, THERE WAS...
Sisa, excited, starts writing.


Event day
ALRIGHT, KIDS, THE FESTIVAL IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. GRAB YOUR BOOKS AND LET'S HEAD TO THE YARD
YES! THAT WAY, EVERYONE WILL LEARN THE STORIES OF MY PEOPLE
YES, IT WAS A GREAT IDEA!
THE END!

THE POWER OF WORDS

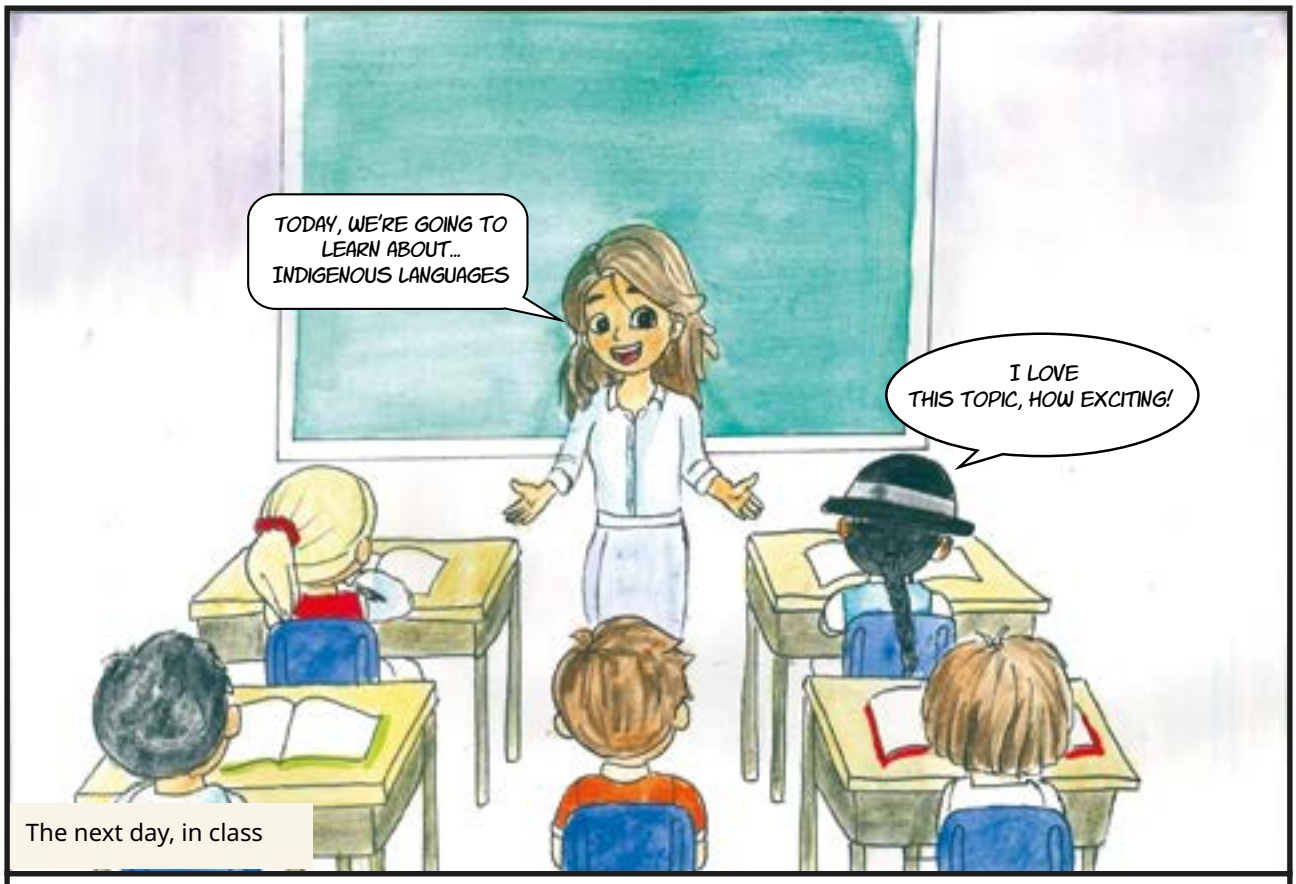


First day of school in a multicultural classroom where we see Indigenous children

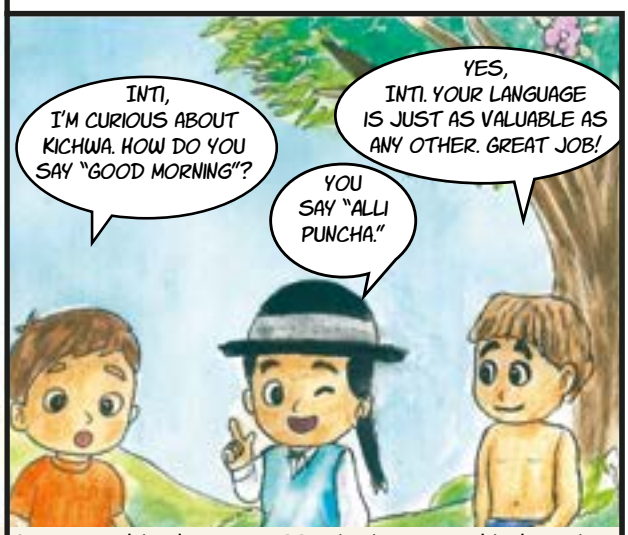


Inti, an Otavalo Indigenous boy, nervously raises his hand while some classmates make fun, but teacher Emilia congratulates him

Later at home



The next day, in class



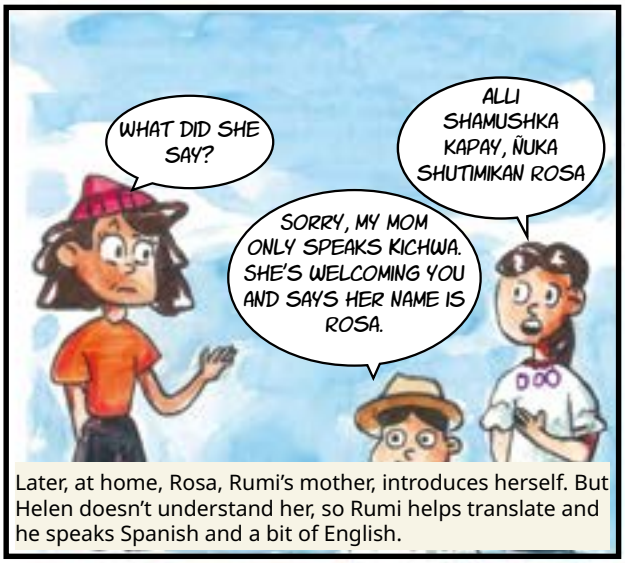
At recess, his classmate Martin, interested in learning his language, approaches Inti and Kunki to learn

A few minutes later, Eduardo who bothered him earlier, is embarrassed and apologizes

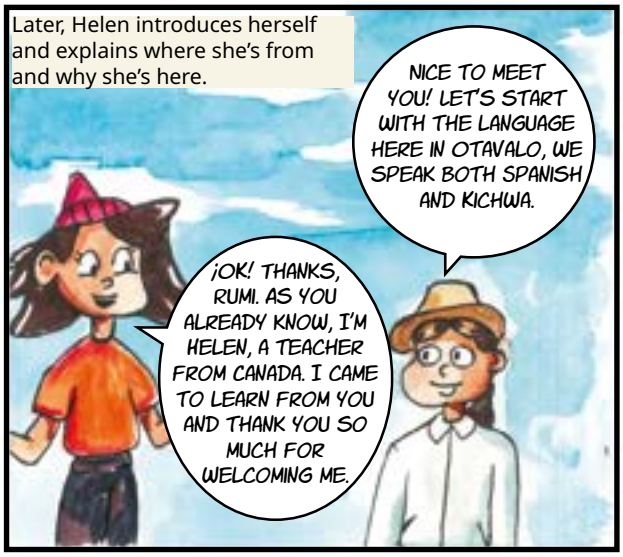
THE END!

TRAVELING WORDS

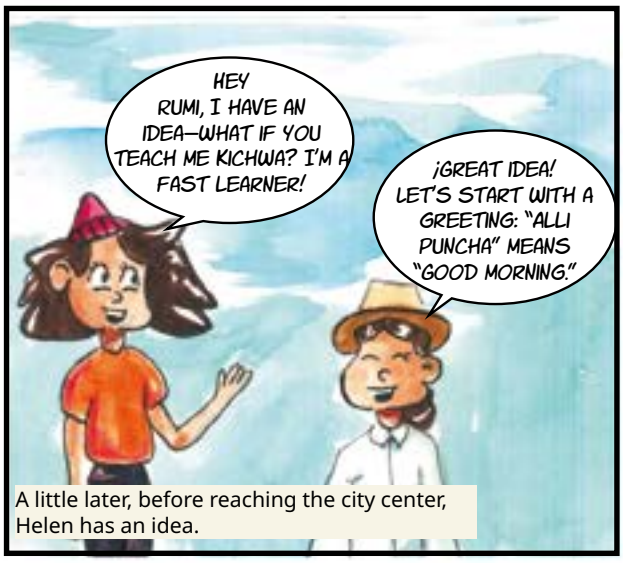
From Canada, a teacher travels on an exchange program to Ecuador, to the city of Otavalo, where she is welcomed by an Indigenous Kichwa family.



Later, at home, Rosa, Rumi's mother, introduces herself. But Helen doesn't understand her, so Rumi helps translate and he speaks Spanish and a bit of English.



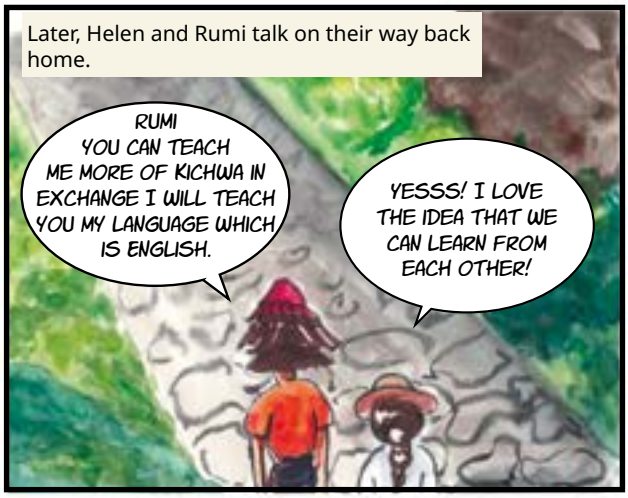
The next day, they decide to walk to the center of Otavalo.



A little later, before reaching the city center, Helen has an idea.

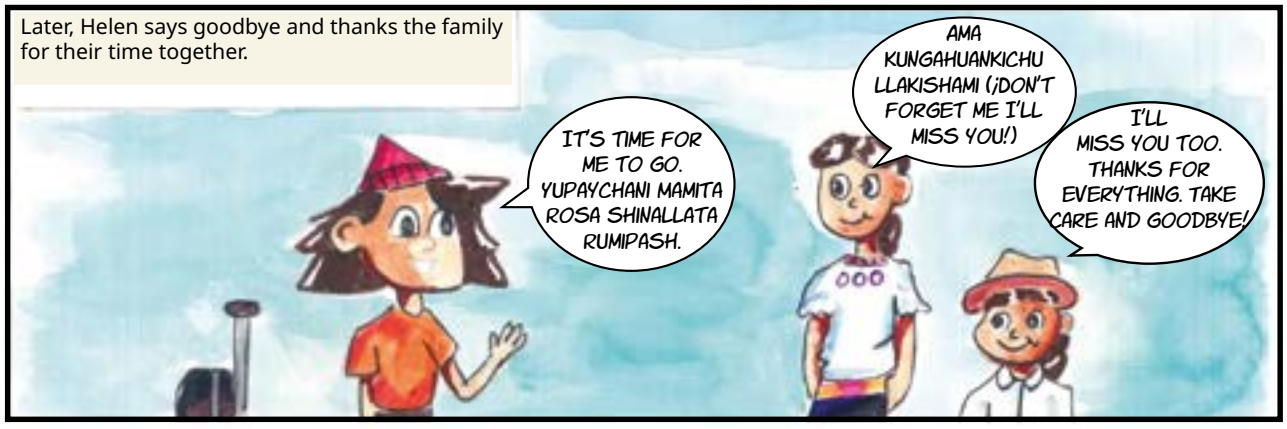
Inside the plaza, Helen, full of excitement, greets everyone in Kichwa with “Alli puncha.” The artisans and vendors are surprised.

Later, Helen and Rumi talk on their way back home.

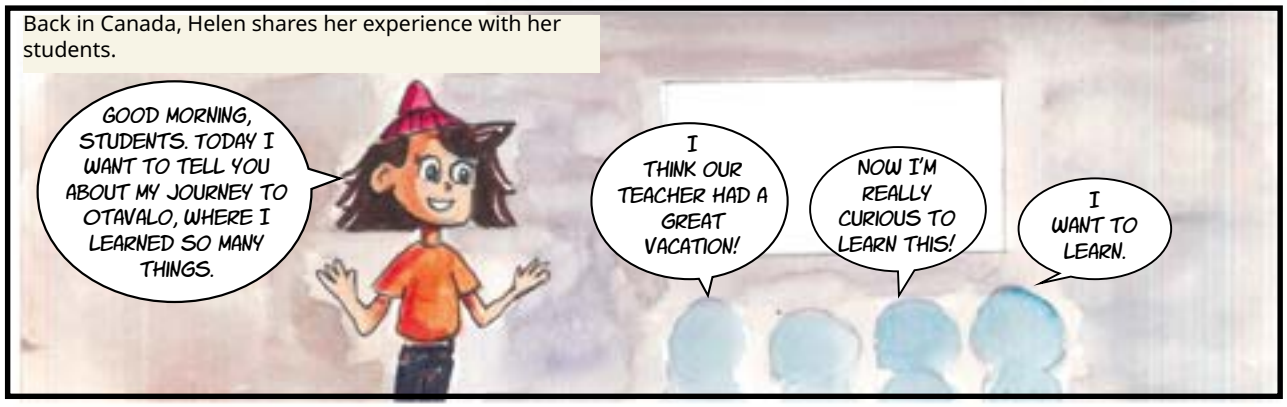


After some time, at Rosa’s house, Helen and Rumi’s family reflect on all they’ve learned.

Later, Helen says goodbye and thanks the family for their time together.



Back in Canada, Helen shares her experience with her students.



THE LAST WORD

It was just an ordinary day for Grandma Isabel and her granddaughter Sara at the Plaza de Ponchos in Otavalo, when Sara discovered something shocking.

A few minutes later, Sarita realized that Kichwa was disappearing. All the salespeople were switching to other languages, leaving their own behind.

Back home, Sara approaches her grandmother, who sells handicrafts, and expresses her doubts.

Grandma shows her an old sign that said "Sisa Shop, " trying to explain how the use of Kichwa faded over time.

The next day, while at the market, Sara realizes that even adults don't speak Kichwa anymore.

Sara decides to take over her grandmother's booth and greet the customers in Kichwa.

After a few minutes, a tourist notices the language the girl is speaking and is impressed.

The following day, Sara and her grandmother placed a sign at their booth. Sara's goal was to reclaim and strengthen the Kichwa language.

Some time later, people began to notice the sign and grew interested in reconnecting with their language. Other salespeople picked up on the enthusiasm and started speaking Kichwa with their customers.

Some time later, a little girl greeted Sara's grandmother in Kichwa. Sarita realized her efforts hadn't been in vain and felt deeply moved that a child was now speaking the language.

THE END

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Chapter 5

Education with sensitivity: Trauma, resilience and emotional support

Education with sensitivity: Trauma, resilience and emotional support

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Ecuador's classrooms are a faithful reflection of the country's cultural, linguistic and social richness, showcasing an important indigenous plurality that demonstrates there is more than one way of learning. To speak of education with sensitivity, today is not a luxury but an urgent necessity. In a context characterized by cultural plurality, it is essential to recognize that diversity is not a problem to be solved but a valuable opportunity to enrich the teaching and learning processes. In this way, it is possible to overcome deeply rooted prejudices and pave the way for a transformative and liberating education that responds with justice and equity to contemporary realities.

One of the persistent challenges in Ecuador is the influence of gender stereotypes that assign roles according to biological sex, perpetuating attitudes such as machismo and homophobia. Although progress has been made towards equity, opportunities for women remain limited, while male presence continues to be legitimized in technical, physical and sporting activities (Ramírez et al., 2019). In this context, education plays a fundamental role as an agent of change. To achieve genuine gender equity, continuous teacher training and teaching based on co-education, respect for diversity, peaceful coexistence and autonomy are essential (Vizuete-Salazar & Lárez-Lárez, 2021).

Valuing the diversity of talents is also one of the major challenges of contemporary education. This requires the implementation of inclusive and personalized pedagogical approaches that are capable of responding to the particularities of each student (Hernández et al.,

2021). In this context, Guzmán (2018) observes that 'the incorporation of adaptive methodologies in the classroom fosters learning diversity and allows students to progress at their own pace, favoring a personalized education that caters to individual needs' (p. 45).

As Hernández-Sánchez and Ainscow (2018) argue, offering exactly the same to everyone does not guarantee educational justice. On the contrary, applying differentiated criteria that favor those who face greater disadvantages, as Bolívar (2012) notes, constitutes a form of equality aimed at achieving effective equity. When all voices are heard, the educational institution becomes a genuine engine of social transformation (Guaillas *et al.*, 2024). In this context, it is also crucial to attend to children and adolescents who have experienced traumas such as abandonment, abuse, or the loss of a loved one, as these experiences affect their emotional and academic development. The educational response must be comprehensive and sensitive to the realities of each student, incorporating psychological support, academic accompaniment, early detection of risk factors, teacher training, and close collaboration with families and social services. In this way, it is possible to foster a safe environment, based on empathy, trust and respect, which strengthens students' resilience and overall well-being (Alduán, 2024).

Emotional Regulation Strategies in the Classroom

Emotional regulation is essential for the holistic development of students within the educational environment. It is important to implement strategies that effectively promote self-regulation and emotional management skills, as these influence both the psychological well-being of students and their academic performance.

Over the last decade, research has shown that well-articulated strategies within the school environment, implemented by teachers, students and institutions, support cognitive, relational and psychological well-being. Appropriate management of emotions in the classroom is a key factor in enhancing learning, fostering healthy interpersonal relationships among students and with teachers, and achieving academic goals.

In the educational context, emotional regulation is a decisive factor for students' academic performance, social adaptation and overall

well-being (Salovey et al., 2022). This process should not be confined to students alone but must extend to teaching staff and the organizational structure of the school. As Garn et al., (2021) highlight, emotional regulation within the educational environment is fundamental for consolidating positive school climates and promoting the well-being of all stakeholders involved.

From this systemic approach, three complementary levels of emotional regulation strategies applicable to the classroom can be identified:

- **Teacher-focused strategies:** encompass both teachers' emotional self-regulation and their ability to co-regulate students' emotions during pedagogical interactions. These strategies include individual practices such as cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness and stress management, as well as institutional programs aimed at teachers' emotional development to strengthen professional well-being and foster positive socio-emotional climates in the classroom.

- **Student-centered strategies**: focus on the systematic teaching of emotional competences to students, emphasizing the recognition, understanding and regulation of their own emotions. These include developing emotional awareness, mindfulness training, employing adaptive cognitive strategies such as reframing, and promoting social-emotional intelligence to support coexistence and co-regulation among peers.

- **Institutional and curricular strategies:** encompass the creation of a safe and supportive school environment. These include designing emotionally safe school spaces, integrating trauma-informed educational practices, and implementing curricular programs that foster resilience and collective social-emotional development within the educational community.

The incorporation of emotional education supports the strengthening of intrapersonal competences, enabling students to identify emotional experiences in ways congruent with their individual personality styles

(Ruales et al., 2022; Villegas, 2023). The implementation of relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and physical activity, has proven effective in preventing anxiety and managing stress associated with the school environment, while also improving students' mood (Balón et al., 2024; Bravo, 2017).

Integrating emotional education within the school environment plays a crucial role in fostering intrapersonal competences, enabling students to recognize, comprehend, and regulate their emotions in a manner aligned with their individual personality traits. Bentley et al. (2022) note that the consistent application of emotional self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and mindful physical activity has yielded positive outcomes in preventing anxiety, alleviating stress linked to the school setting and enhancing students' overall mood.

The Role of Families in Emotional Accompaniment

The family, as the primary environment where students first learn to regulate their emotions, plays a crucial role in developing socio-emotional skills that students apply in the classroom whether these skills are positive or otherwise. Therefore, it is essential for families to be actively involved in their child's emotional development. Emotional support from parents or significant adults who have a positive connection with the student is a key factor in fostering motivation and self-esteem, thereby helping to prevent difficulties in areas such as reading, writing and other academic skills (Mejía et al., 2023).

Effective communication is fundamental to providing emotional support, which is crucial for the holistic development of learners. Parents should create a safe and nurturing environment that encourages their children to express their emotions freely. Additionally, family members who maintain regular contact with learners ought to model healthy behaviors and demonstrate social-emotional skills, enabling students to learn through observation (González et al., 2025). Table 6 outlines family intervention strategies and their outcomes in supporting students' emotional well-being.

Table 6
Family Intervention Strategies and Outcomes of Emotional Support

Intervention Strategies	Documented Outcomes
Parental training in emotional regulation through workshops and digital programmers.	Emotional well -being: better perceived support reduces stress and anxiety and increases self -esteem...
Encouraging empathy and communication during homework.	Academic performance: when parents provide both emotional and instrumental support, motivation and academic focus improve.
Creating immediate family spaces for emotional listening.	Emotional regulation: development of adaptive strategies is fostered under family guidance.
Promoting school –family partnerships with an emotional focus	Resilience: emotionally present families strengthen the ability to cope with crises.
Parental stress relief mea sures: community services, psychological support and networks	Time and quality of interaction: meaningful time with the family unit strengthens bonds and trust

Source: González et al. (2025)

Restorative Pedagogical Approaches and Responsive Education

In recent years, education has evolved to recognize the impact of trauma on learning, promoting restorative pedagogical approaches that transform the school into a safe and welcoming space for students. According to Universidad Pablo de Olavide (2024), it is vital that the entire educational community is aware of the effects of trauma and works collaboratively to create a safe, empathetic and emotionally supportive school environment.

Restorative approaches in education focus on strengthening the community through values such as respect, empathy and dialogue. The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2020) states that 'conflict management based on the restorative approach curbs negative student behavior much more effectively than models based solely on sanctions and punishments. Similarly, Schmitz (2020) observes that 'Instead of "blaming to punish", it seeks "accountability to repair harm and restore relationships"' (p. 22). Ultimately, restorative approaches strengthen the bonds between teachers and students through mutual respect and support.

At the same time, sensitive education fosters emotional support and spaces of understanding, where the entire educational community is prepared to respond empathetically and collaboratively to the consequences of trauma. As Moreno (2024) aptly observes, empathy and a safe school environment can help to mitigate the effects of trauma and stress in students' lives.

Emotional Education: Domestic Violence in Rural Ecuador

In rural areas of Ecuador, many students enter the classroom carrying the emotional burdens of violence experienced in their homes. This reality profoundly affects how they learn and interact with others in the classroom. As Pinargote Pincay et al. (2022) observe: When a child grows up in a violent environment, their emotional, physical and mental well-being will be profoundly affected. This is reflected in their academic performance, hindering their ability to learn and develop fully. These words constitute a clear call to action: it is not enough to teach content if we do not also care for the hearts of those who learn.

A study conducted in an educational unit in the province of Esmeraldas concludes that the impact of domestic violence on students extends beyond the home and is evident in their academic performance. Low self-esteem, a tendency to withdraw, and constant exposure to conflict make it difficult for them to concentrate, diminish their motivation and limit their participation in learning (Cueva et al. 2025).

In this context, research shows that the school is not only a place of learning, but also a potential refuge for emotional education. According to Chávez-Martínez and Salazar-Jiménez (2024), integrating emotional competencies in schools improves the school climate and reduces behavioral problems by fostering skills such as self-regulation, empathy and emotional management.

In rural contexts, however, the challenge is even greater, as support services are scarce and physical distances make access to specialized care difficult. It is therefore essential to train teachers themselves in emotional intelligence and resilience strategies. The OECD (2023) has highlighted that socio-emotional development programs, particularly

in rural and vulnerable communities, "raise cognitive performance, strengthen social cohesion and reduce anxiety" (p. 12).

Spaces for Intercultural Dialogue: Emotional Healing in Pluricultural Contexts

According to Decolonised Minds (2022),

> Spaces for intercultural dialogue play an essential role in emotional restoration within diverse communities. Firstly, they provide a safe and respectful environment for expressing emotional experiences linked to discrimination, trauma, or cultural loss. Such social recognition is crucial for validating emotions and preventing their denial or invisibility. (p. 15).

In contemporary societies marked by cultural diversity, the creation of spaces for intercultural dialogue has become a necessity to foster peaceful coexistence, mutual recognition, and emotional healing in multicultural communities. Pluricultural contexts bring together multiple identities, traditions, and worldviews which, when interacting, can give rise to conflicts and emotional tensions rooted in discrimination, exclusion or traumatic historical processes. In this context, spaces for intercultural dialogue are not only places of encounter and learning, but also vital settings for emotional reparation and collective well-being. Latin America benefits from the presence of interculturality in every country; the creation of spaces for intercultural dialogue is essential for emotional healing in multicultural contexts, as well as fostering emotional well-being.

Interculturality entails coexistence and active interaction between different cultures, grounded in mutual respect and the construction of shared cultural expressions, communicated through accessible language that acknowledges the various dialects present in the environment (Le Mur, 2020). The implementation of intercultural dialogue practices significantly contributes to reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress among members of different cultural groups such as the Kichwa and Shuar peoples, among others, in Ecuador and promotes the strengthening of self-esteem and self-confidence (Comboni et al., 2020).

The provision of safe and receptive environments that enable individuals from diverse cultures to share their experiences and emotions through effective communication aimed at fostering intercultural understanding is essential, particularly within academic settings. Active listening and constructive feedback are fundamental practices in this process. Likewise, recognizing and respecting cultural diversity while avoiding assumptions about other cultures promotes equitable relations among peoples a crucial consideration given the cultural heterogeneity present in Ecuador and across Latin America (García, 2014).

The stories, examples and reflections presented here aim to inspire teachers, families and communities to unite in ensuring that every child, without exception, can learn with both their minds and the protective heart of an empathetic school.

Conclusions

Trauma-sensitive education represents a necessary response to the emotional and social realities affecting students, particularly in contexts marked by violence, neglect, discrimination and displacement. Recognizing the impact of trauma on the development of children and adolescents enables us to reconceptualize the role of the school as a space for knowledge transmission, as well as a protective environment that fosters emotional stability, affective support and the strengthening of resilience.

The family plays a vital role in the emotional support of the educational process. Research indicates that when primary emotional bonds are strong and communication is respectful, students develop higher levels of security and self-confidence. Accordingly, it is essential to promote institutional actions that enhance parental capacities in addressing trauma, such as training workshops, psychological counselling, and school-family mediation initiatives. Emotional co-responsibility between home and school reinforces the positive impact of pedagogical interventions.

The development of social-emotional competencies in the classroom fosters self-regulation, empathy, and resilience. Strategies such as

conscious breath management, active listening, strengthening the sense of community and emotional validation contribute to creating safe learning environments. These practices should not be regarded as peripheral activities but as fundamental components of the curriculum that enhance the holistic development of the student.

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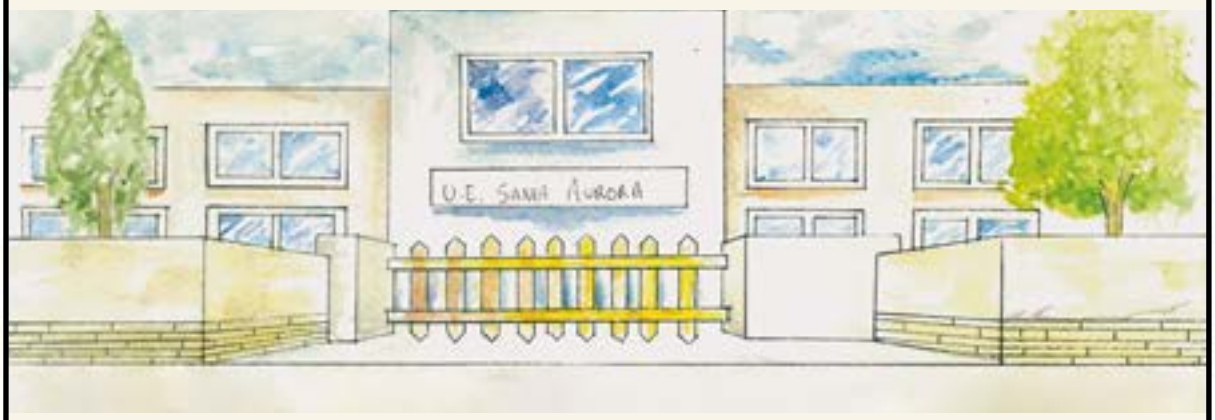
NOTES OF HOPE

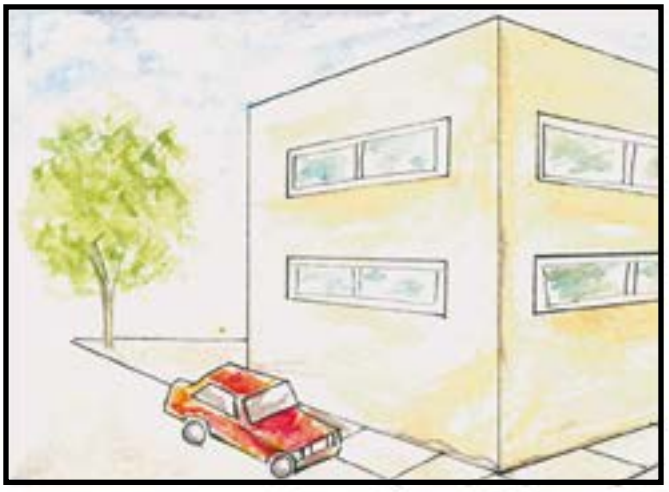
Santa Aurora High School faces high dropout rates and disciplinary issues.



School entrance

Today, a new music teacher arrives: Gabriel Rivas.

Entrance to the music room



Gabriel Rivas introduces himself to a group of scattered, distracted, indifferent students—undeniably... a profound disconnect.

Camila... hesitantly clutches her notebook in her hand.

Manuel as tired as usual.

Damián, always so relaxed, each one lost in his own world, where music had no place.

Gabriel didn't want good grades He wanted to leave a mark on their lives!

Enrique, on the drums—it's not just rhythm, it's everything he couldn't say at home.

Camila didn't talk much. But when she sang, the room heard her soul.

Manuel discovered a language he had never known... yet it had always been inside him."

Damián wrote so he wouldn't forget who he wanted to become.

With each class, music seeped into Enrique's heart.

Gabriel wanted more for his students: counseling, scholarships, a real future.

The next day in music class...

That afternoon... After arguing with his dad, Enrique takes refuge in the park.

Enrique felt he didn't belong anywhere...

Enrique never expected this moment. His heart trembled. Comfort? Maybe. But for the first time in a long time... he didn't feel alone

He didn't know what he was searching for... until he felt it: a home, a family. And something inside him softly broke.

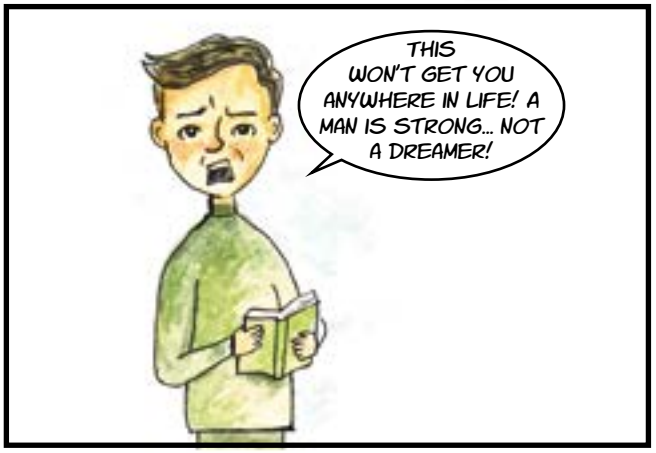
Gabriel watched them proudly, like seeing a seed bloom... one planted with heart.

Enrique had found his passion in music... and his strength in friendship.

THE END

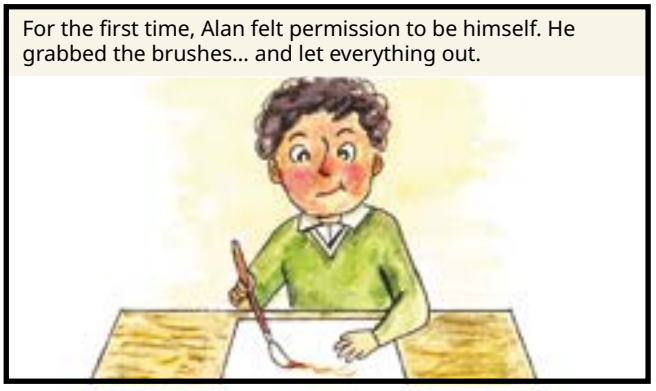
THE COLOR OF FEAR

When Alan opened his sketchbook, the world faded away. Only he and his drawings remained... his safe place.

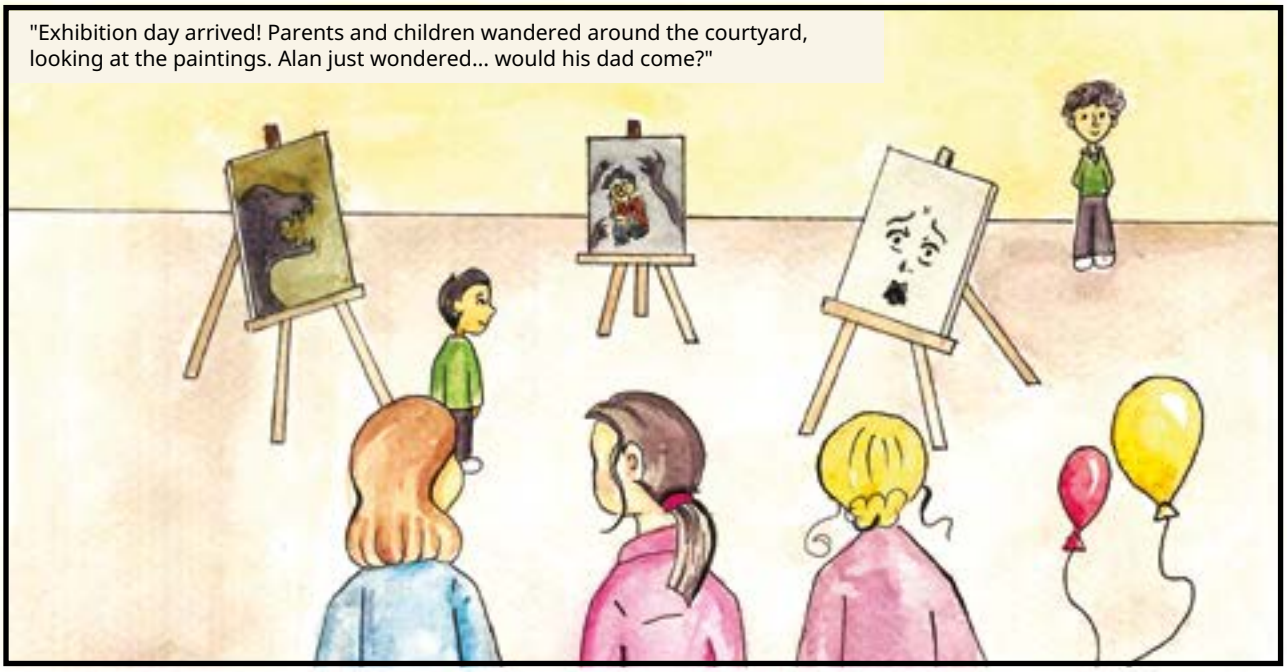


The next day, Alan felt a strange calm. In Ms. Claudia's class, everything seemed easier...

For the first time, Alan felt permission to be himself. He grabbed the brushes... and let everything out.

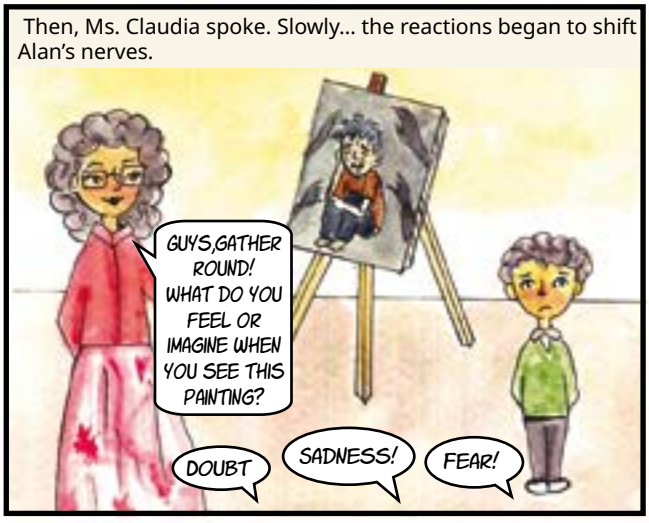


"Exhibition day arrived! Parents and children wandered around the courtyard, looking at the paintings. Alan just wondered... would his dad come?"

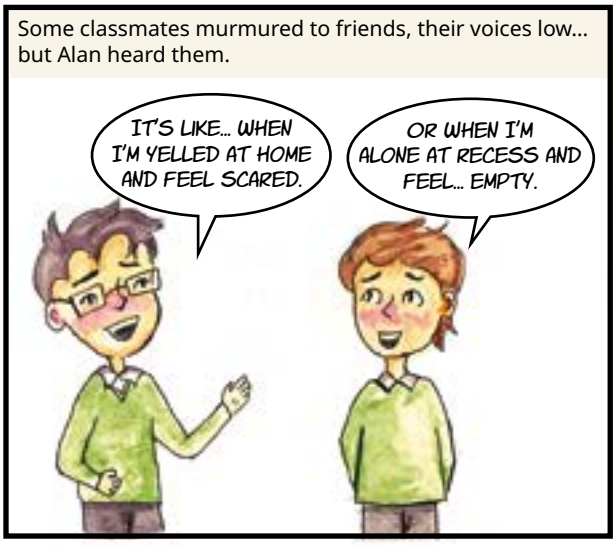


In front of his painting, he overheard comments... and every word tightened his chest.

Then, Ms. Claudia spoke. Slowly... the reactions began to shift Alan's nerves.



Some classmates murmured to friends, their voices low... but Alan heard them.



Alan never thought others could feel... the same way he did.

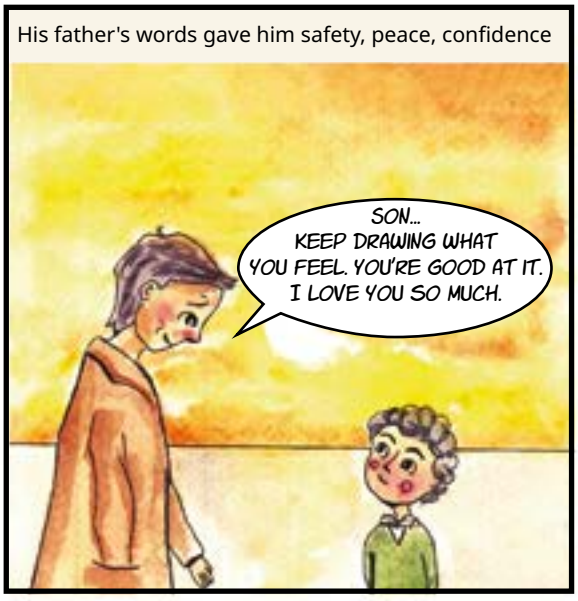
And then, through the crowd... his father appeared. Silent. Watching Alan's painting from afar

The painting stirred old fears... and buried memories.

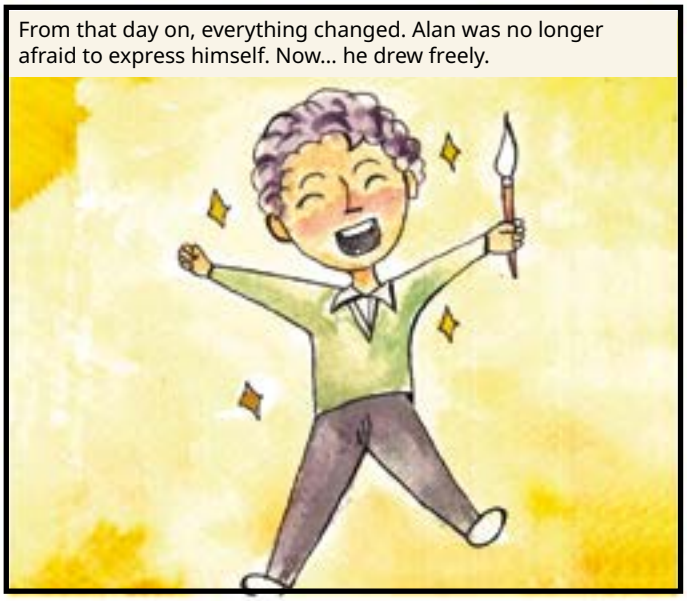
Alan said nothing... but in his eyes, he understood.

His father walked past the paintings, silent. Something inside him... had begun to crack open.

His father's words gave him safety, peace, confidence



From that day on, everything changed. Alan was no longer afraid to express himself. Now... he drew freely.

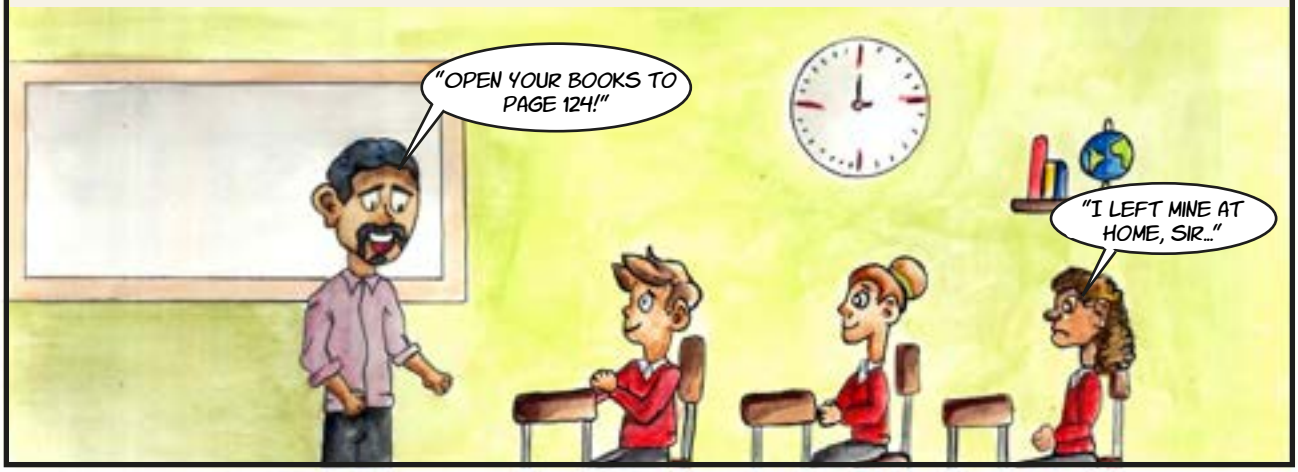


"SOMETIMES, COLORS SAY WHAT WORDS CANNOT."

THE END

THE PAPER TREE

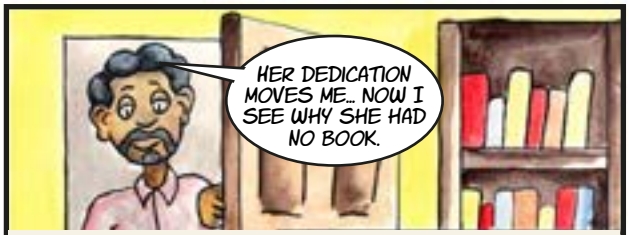
Amid the morning chatter, Professor Andrés begins math class



Eva felt embarrassed. She loved math, but that day... the embarrassment weighed heavier.

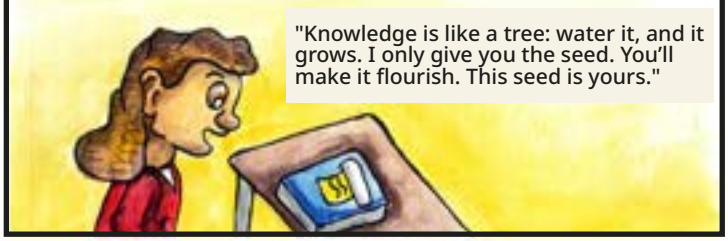
Silently, Eva scribbled cramped notes in her notebook. Every inch mattered. Each sheet was precious... like gold.

Later, in the library, Eva raced through math problems. Every stroke of her pencil spoke of effor

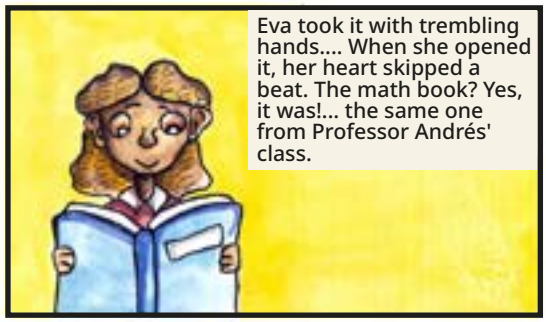


Andrés happened to pass by and spotted Eva from afar. He said nothing. But something stirred inside him—a push to act.

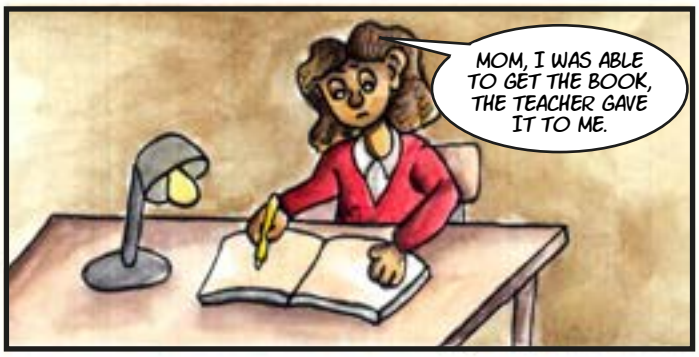
The next morning. Eva arrived early. On her desk sat the unexpected: a new book... and a note.

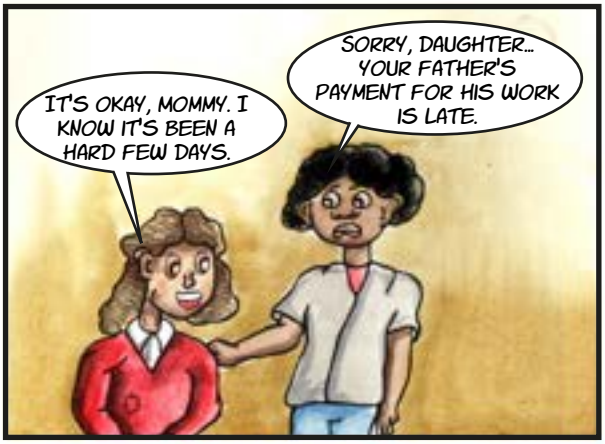


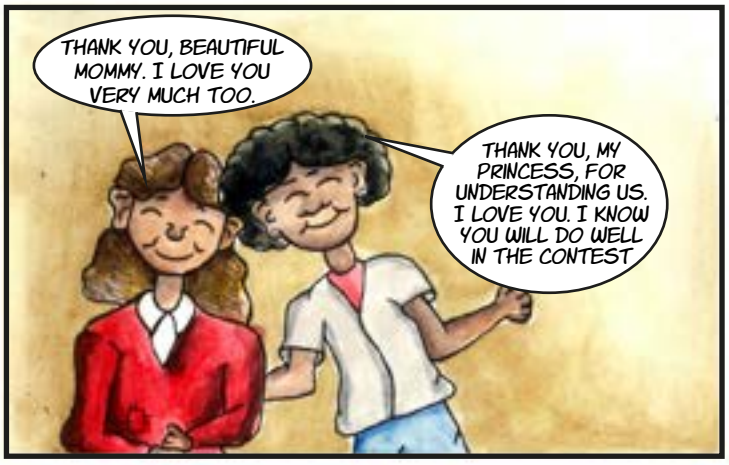
"Knowledge is like a tree: water it, and it grows. I only give you the seed. You'll make it flourish. This seed is yours."

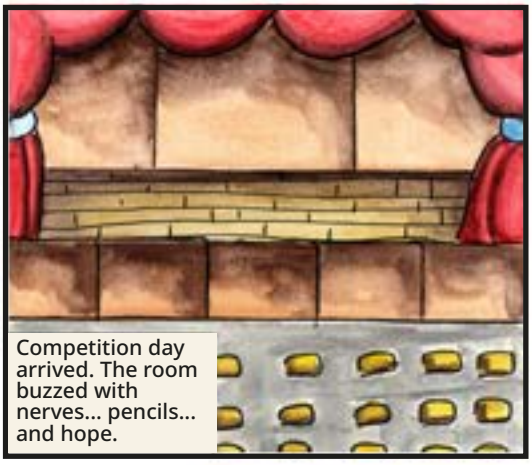


Eva took it with trembling hands.... When she opened it, her heart skipped a beat. The math book? Yes, it was!... the same one from Professor Andrés' class.








Competition day arrived. The room buzzed with nerves... pencils... and hope.

Despite her nerves, Eva had confidence in herself. Among so many looks, two filled her with faith: her mother... and the teacher who believed in her.

"Shared knowledge can change lives. And perhaps, much more."

ISABEL'S CHALLENGE

During P.E. class at Florida Uno School, Isabel felt overwhelmed and frustrated. Gymnastics didn't come as easily to her as it did to the others.

Isabel watched her classmates. The knot in her chest tightened with every attempt she saw.

Isabel tried a handstand... but fell sideways again. The fall didn't hurt as much as failing once more.

¡Isabel felt demotivated... She saw her classmates performing the exercises with such ease, while everything felt twice as hard for her!

Margarita's words ignited a spark in Isabel! Still sad, she decided... not to give up.

After class, Isabel trained with determination, without comparing herself to anyone. Her teacher watched from afar, proud of her effort.

That once-insecure girl... now managed to hold a handstand, even if only for a few seconds!

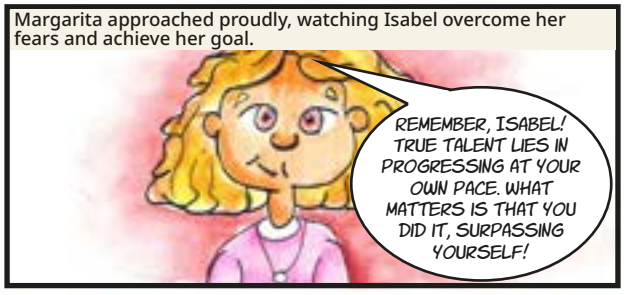
The final class had arrived... Isabel felt her heart pounding; she wasn't the same anymore... this time, she was ready.

Determined... she took a deep breath and raised her arms.

With all her strength and courage, she launched herself onto the mat. without fear.

She had done it! The handstand was hers! Surprised, happy... unstoppable!

Margarita approached proudly, watching Isabel overcome her fears and achieve her goal.



¡Isabel not only conquered her fear of gymnastics... she also stopped comparing herself to others!

"Every talent is unique and valuable. We all deserve a safe space to learn and grow, just like Isabel did."

CODE OF CHANGE

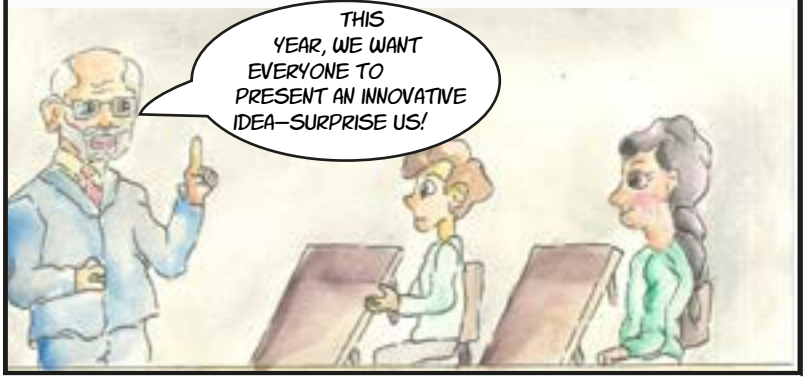
In a small town in Cañar, Ana attended a public school and excelled in science and math.

): Her passion for technology grew every day... and her mother stood by her, giving her the strength to chase her dreams.

In class, not everyone understood her passion, and reading about programming made her a target for mockery.

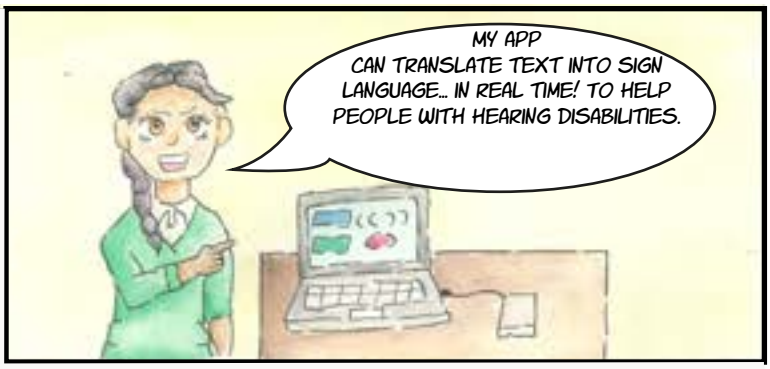
Sometimes, just one encouraging voice is enough to reignite confidence...

Ana hesitated to participate... until her teacher's gaze restored her confidence.



: At home... under the dim glow of a bulb, Ana scribbled ideas in her notebook. This was her chance to prove what she could do!

Ana prepared to present...



Ana receives an unexpected apology

Now, her gays couldn't believe what they saw in Ana's presentation!

Ana earned applause from her guys, who now looked at her with pride... even Teacher Lucía beamed with joy!

With courage... Ana didn't just prove her talent—she broke barriers and lit the way for many more!

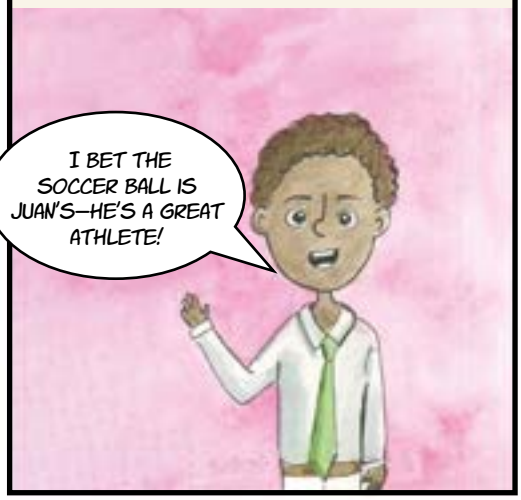
Talent has no gender and does not depend on resources; it just needs opportunities.

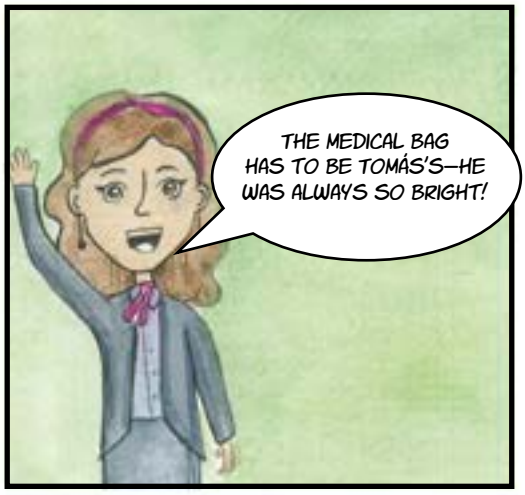
THE END

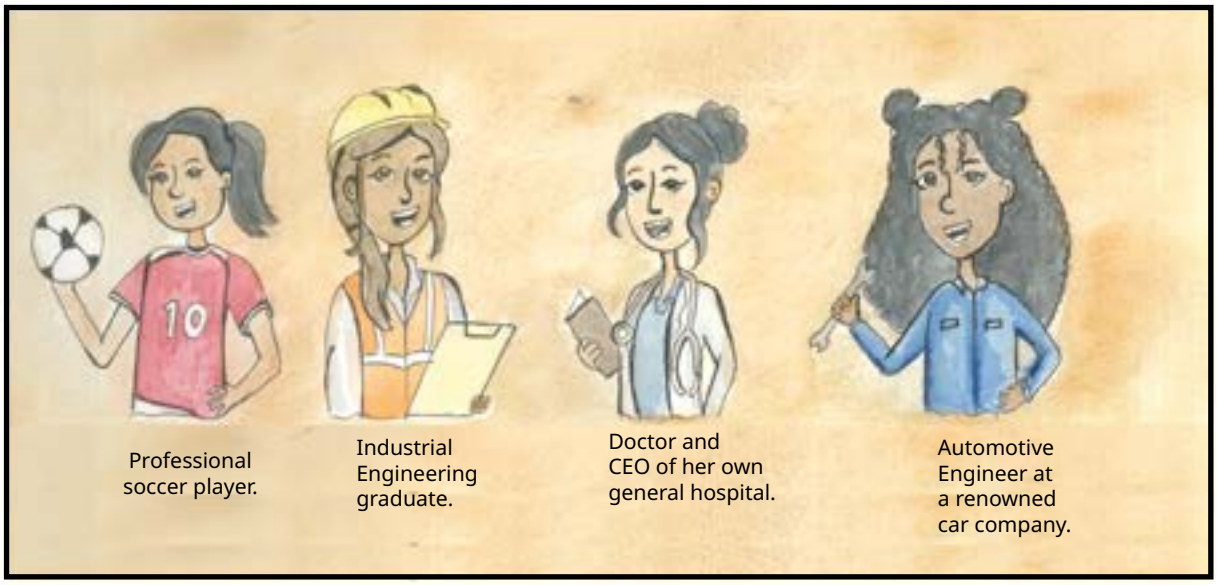
WHOSE IS THIS?

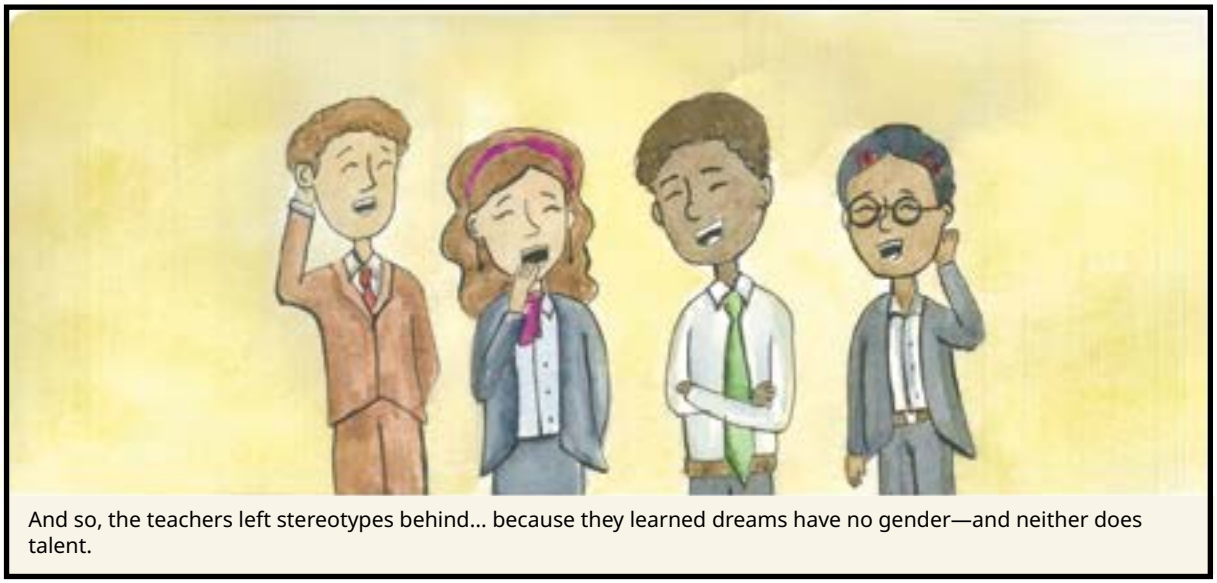
Once, at a school... teachers attended a thought-provoking workshop that began with a question...

All the objects belonged to the teachers' former students... but whose exactly?









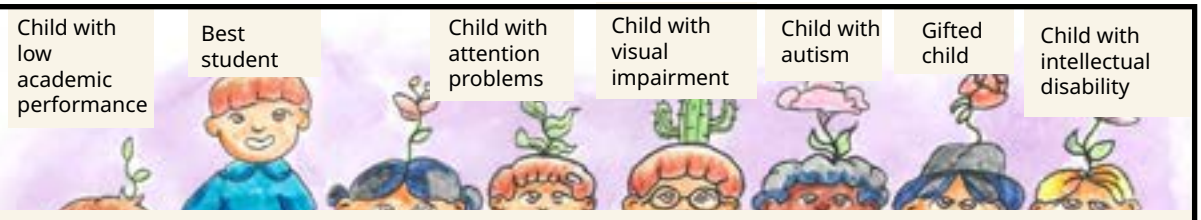
And so, the teachers left stereotypes behind... because they learned dreams have no gender—and neither does talent.

THE END

THE GARDEN OF EQUALITY

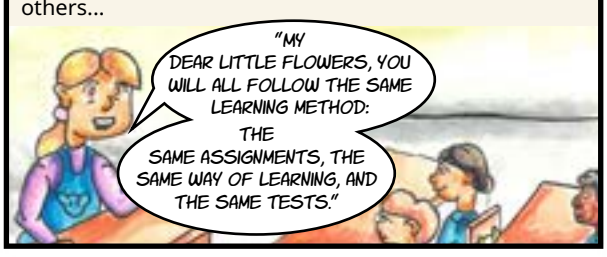
Teacher Luz has a lovely garden. She tends to it every day, Monday through Friday.

Every morning, the teacher greets each plant in the garden (the children)... She carries her watering can and begins teaching them all equally.



From the smallest to the tallest; from the reddest to the greenest; whether roses, carnations, cacti, or lilies... every plant had to learn to grow the same way, without adaptations.

Each plant is nurtured and made to grow just like the others...



Even as some flowers wilt, stall, or stop blooming...

The teacher doesn't see the consequences. Soon, there's no longer equal opportunity to grow, because each child's specific needs go unmet.

In the end, Teacher Luz's beautiful garden slowly withered away—only a few lonely flowers survived.

Perhaps if every flower in the garden had grown with equal care and equity—each receiving the specific support they needed—the teacher could have created a vibrant garden full of different, yet equally valuable, flowers.

THE END

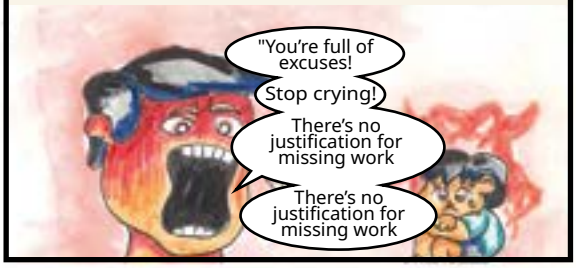
THE INSTRUCTOR OF FEAR

Hi, my name is Omar. I just lost my grandmother. Since then, deep sadness and anxiety have robbed me of peace.

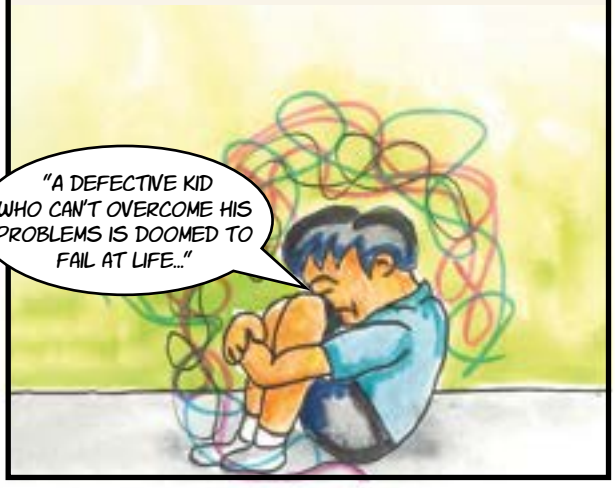
In an institute

My greatest fear is Professor Pérez. Just seeing him makes me tremble. He's a "strict disciplinarian."

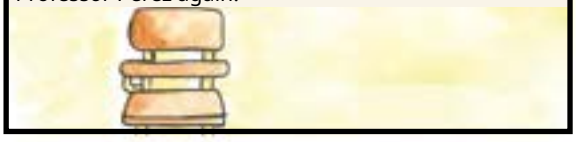
Lately, my grades dropped because I couldn't focus... and the professor hasn't stopped scolding me.



He constantly rages at me for not participating. His judgment is unfair...



In the end, I left the institute, and never saw Professor Pérez again.

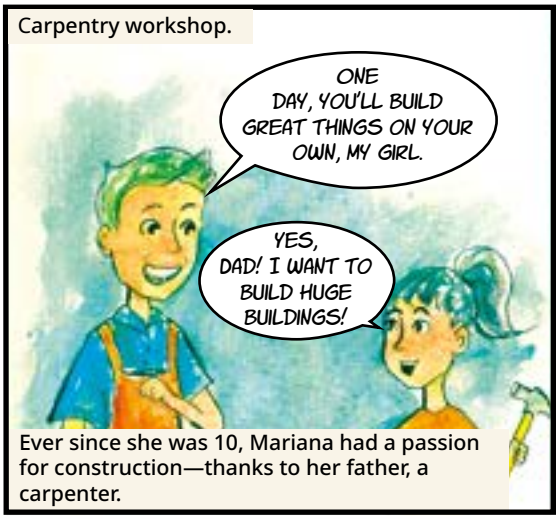


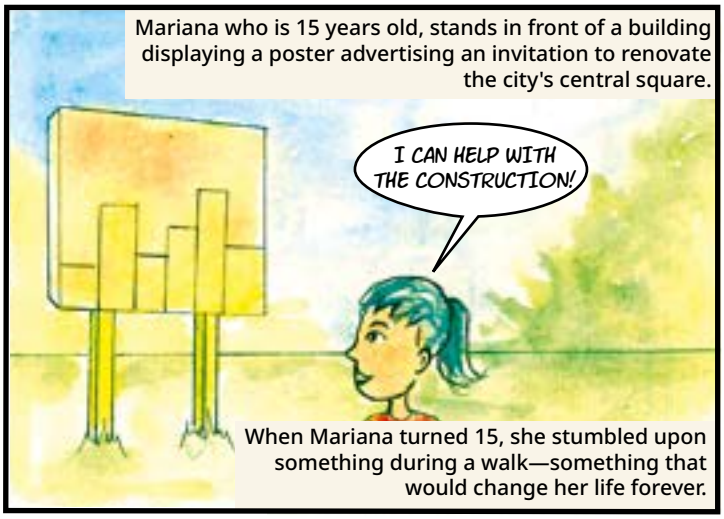
Maybe with a little support, I could've been the top student even with Professor Pérez. My dream was always to be an astronaut... and I will make it someday.

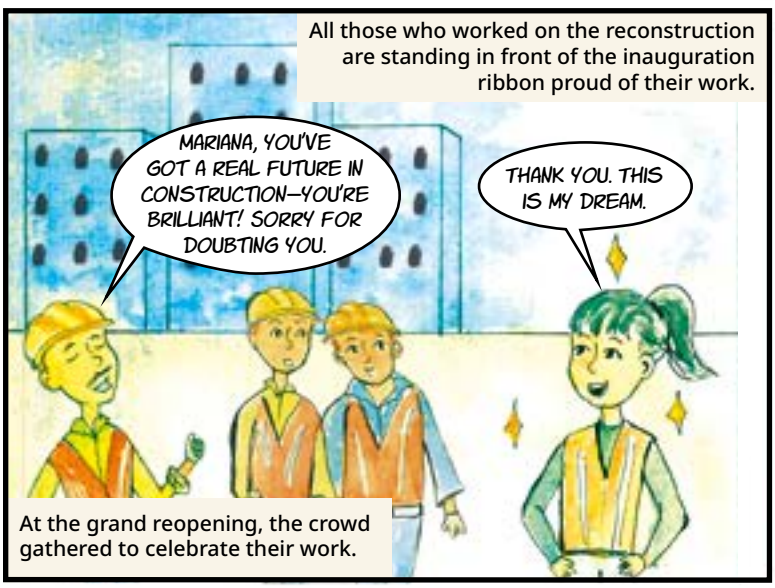
If only Professor Pérez had shown empathy and flexibility, and had given me the trust and support I needed, I would have been trained as a professional in a healthy and resilient environment.

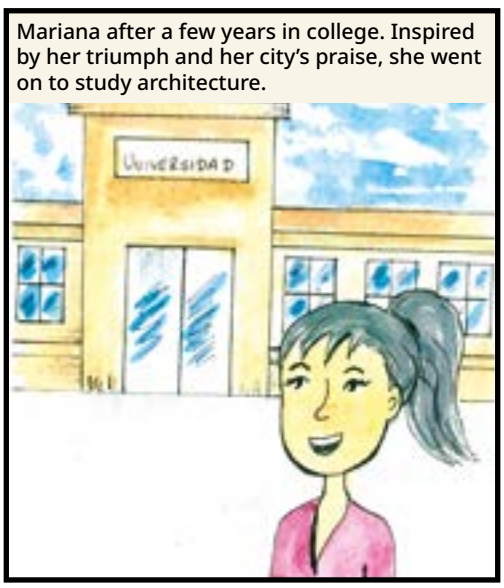
THE END

BUILDING THE PATH









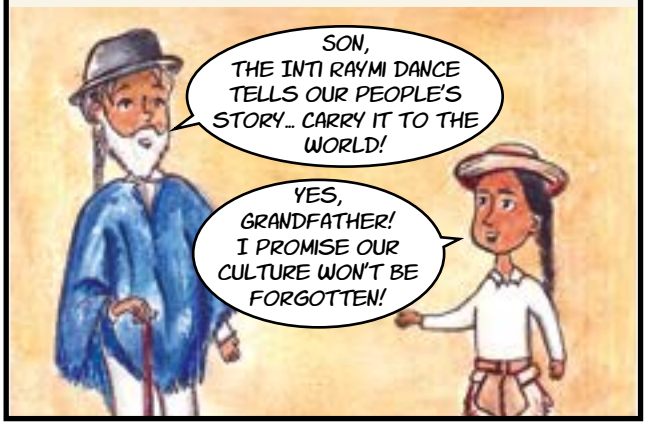
THE END

CULTURE WITHOUT LIMITS

From childhood, Yuri was fascinated by construction. She dreamed of connecting communities like the engineers before her.

But in her community, engineering was still seen as men's work.

Meanwhile, in Imantag, Kunaq grew up immersed in ancestral music and dance.



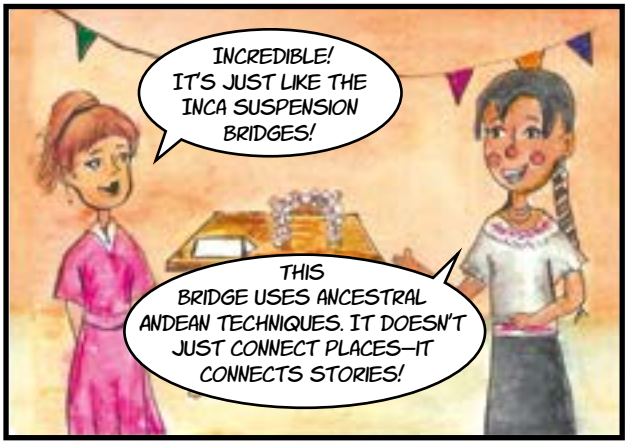
In the only school for miles, where first-graders shared slates with teenagers, Yuri and Kunaq's paths finally crossed

The years turned like pages in their shared notebook.

Later that afternoon at Yuri's home...

Meanwhile, Kunaq was practicing his dance with great dedication.

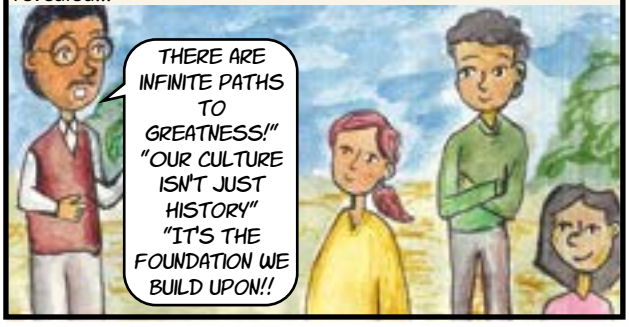
The big day arrived at last...The courtyard hums with anticipation as students and families crowd together, eager faces turned toward the demonstration area.



Kunaq's Inti Raymi performance began. Every movement told a story.

The mesmerized audience saw more than just a performance - they witnessed their living history.

As the event closed, something greater than talent had been revealed...



THE END

BREAKING ALGORITHMS

In Pimampiro, Ñusta found happiness in numbers... though some said they weren't for her.

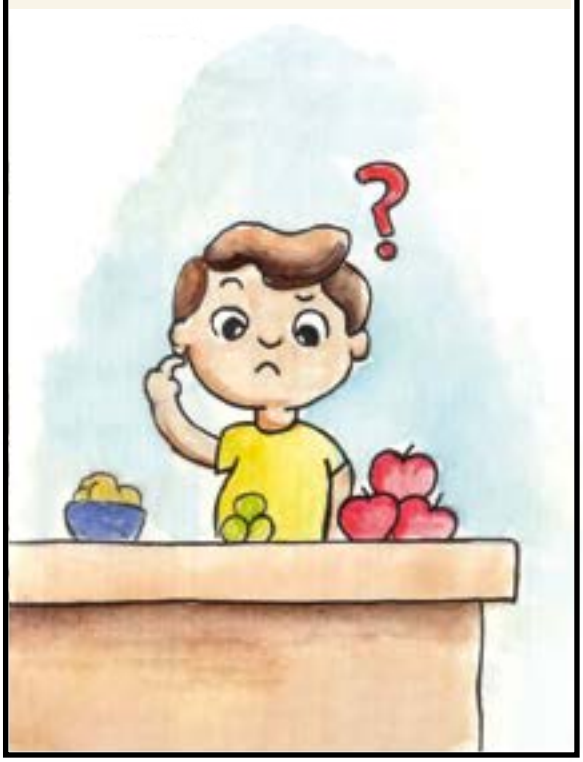
At only 15 years old, the words of others were shaking his confidence.

During the barter market, the alcalde surprised everyone with an announcement.

Ñusta was excited... but her look also showed fear.

Seeing her hesitate, her mother decided to remind her of her strength.

The contest began. One by one, participants took the stage.



Some people got confused... until it was Ñusta's turn.

Sumak Warmi (Kichwa): "noble/wise woman"; a respectful term recognizing intelligence and virtue

Ñusta won! She proved knowledge has no gender. From that day on, her community believed in her and knew her talent could uplift them all.

GROWING IN LOVE

This story begins on a journey to Quito for a musical performance.

This is Killa, a girl from Cayambe... her dream has always been to become a famous singer in her country.

Killa loves singing at events and festivals. Even if not everyone values the Kichwa language...

After some time, Killa returns to Cayambe just in time for the town festivities...

Though Killa loved her culture, she feared rejection as a singer for preferring Kichwa...

In the end, Killa felt the desire to speak her language without fear, and with pride, she would continue speaking her native tongue

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Chapter 6

Learning from the community

Learning from the community

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Introduction

In Ecuador, the concept of interculturality began to gain recognition in the late 20th century as a result of social struggles led by Indigenous organizations seeking comprehensive recognition and respect for their cultures, languages, and ways of life. Although the term "interculturality" was already used in Latin American academic circles, in the Ecuadorian state, it emerged from grassroots communities, particularly through Intercultural Bilingual Education (*Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, EIB). During the 1980s, movements like the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, CONAIE) and the National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education (*Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, DINEIB) proposed an educational model that translated school content from Spanish into Kichwa and other indigenous languages. An academic framework based on ancestral knowledge, values, and worldviews was established. In this way, interculturality emerged from the community as a collective need to reclaim and legitimize Indigenous identity (Pilaguano, 2018).

According to Astudillo (2020), one of the most productive settings for intercultural practice has been the community. The process of teaching and learning from the community is a political, social, and

spiritual act that positions ancestral wisdom as a living heritage, transmitted across generations. In the Ecuadorian context, multiple Indigenous communities have developed participatory mechanisms to preserve their customs and knowledge. For example, ***mingas*** (community work gatherings) exemplify collaborative labor and transmit knowledge about planting, agricultural cycles, rituals associated with ***Pachamama*** (Mother Earth), and ancestral medicine. In the Ecuadorian Amazon region, peoples like the Kichwa, Shuar, and Achuar integrate spiritual and botanical practices into daily life, recognizing nature as a living educational space. These practices resist cultural colonization while adapting to contemporary social contexts (Bravo et al., 2023).

Indigenous leaders play a central role in local education. These community figures act as guardians and mediators of ancestral knowledge. By acting as guides in alternative educational processes, they extend their cultural practices into activities tied to nature and their surroundings. An example of this can be seen in the San Pedro de Quilotoa community in Cotopaxi province, where decisions about classroom construction, curriculum design, management of school activities and community resources allocation were made collectively by the cabildo (local council), families, and teachers with a shared goal: to strengthen intercultural education in the long term from within the community (Pilaguano, 2018).

In intercultural education, language and art are priority focus areas. Some educational strategies to integrate this knowledge into formal learning process include linguistic recovery workshops, such as strengthening the Kichwa language in Imbabura province or Shuar language in Morona Santiago. In terms of artistic expression, the revitalization of traditional arts is prioritized through teaching weaving, body painting, ancestral music, and ceremonial dance. These intercultural teaching strategies restore cultural pride to new generations, transforming community education into a holistic process that affirms diverse ways of experiencing the world (Astudillo, 2020).

At the institutional level, Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs) have implemented heritage education programs with direct community involvement. For example, in Otavalo, the 2023 Management Report (Diario El Norte, 2025) highlighted collaboration

with the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INPC) to update inventories of tangible and intangible heritage, integrate traditional knowledge into community museums, and develop educational routes for local cultural heritage. This vision has created spaces for cultural retention, where Kichwa attire, traditional festivals, and agricultural knowledge become part of municipal school curricula.

Academically, research collaborations between higher education institutions and communities have been promoted. Within the study Ancestral Knowledge of the Kichwa Otavalo People and Its Influence on Cultural Tourism (Castro-Viera et al., 2022) notes that ancestral knowledge is an integral part of cultural identity and influences cultural tourism practices. Such collaborative research significantly contributes to recognizing interculturality as an educational process that values the tangible and intangible heritage of Ecuadorian diversity.

Learning from the community represents a multidimensional educational approach that integrates the participation of multiple stakeholders across different levels of contribution. Through their legacy, these actors validate ancestral knowledge, strengthen cultural identities, and stimulate interdependent learning methods. For higher education and national and international researchers, these community-based experiences provide fertile ground to rethink and relearn knowledge production processes, co-research, and teaching connected to the urgent needs of Indigenous peoples and nationalities. In a globalized world, intercultural education positions itself as an axis of transformation, capable of fostering legitimate dialogues between Indigenous and academic knowledge, always rooted in the preservation of Ecuador's living cultural heritage (Agualongo, 2025).

Learning from the Community is a chapter that includes visual narratives to illustrate how community-based learning and intercultural education integrate ancestral knowledge into traditional education through stories showcasing the richness of blending diverse cultures in the educational sphere. The chapter includes 12 comics where readers follow a group of students and their teacher on a journey through Ecuador's regions. Along this quest for community knowledge, they listen to stories, observe traditional practices, and

connect with the worldviews of those who preserve their identity across generations.

Integration of Ancestral Knowledge in Language and Arts in Ecuador

The integration of ancestral knowledge in language and arts in Ecuador is a fundamental educational strategy to preserve and revitalize Indigenous cultures. This integration addresses the need to preserve languages and artistic expressions while promoting intercultural education that recognizes and values the country's cultural diversity. The following section presents various strategies implemented in the Ecuadorian context to achieve this integration.

- **Incorporation of ancestral knowledge in the technical training of the intercultural bilingual education system (SEIB):** The SEIB is a key space for integrating ancestral knowledge into Ecuadorian education. According to Segundo and Espin (2025), incorporating Indigenous worldviews into technical secondary school education enables the articulation of scientific knowledge with traditional practices, strengthening cultural identity and promoting sustainable models of local development. This integration is achieved through the contextualization of curricular content, the incorporation of participatory methodologies, and the alignment of technical knowledge with natural cycles and food sovereignty from a community perspective.

- **Use of active and decolonial methodologies in arts education:** Arts teaching in intercultural contexts has adopted active and decolonial methodologies that facilitate the transmission of ancestral knowledge. Fajardo-Minchala (2020) proposes a model of didactic planning that recognizes the legacy of ancestral wisdom related to medicinal plants and caregiving practices, highlighting women's role in preserving this knowledge. Through group activities incorporating sensory perception exercises, games, and interviews, students collectively construct knowledge and recognize how ancestral wisdom is preserved in the memory and practices of women in their communities.

- **Implementation of school gardens as intercultural learning spaces:** School gardens have increasingly become

intercultural learning spaces where ancestral knowledge related to agriculture and traditional medicine is integrated. According to Rodríguez Jara et al. (2020), the "TiNi" methodology (Tierra de Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes para el buen vivir - "Land of Girls, Boys, and Youth for Good Living"), promoted by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, encourages the creation of school gardens, fostering educational activities through environmental and intercultural approaches. In the community of Taday, a rural parish in the canton of Azogues, in the province of Cañar, the implementation of this methodology has enabled the participation of teachers, students, and parents. This process has facilitated the intergenerational transmission of ancestral knowledge and has contributed to the strengthening of the community's cultural identity, which is characterized by its Andean richness and traditional practices.

- **Teacher training in Intercultural Bilingual Education:** Teacher training is essential for the effective implementation of strategies that integrate ancestral knowledge into language and arts education. Martínez et al. (2020) argue that ethnoeducation in Ecuador serves as a crucial tool for preserving the cultural identity of ancestral peoples, particularly through the intercultural bilingual education system. However, challenges remain in implementing models that value Indigenous knowledge, especially concerning ancestral territories. Ongoing teacher training is vital to overcoming these limitations and promoting inclusive intercultural education.

The integration of ancestral knowledge in language and arts education in Ecuador constitutes an educational strategy that contributes to the preservation of Indigenous cultures and promotes inclusive intercultural education. Through incorporating Indigenous worldviews into technical training, the use of active and decolonial methodologies in arts education, implementing school gardens as intercultural learning spaces, and providing teacher training in Intercultural Bilingual Education, an educational model is achieved that recognizes and values the country's cultural diversity. These strategies strengthen the cultural identity of Indigenous peoples, promote sustainable local development models, and contribute to building a more equitable and pluralistic society.

Participatory Documentation of Community Knowledge

Participatory documentation of community knowledge is defined as a collaborative process in which communities are accompanied by academic or institutional actors to record, preserve, and transmit traditional, cultural, ecological, or practical knowledge through inclusive contextually grounded methodologies (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025). This type of documentation is framed within approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), citizen science, and documentation, with the central goal of democratizing knowledge production, recognizing the epistemic authority of communities, and strengthening cultural sustainability (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024).

Valuing community knowledge as legitimate sources of knowledge challenges conventional academic paradigms, which often subordinate local knowledge to institutional scientific knowledge. Participatory research involves a deliberate redistribution of power across all stages of the research process, from the formulation of research questions to dissemination of findings (Dadich et al., 2019). This approach aligns with collaborative and Indigenous research frameworks, which emphasize that citizen science and participatory research shift epistemological control to marginalized groups, reinforcing their agency in decision-making about their territories and cultures (Wolff et al., 2021).

The study by Zamiri and Esmaeili (2024), which focuses on methods and technologies for knowledge exchange in learning communities, identifies key processes such as mentorship, collaborative virtual spaces, and participatory digital tools that foster community engagement in knowledge documentation. Their findings demonstrate the success of participatory digital platforms depends on factors such as usability, user-centered design, cost-free accessibility, community marketing, community-led outreach and process management, elements equally applicable to participatory documentation initiatives (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025).

Forms and Means of Participatory Documentation

The methods employed vary depending on context and the knowledge being documented but typically include visual, audio-visual, and digital strategies:

- **Participatory videos:** Recent studies highlight their usefulness in capturing peripheral knowledge, giving community members an active role in co-creating audio-visual content.

- **Digital community archives:** These create repositories autonomously managed by the communities, who define content, permissions, and access, preserving their autonomy and cultural representation.

- **Participatory mapping:** Geospatial tools enable the representation of knowledge linked to territories, environmental practices, and ceremonial routes. Success criteria include ease of use, data privacy, and alignment with community decision-making processes (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025).

- **Oral narratives and living practices:** Participatory research with Indigenous peoples emphasizes the value of local narratives shared through workshops, semi-structured interviews, or audio-visual recordings, preserving the voices of elders, youth, and knowledge holders (Davis & Ramírez, 2021).

- **Ethical and epistemological principles:** Ethical principles include informed consent, local control over data, reciprocity, and transparency. Research with Indigenous communities stresses that agendas must emerge from the community, be co-designed, and be co-governed (Smith, 2012). Cochran et al. (2008) underscore the importance of validating local epistemologies as legitimate and operational within formal documentation projects, avoiding reductionism.

- Additionally, emerging initiatives in artificial intelligence, such as automated translation of Indigenous languages, highlight

how including native speakers strengthens the cultural and ethical validity of documented knowledge (Mager et al., 2023).

Participatory documentation methods are essential tools for preserving and making visible the knowledge of Indigenous and local communities, linking tradition and technology. Beyond recording knowledge, these processes generate tangible impacts on social cohesion, governance, and cultural projection. However, despite their many benefits, participatory documentation faces structural and ethical challenges that affect its reach and sustainability. The following section outlines the main positive impacts observed in practice, as well as persistent challenges requiring attention to consolidate truly inclusive and culturally relevant models (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025; Davis & Ramírez, 2021; Smith, 2012).

Positive Impacts

- **Identity strengthening**: Documenting knowledge revitalizes intergenerational ties and reinforces cultural pride.

- **Advocacy capacity:** Documented community knowledge serves as valuable evidence for interventions in health, environment, or cultural policies, particularly when using citizen science (Wolff et al., 2021).

- **Collaboration and local governance:** The documentation process reinforces community organization and social accountability mechanisms.

Main Challenges

- **Digital divide:** Limited access and technological literacy restrict participation, making it essential to develop user-friendly platforms and training support (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025).

- **Data protection and intellectual property:** Protocols are needed for the use and safeguarding of sensitive knowledge, incorporating both customary and legal frameworks.

- **Funding and sustainability:** Participatory documentation requires logistical and technical resources; financial co-responsibility

strengthens long-term community commitment (Cochran et al., 2008).

Methodological Framework for Documentation Projects

Suggested methodological guidelines include the following stages:

- **Joint diagnosis and planning:** Identify the knowledge systems to be documented through deliberative workshops involving youth, elders, artists, and local wisdom keepers.

- **Collaborative ethical and technical design:** Establish mixed committees to decide on formats (audio, video, text, digital maps) and mechanisms for validation, intellectual property, and access**.**

- **Training and piloting:** Provide training to facilitate the use of cameras, geolocation tools, or community-based digital platforms.

- **Co-documentation:** interviews, oral narratives, field visits, maps, and videos, all with active community roles.

- **Collective reflective analysis**: Engage in collaborative classification and interpretation of data, ensuring interpretations remain faithful to the context and are not externally imposed.

- **Internal validation and circulation:** Community presentations, local festivals, and community repositories to share and validate documentation formats.

- **Scaling and external transfer:** Publications, intercommunity workshops, and visibility in networks or academic spaces, with protocols in place to ensure discretion when needed.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Evaluate the impacts, review formats and use of documented materials, and adjust processes to ensure relevance and renewal.

The following recommendations are provided for implementation:

- **Accessible technological platforms:** Design or adapt simple tools with user-friendly interfaces and the possibility of offline functionality, which guarantee usability (Atzmanstorfer et al., 2025).

- **Mentorship and ongoing training approach:** Step-by-step guidance from local facilitators enhances skills and prevents technological abandonment (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024).

- **Hybrid data governance:** Design collections managed by the community with their own access criteria, legal backup, and epistemological control.

- **Mobilization of community resources:** Promote contributions of time, spaces, ancestral knowledge, and partnerships with NGOs, universities, or public centres, with clear agreements of shared responsibility (Cochran et al., 2008).

- **Adaptive evaluation approach:** To incorporate active feedback, iterative adjustments, and follow-up to ensure continuous relevance and progressive empowerment.

Participatory documentation of community knowledge represents a transformative strategy to strengthen cultural autonomy, generate applied evidence for local development, and promote epistemic justice. Recent studies demonstrate that success depends on community-centered digital design, tailored training, and strong mechanisms for community governance of knowledge. This approach deepens citizen science by integrating it with the protection of local knowledge systems, ensuring that community members themselves are the ones who record, interpret, and manage their own legacy.

Participation of Community Leaders in Ecuador's Intercultural Context

The participation of community leaders in Ecuador, framed within intercultural contexts, constitutes a complex and fundamental

phenomenon for ensuring social cohesion, local governance, and the effective exercise of collective rights. Given the country's plurinational and multicultural composition, community leadership acquires particular dimensions where dialogue between worldviews, traditional knowledge systems, and state structures becomes indispensable (Pazmiño-Caiza et al., 2023).

- **Community leadership and interculturality in Ecuador:** Ecuador is constitutionally recognized as a plurinational and intercultural state, which implies formal recognition of the coexistence of diverse peoples and nationalities with their own cultural and political systems. In this context, community leaders fulfil strategic functions by articulating collective interests, promoting local development, and defending territorial and cultural rights (Guamán & Bustos, 2022). According to research conducted in Kichwa communities in Ecuador's highlands, leadership is based on ancestral practices where the *mashi* or community representative is chosen by consensus and acts as guarantor of *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir* (Pazmiño-Caiza et al., 2023).

- **Interculturality presents an additional challenge:** Managing spaces where community-specific logics converge with state or globalized regulatory frameworks. In these processes, leaders become symbolic and practical bridges that facilitate understanding and cooperation between actors with different worldviews (Loor et al., 2022).

- **Social and political function of community leaders:** Community leaders perform multiple roles including local administrative management, internal conflict mediation, dialogue with government authorities, and promotion of productive or environmental initiatives. A study conducted in Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities in the country's north emphasizes that these leaders derive their legitimacy from community values, experience, and commitment, factors that distinguish them from externally appointed or politically designated leaders (Moreta et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in intercultural contexts characterized by historical inequalities, the actions of community leaders are crucial for demanding compliance with collective rights, such as access

to bilingual education, culturally appropriate healthcare, and participation in decisions about natural resources (Gómez et al., 2021). Thus, their role transcends local management and extends to the defense of territories and cultures.

- **Leadership, participation, and social capital:** Community participation is strengthened through networks of trust, reciprocity, and solidarity that constitute the community's social capital. Leaders act as catalysts for these networks by convening assemblies, organizing *mingas*, and coordinating joint projects (Sánchez & Torres, 2020). In Ecuador, *mingas* or communal work are ancestral practices that, under local leadership, consolidate social bonds and foster a collective sense of responsibility.

- Recent research highlights that, in intercultural settings, community leadership drives participatory processes that enable communities to propose their own development agendas and establish autonomous governance mechanisms (Guamán & Bustos, 2022). This type of participation influences project implementation and enhances self-organization and cultural self-definition.

- **Education, leadership, and interculturality:** Community leadership in Ecuador is closely linked to the management of intercultural bilingual education (EIB). In Indigenous communities, leaders often promote schools that integrate native languages and knowledge systems with the official curriculum, thereby contributing to language revitalization and intergenerational knowledge transmission (Pazmiño-Caiza et al., 2023).

Strategies to Strengthen Intercultural Community Participation

To consolidate the participation of community leaders in Ecuador's intercultural contexts, specialized literature suggests the following two strategies:

- **First strategy:** Enhance training processes in collective rights, community management, and cultural intelligence to strengthen autonomy and dialogue capacity (Guamán & Bustos, 2022).

- **Second strategy:** Promote intercommunity networks that connect successful experiences, allow sharing solutions to common problems, and exert collective pressure on state or corporate entities.

It is essential to design participatory evaluation mechanisms that recognize achievements through culturally relevant parameters, moving beyond homogeneous models that fail to capture community-based wellbeing. The inclusion of community-developed indicators helps legitimize processes and highlight achievements that transcend purely material outcomes (Gómez et al., 2021).

In Ecuador, the participation of community leaders in intercultural contexts represents one of the clearest expressions of the exercise of collective rights and the validity of the plurinational state. These leadership models sustain social fabric, mediate between diverse cultures, and promote participatory processes that enhance development from local perspectives. However, they face structural challenges that must be addressed through intercultural public policies, adequate funding, and respect for local normative systems. Strengthening these practices is essential both for directly involved communities and for consolidating a truly intercultural model of coexistence in the country.

The *Minga* as a Pedagogical Act: Real Experiences

The *minga* constitutes a collective educational methodology, where participants simultaneously learn and teach through action. Pascual and Del Carmen (2021) argue that this practice is a pedagogy of resilience, as it fosters the generation of community knowledge and exercises cultural resistance against homogenizing forces. Thus, the *minga* stands as one of the most outstanding examples of ancestral education with active pedagogical value.

Below are concrete examples illustrating how the *minga* operates in daily life, reaffirming its relevance as a living pedagogy and tool for strengthening educational, cultural, and social processes.

- **Ecuador:** Chimborazo and Andean Communities

In Chimborazo (Ecuador), Bravo et al. (2023) presented an ethnographic study on the *minga* as a communicative practice driving social transformation. In the parishes of Tixán and Totorillas, the *minga* enabled collective decision-making, facilitated reflection on local issues, and propelled well-organized community action. The authors conclude that the *minga* enhances communicative and organizational competencies among community actors.

- **Colombia:** Pedagogy of resilience

Colombian researchers assert that the *minga* functions as a symbolic language of collective teaching. Its execution strengthens historical and cultural consciousness, contributing to a social imaginary of resistance and peacebuilding following the 2016 Peace Agreement. This resilient pedagogy elevates ancestral practices into instruments of contemporary social transformation.

- **Chile:** Technological *minga*

Pareti et al. (2022) investigated the "minga chilota" of Chiloé and found that, when articulated with digital networks and smart urban structures, the *minga* reduces urban vulnerability. By incorporating modern elements, the strategy retains its cooperative essence while reinforcing community governance.

Pedagogical Components of the *Minga*

The *minga* is more than a community cooperation mechanism; it constitutes a dynamic pedagogical space where knowledge systems, cultural practices, and collective learning processes converge. Its pedagogical components reveal how this ancestral tradition functions as a living educational strategy, capable of strengthening cultural identity, promoting active participation, and building social resilience. Various studies have shown that the *minga* serves as experiential learning for intercultural education, articulating traditional and contemporary knowledge.

Below are the key elements that define its pedagogical power, along with guidelines for implementing this methodology in community

and institutional projects, demonstrating its adaptability and relevance across diverse educational contexts.

- **Experiential and collaborative learning:** The *minga* is based on active, experience-based learning, which strengthens technical, organizational, and cognitive capacities. In Ecuador, Bravo et al. (2023) document how participants acquire skills in dialogue, negotiation, planning, and collective action.

- **Intercultural Education and Identity Reinforcement:** In Columbe Grande (Chimborazo), Avemañay (2012) documented how community *mingas* complement Intercultural Bilingual Education by transmitting Kichwa knowledge and traditional community practices. This strengthens the cultural identity of children and adolescents, reinforcing their sense of belonging.

- **Community resilience and citizenship education:** The *minga* strengthens social cohesion, enabling communities to collectively confront challenges and generate community-based solutions. Mora and Correa (2020) emphasize the *minga* as a pedagogy of resilience that builds collective capacities for peace and social organization.

The *Minga* as Institutionalized Strategy

There are cases where the *minga* has been integrated into formal institutional education projects. Banderas (2021) documented the adoption of a "virtual minga" at PUCE during the COVID-19 pandemic, in collaboration with a Colombian Indigenous community. This approach enabled ICT-mediated co-creation, transforming the *minga* into a digital cooperative learning strategy.

The following requirements can be identified for designing minga-based projects:

- **Shared purpose:** The community defines a common objective (infrastructure, social transformation, community gardens).

- **Participation:** Voluntary involvement of diverse community actors.

- **Knowledge system integration:** Combining traditional knowledge and contemporary techniques.

- **Collective reflection:** Spaces to analyze processes and outcomes from multiple perspectives.

- **Planning and sustainability:** Scheduling of actions with long-term vision and community evaluation. These components, present in the studies cited, allow *minga* to be a practice of cooperation and an effective community educational process. Below, some challenges and future perspectives are described:

- **Academic recognition:** It is necessary for disciplines such as pedagogy, anthropology, and social sciences to systematically incorporate the *minga* as an object of study and formal educational intervention.

- **Pedagogical evaluation:** It is urgent to develop participatory evaluation mechanisms that measure the educational and social impact of minga-based projects, ensuring their replicability and continuous improvement.

- **Technological integration:** The virtual *minga* (Banderas, 2021) opens possibilities for replicating this strategy in urban and remote contexts, utilizing digital platforms to strengthen community pedagogy.

- **Public policies and decentralization:** Including the *minga* in community education policies can promote real decentralization, where local actors regain their leading role and strengthen their self-management capacity.

The *minga* stands as a community pedagogical strategy with great potential. Through collective work, knowledge systems are built, identities are strengthened, resilience horizons are promoted, and organizational structures are energized. Recent cases in Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile demonstrate its effectiveness in urban and rural intercultural contexts. Its integration into formal educational projects, combined with evaluation methodologies and technological tools, projects a promising scenario for its consolidation. It is essential that researchers, educators, and public managers recognize the *minga* as an invaluable resource for building collective and transformative learning dynamics.

Heritage Education Projects in Collaboration with Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GAD)

Participatory governance emerges as a determining factor for the success of heritage education projects by promoting shared management among different social actors. Various studies on institutional frameworks in Ecuador's local governments highlight the need to create inter-institutional mechanisms that strengthen collaboration between Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GAD), academia, the private sector, and communities. This coordination enhances the legitimacy of initiatives while improving project effectiveness and sustainability. In this context, the co-creation of educational activities facilitates the integration of community interpretations of heritage into formal and non-formal curricular programs, integrating local knowledge with academic perspectives. This synergy between knowledge systems strengthens citizens' sense of belonging and promotes an inclusive and equitable approach to cultural management (Sánchez & Torres, 2020).

A crucial aspect of heritage management for communities like Abañín in El Oro province is the active collaboration between Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GAD) and educational institutions to identify, document, and enhance intangible cultural heritage. This heritage, comprising practices like traditional artisanal techniques, is particularly vulnerable to being lost or transformed, requiring specific safeguarding strategies. Partnerships enable the development of local policies and regulatory frameworks aimed at protecting, preserving, promoting, and leveraging intangible heritage for tourism. Implemented actions include participatory inventories, interviews with knowledge bearers and local authorities, and community surveys, which have revealed a concerning disconnect from cultural roots. In response, governance mechanisms have been integrated to encourage community participation in educational activities, tourist routes, craft fairs, and exhibition spaces. This holistic approach revitalizes traditional practices, facilitates intergenerational transmission, strengthens collective identity, and generates socio-economic opportunities linked to sustainable cultural tourism (Párraga et al., 2021).

Despite the potential of GADs to lead heritage education initiatives, implementation faces multiple challenges, especially in rural contexts and communities with limited infrastructure. In provinces such as Imbabura, cantonal and parish governments frequently encounter difficulties related to financial resource shortages and limited technical expertise among their personnel. These limitations undermine project continuity and quality, impeding their integration into long-term public policies. Additionally, high turnover of local authorities and the absence of institutionalization of cultural education processes hinder the accumulation of knowledge and consolidation of experiences. Nevertheless, community willingness and growing interest in reclaiming local heritage can serve as important catalysts to overcome these limitations, provided adequate technical, financial, and regulatory support mechanisms are established (Benítez et al., 2025).

The incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into heritage education represents a powerful tool to expand its reach, modernize strategies, and engage younger generations. On the other hand, at Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, digital platforms incorporating augmented reality, virtual tours, and mobile applications have been developed, enabling users to explore heritage assets from anywhere and democratizing access to cultural knowledge. The use of social media, audio-visual resources, and virtual environments has enhanced the dissemination of heritage content, enabling more dynamic and participatory teaching-learning processes. Additionally, implementing digital monitoring systems, like those used in Centro Historico de Cuenca (Cuenca's Historic Centre), has improved preventive conservation and technical documentation of cultural assets while integrating these resources into school classrooms and community processes. These innovations promote meaningful learning and strengthen sustainable tourism development, consolidating GADs' role as promoters of an educational-cultural model adapted to 21st-century demands (Cobos et al., 2024).

The promotion of interculturality must serve as a cross-cutting axis in all heritage education projects developed in Ecuador. In a plurinational and intercultural country like ours, home to vast

ethnic and cultural diversity among Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and mestizo peoples, it is essential to design strategies that make these multiple identity expressions visible and valued. Collaborative projects with GADs should foster respect, intercultural dialogue, and mutual recognition, thereby promoting more equitable relationships among the diverse cultures coexisting in shared territories (Díaz & Romero, 2025). Heritage education, in this context, must contribute to building symbolic bridges between cultures, creating spaces for expression and mutual understanding, strengthening social cohesion, and enhancing collective enrichment through diversity. This approach also combats stereotypes, promotes inclusion, and contributes to developing critical, aware, and engaged citizens committed to the country's cultural plurality.

The evaluation of heritage education projects constitutes an essential component to ensure their relevance, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability. Experiences in urban contexts like Cuenca's Historic Centre demonstrate that evaluation should not be confined to a final stage but conceived as a continuous, integrated process from project inception. According to an analysis published in ESTOA Journal by the University of Cuenca's Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism (2024), periodic monitoring systems have enabled detection of progressive heritage deterioration and proposal of early, effective interventions.

The application of environmental assessment matrices and technical records, reviewed during different periods (2017-2018 and 2020-2021), has facilitated results comparison and coherent preventive strategy design. This mixed methodology, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, strengthens local stakeholder participation and helps adjust both educational activities and conservation regulations. Moreover, it provides GADs and pedagogical teams with key tools for informed decision-making, aligning actions with specific socio-cultural contexts and ensuring long-term sustainability of heritage education practices.

Conclusions

Intercultural education rooted in community-based learning constitutes an alternative pedagogical model that recognizes

Indigenous cultures as legitimate sources of knowledge. This approach connects with ancestral practices, community values, and the worldviews of native peoples, enabling a redefinition of conventional educational processes. The *minga*, rituals, oral traditions, and collective labor represent cultural elements and living educational methodologies that promote reciprocity, active participation, and intergenerational memory.

The integration of ancestral knowledge into school curricula strengthens students' cultural identities and fosters the decolonization of knowledge. Initiatives such as local festivals and workshops on traditional medicine or native languages enrich educational content and foster emotional connections with the territory. This dynamic relationship between schools and communities broadens pedagogical horizons and contributes to the socio-cultural sustainability of the educational process.

The systematization and documentation of community knowledge through participatory methodologies reinforces collective memory and enables its intergenerational transmission. Processes such as cultural mapping, life story collection, or the creation of community digital archives empower students as knowledge agents and validate voices traditionally excluded from academic discourse. In this context, pedagogical research becomes both a political and cultural tool.

Partnerships among communities, educational institutions, Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GAD), and universities are essential for consolidating critical and transformative heritage education. These collaborations must be grounded on principles of reciprocity, mutual respect, and active participation of local actors. The community-learning school is not merely a recipient of knowledge, but a builder of citizenship committed to its environment. In this way, the territory ceases to be a passive backdrop but becomes a pedagogical subject.

The community represents a legitimate and rich source of knowledge that has historically been marginalized by conventional education systems. Intercultural pedagogy rooted in community recognizes that learning is not confined to the classroom but is constructed

through daily interactions, rituals, collective practices, and ancestral narratives. This approach redefines the teacher's role as a cultural mediator and demands institutional openness to alternative ways of knowing and teaching.

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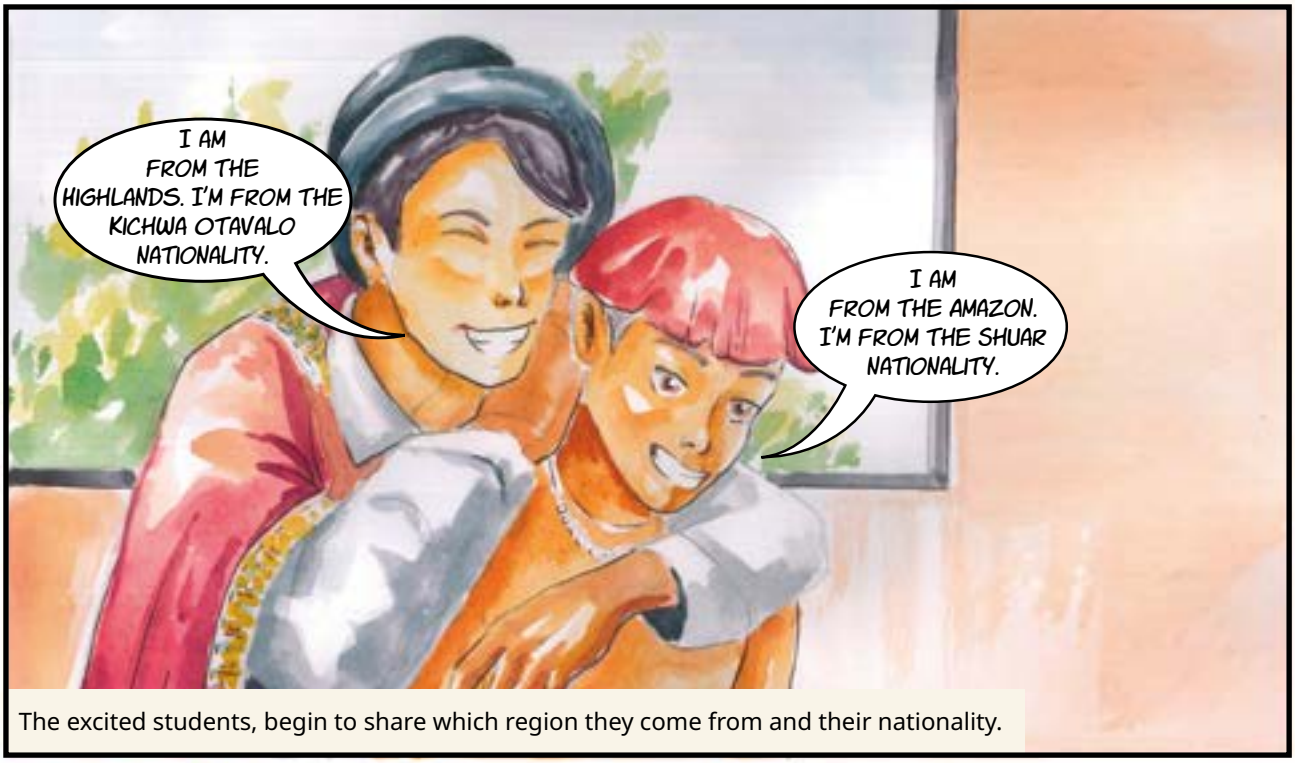
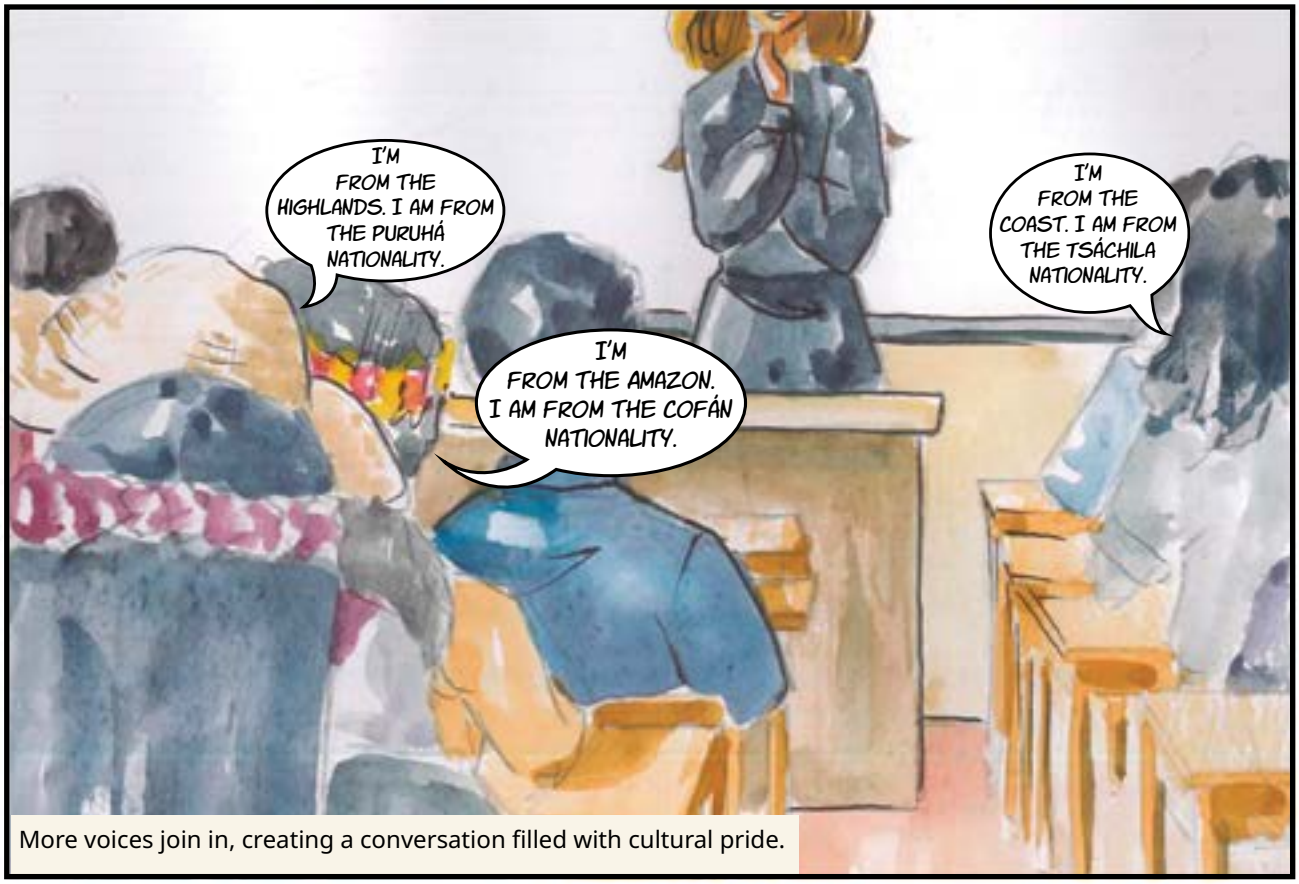
Ecuador has four wonderful regions, each with its own customs and traditions, yet united by cultural diversity, the solidarity of its people, and the pride of sharing a common identity.

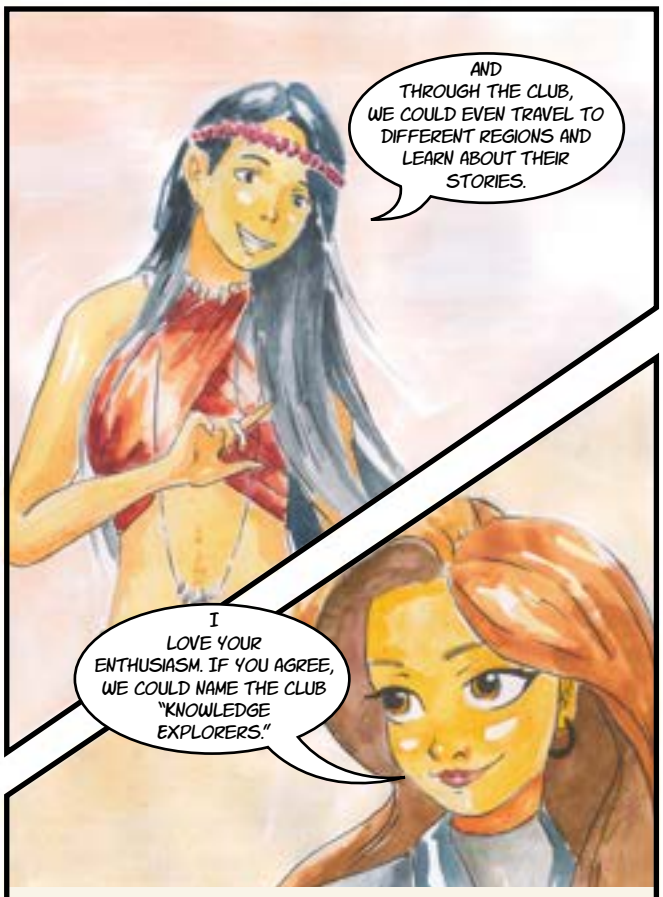


The excited students, begin to share which region they come from and their nationality.

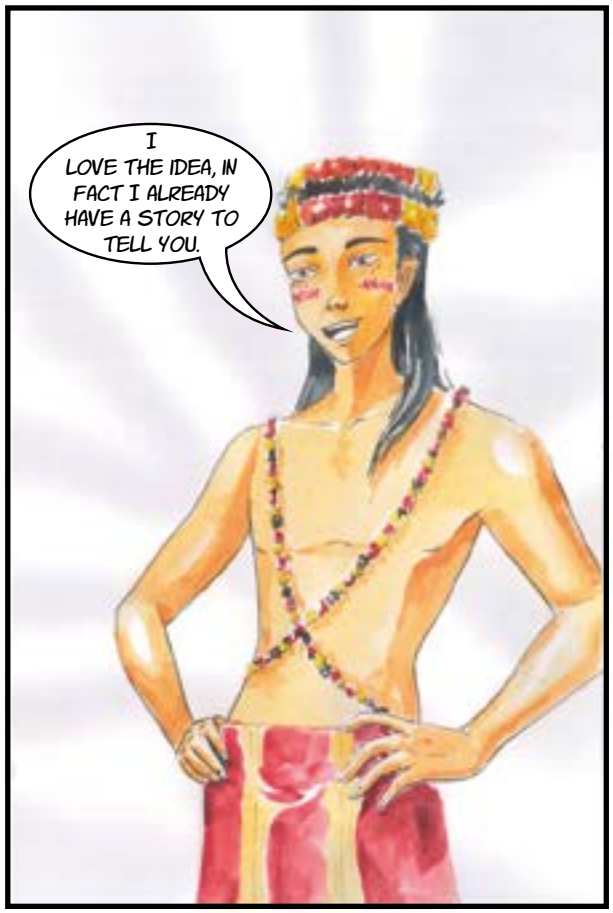
More students are encouraged to share their heritage, and everyone feels proud of their culture.



More voices join in, creating a conversation filled with cultural pride.

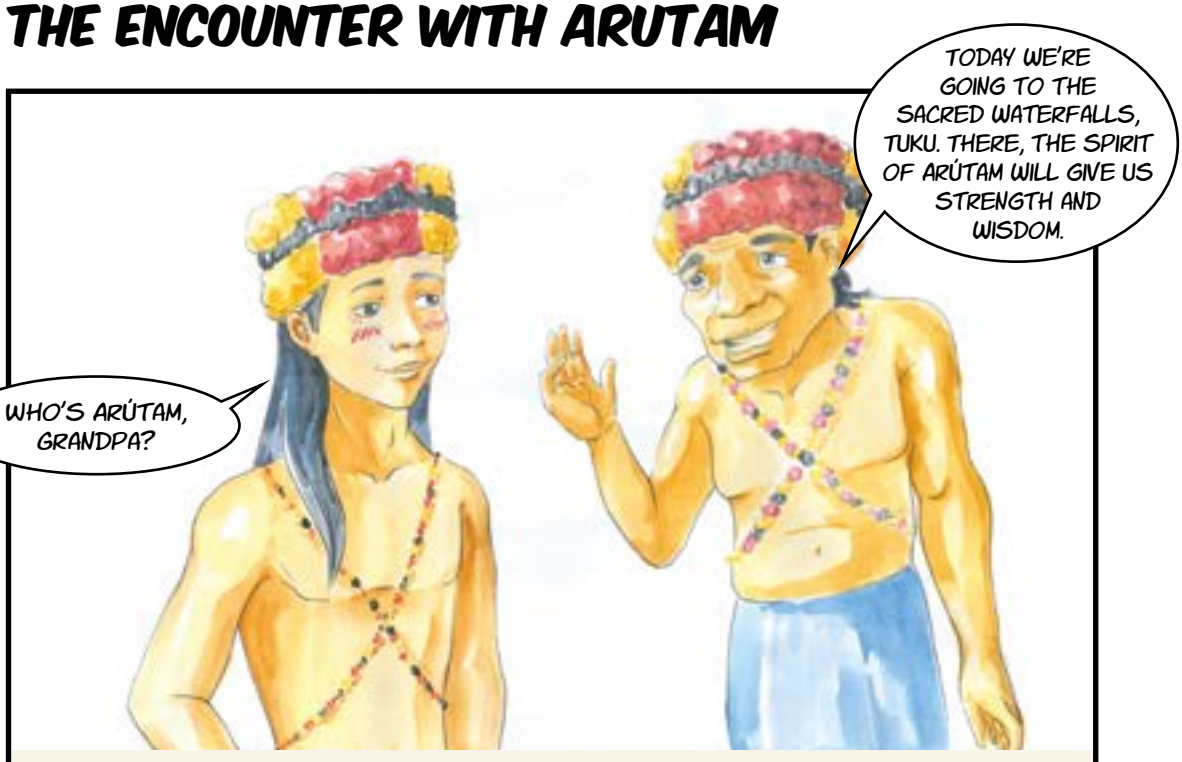


Ms. Lupita, enthusiastic with the idea, gives them her full support to create the club and that is how "Knowledge Explorers Club" was born.

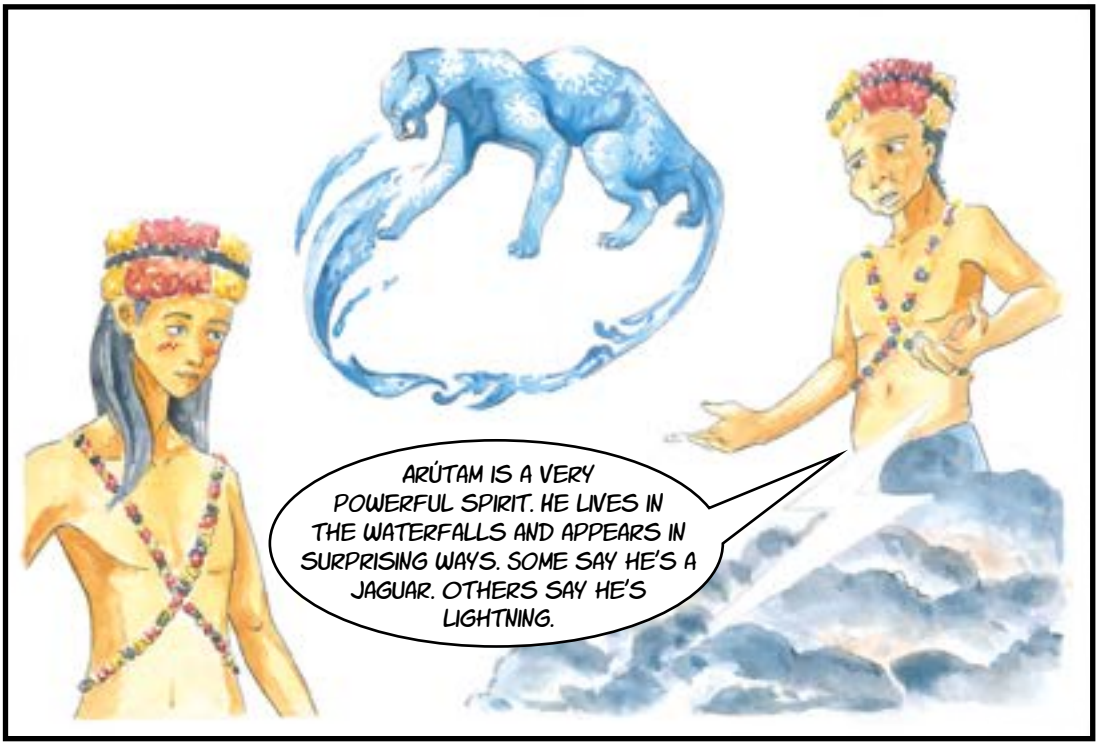


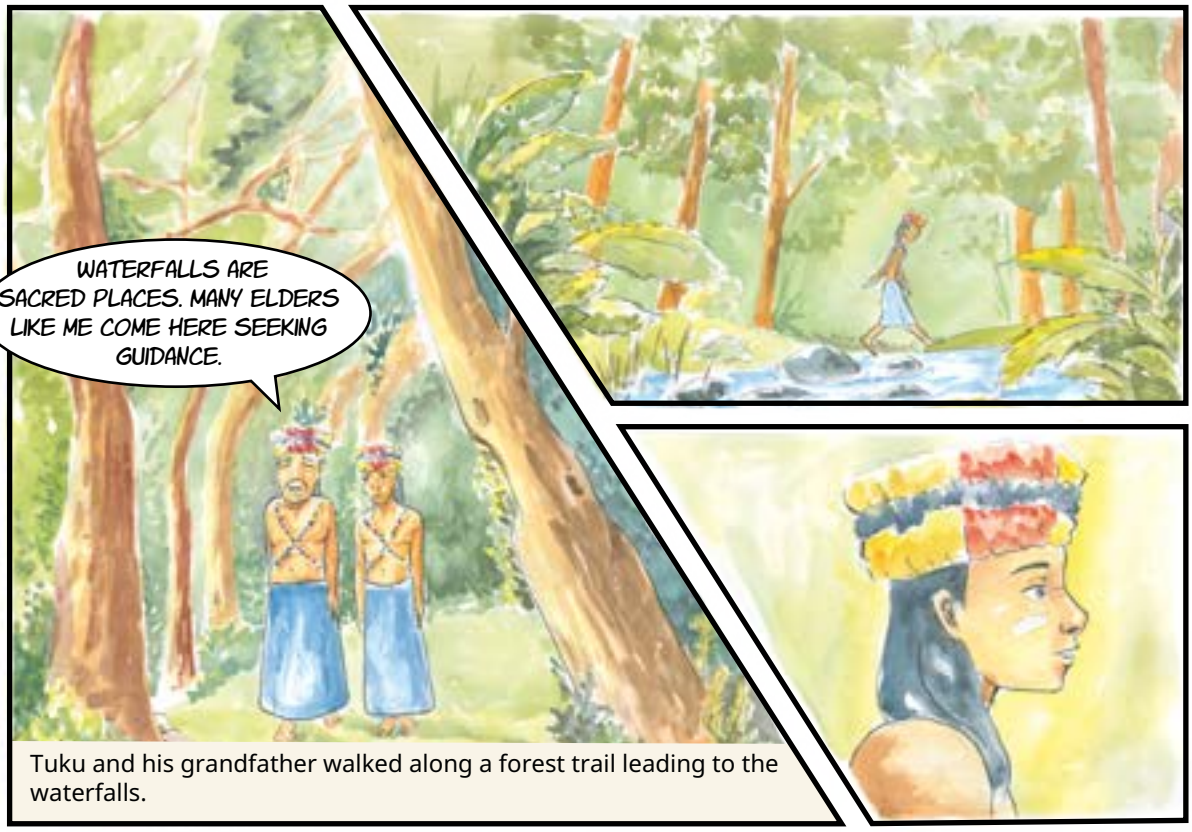
One week ago, at Tuku's house...

SHUAR
THE ENCOUNTER WITH ARÚTAM



One morning, Tuku was getting ready for a very special adventure with his grandfather, who had told him stories about the secrets of nature. Together, they would visit the Kintia Pankie waterfalls near the town of Sucúa, in the beautiful province of Morona Santiago, deep in the Amazon.





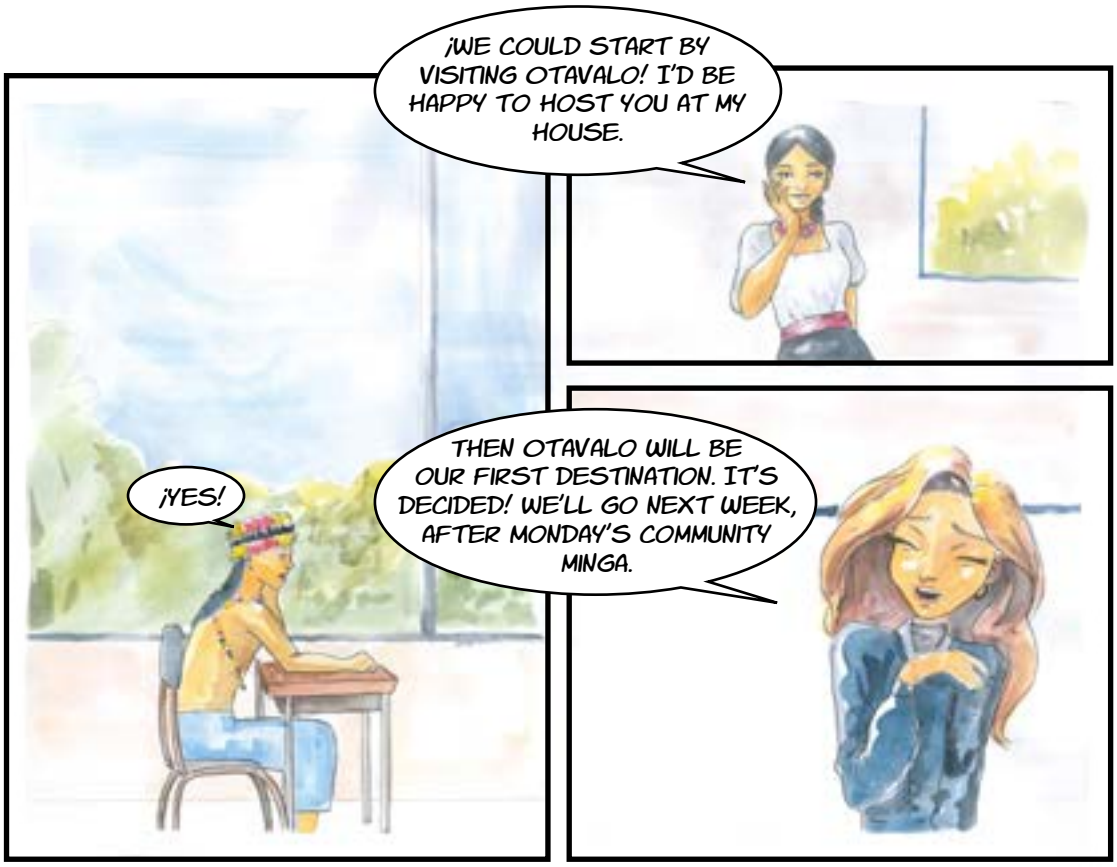
Tuku and his grandfather walked along a forest trail leading to the waterfalls.

His grandfather explained that to encounter Arútam, they had to be deeply attentive and respectful of nature.

The water in the waterfall seems to move strangely, and Tuku feels a vibration. A strong wind begins to blow.

Suddenly, Tuku felt a strange energy. The water glowed, the wind roared—and before him appeared the figure of a giant jaguar.

Tuku felt a deep peace in his heart. He knew Arútam's message was clear: respecting nature is key to living in balance with the world.


¡WE COULD START BY VISITING OTAVALO! I'D BE HAPPY TO HOST YOU AT MY HOUSE.
¡YES!
THEN OTAVALO WILL BE OUR FIRST DESTINATION. IT'S DECIDED! WE'LL GO NEXT WEEK, AFTER MONDAY'S COMMUNITY MINGA.

THE END

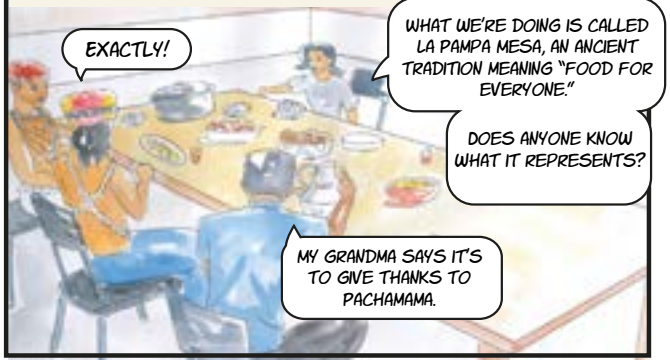
PAMPA MESA

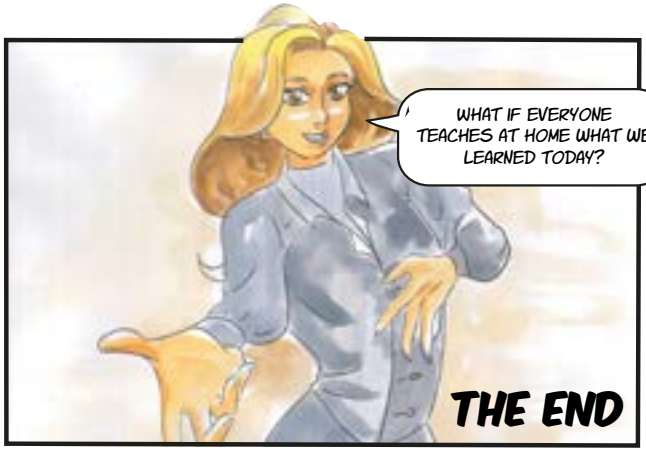
The students are taking part in a minga at "Unidad Educativa Renacer" in Ibarra, Ecuador.

A minga is an ancestral tradition of communal work in Indigenous communities, where people gather to carry out tasks for the collective good—such as a day of cleaning.

Inside the classroom, the students begin taking various foods out of their backpacks.

Everyone sits in front of a cloth where they have placed all the food.

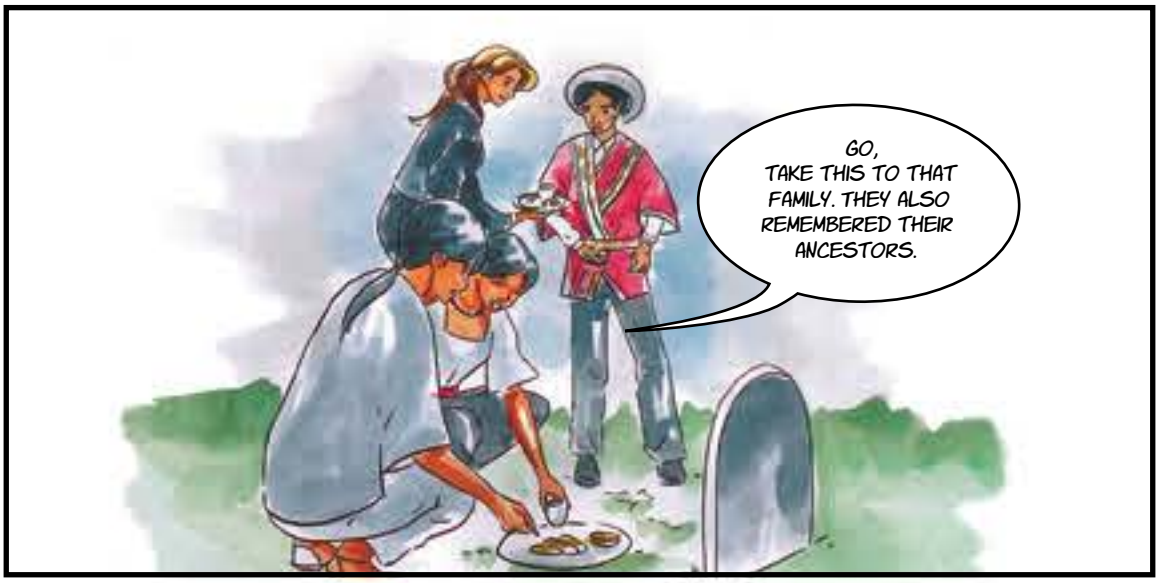




THE REAL MEANING OF THE DAY OF THE DEAD

Every November 2nd in Otavalo, the Kichwa Otavalo people commemorate the Day of the Dead by visiting their loved ones at the cemetery. They bring offerings such as wheat loaves shaped into figures of horses and wawas (children), accompanied by a drink called colada morada, made from blackberries. In addition, they carry dishes prepared with grains such as maize, beans, and broad beans.

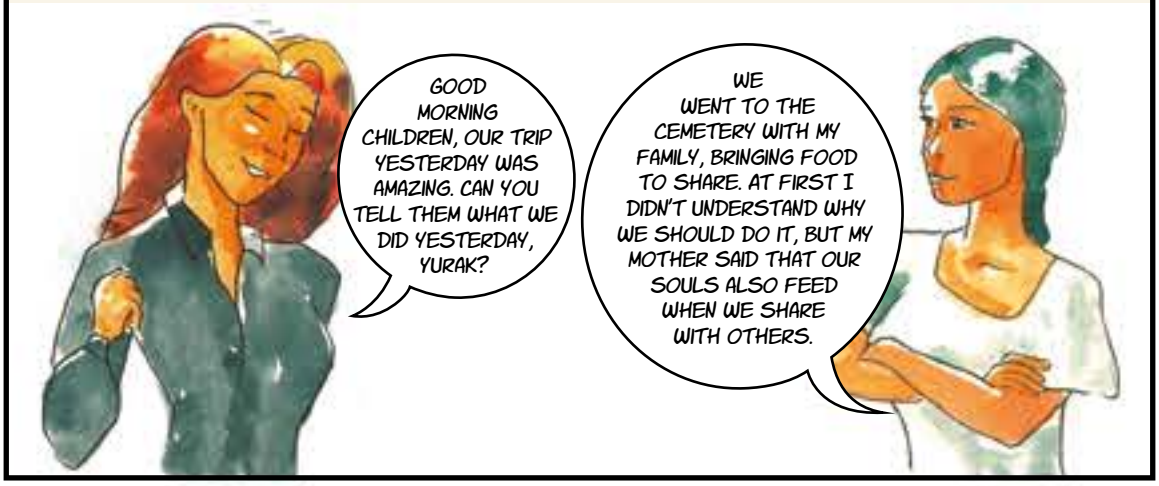
Each family spreads a blanket in front of their loved one's grave. Placing the offerings on a blanket and sitting around it. Sharing food in this way.

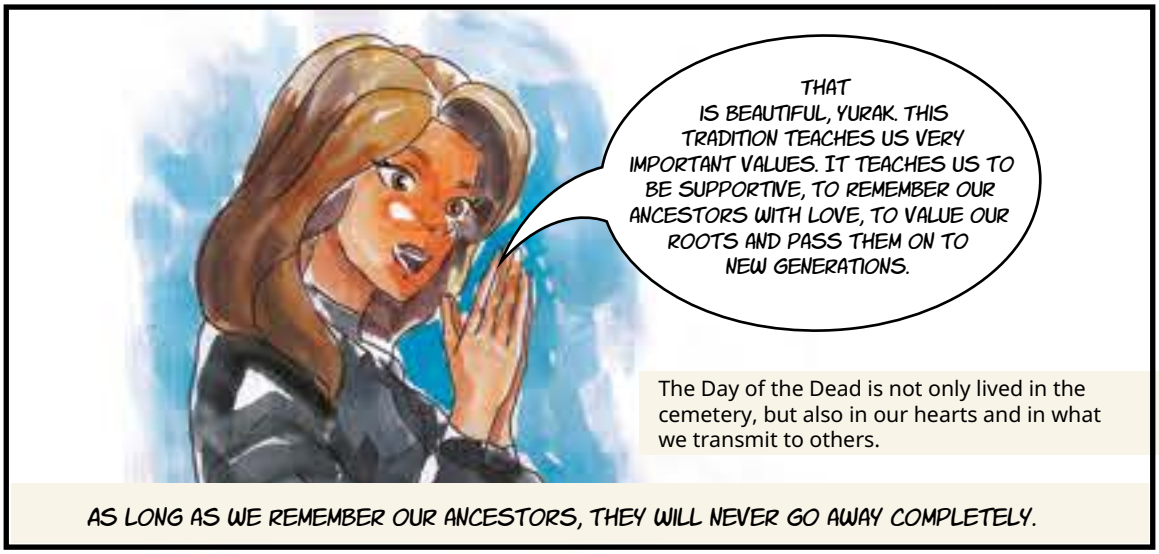

GO,
TAKE THIS TO THAT FAMILY. THEY ALSO REMEMBERED THEIR ANCESTORS.

HERE
YOU HAVE, WITH LOVE FROM OUR FAMILY.
THANKS, MAY YOUR ANCESTORS BLESS YOU.

I'VE
NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS. IT'S BEAUTIFUL TO SHARE WITH EVERYONE, NOT JUST THE FAMILY.

After a long trip to Otavalo, children gather in the club room to share experiences.



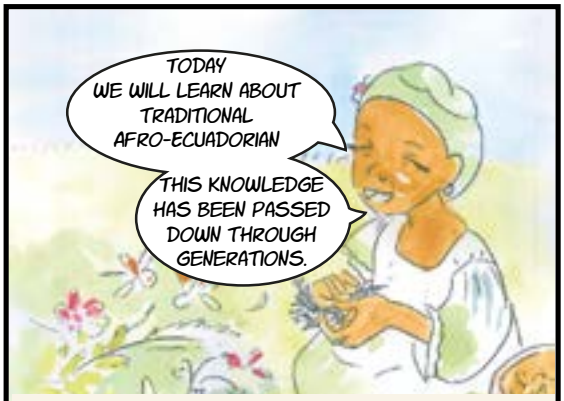


The Day of the Dead is not only lived in the cemetery, but also in our hearts and in what we transmit to others.

AS LONG AS WE REMEMBER OUR ANCESTORS, THEY WILL NEVER GO AWAY COMPLETELY.

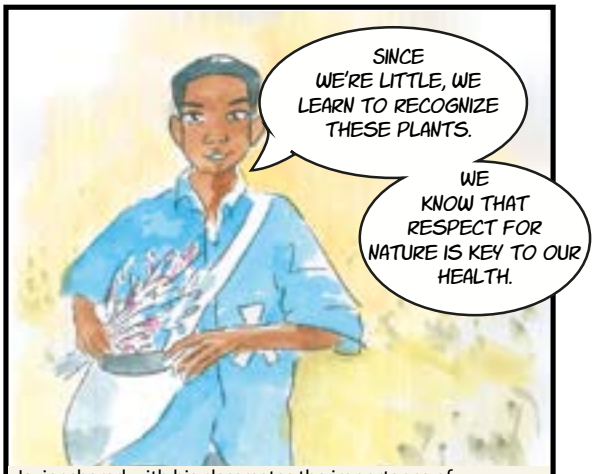
THE END

ROOT MEDICINE



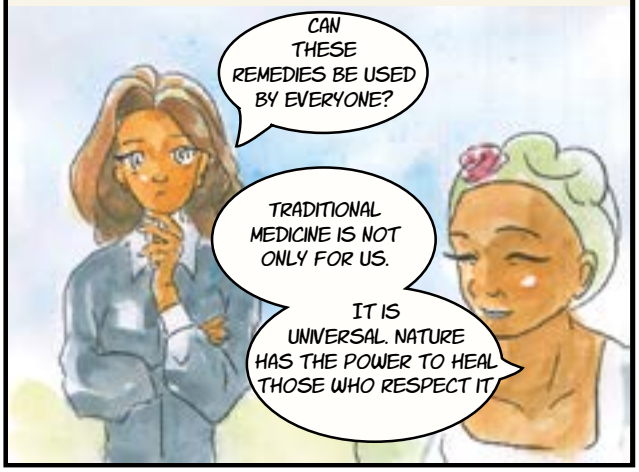
The next day, the students with a smile visited Grandma Carmen again, who is also the healer of the Afro-Ecuadorian community to learn about traditional medicine.

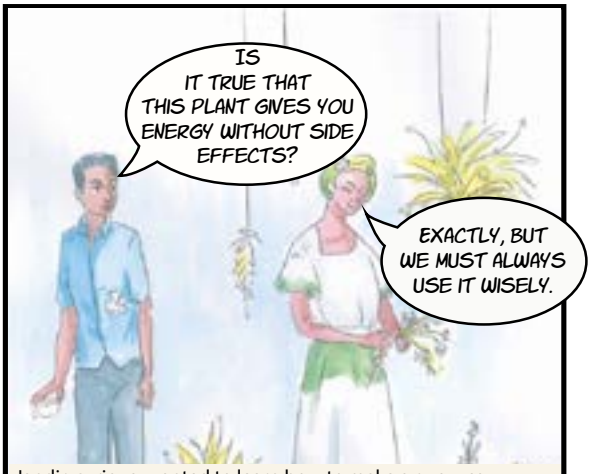
Grandmother Carmen showed them the plants that grew in the region, some of which have been used since ancient times to heal the body and soul.



Javier shared with his classmates the importance of recognizing and respecting plants from an early age.

Professor Lupita asked if these remedies were only for the Afro-Ecuadorian community.





Jandir, curious, wanted to learn how to make a guayusa infusion. He was fascinated with the benefits of the plant.

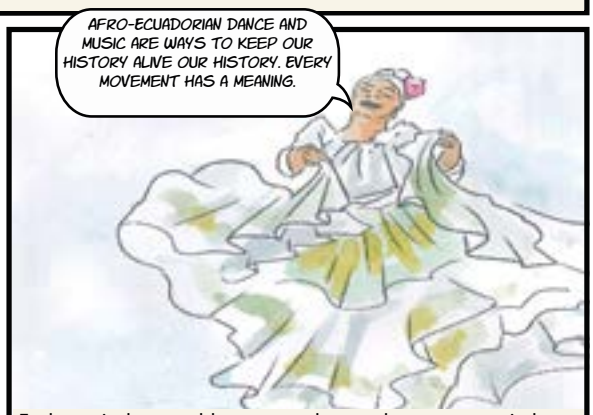
Lupita concluded the lesson by highlighting the deep connection between traditional Afro-Ecuadorian medicine and respect for nature.

RHYTHMS THAT CONNECT US

After their last trip, the students arrived in Esmeraldas, one of the northern coast provinces, known for its beaches, rich culture and vibrant music. Here, they will learn more about this wonderful culture.

The students arrived in the Afro-Ecuadorian community, in the province of Esmeraldas Javier's homeland ready to discover a new culture.

The rhythm and dance filled the air, inviting the visitors to move with the music.



Each musical note told a story, and every dance step carried centuries of tradition.

The vibrant rhythm of the marimba made their hearts beat in time.

Dancing was easy when they let the music guide them.

The students understood that tradition lives in every rhythm, every song, and every story told.

Music and dance are universal languages that unite cultures and generations. Let's celebrate our identity with pride.

THE END

SALASAKAS (TUNGURAHUA) THE SALASAKA CARNIVAL

The Salasaka Carnival is a traditional festivity of the Indigenous Salasaka culture in the province of Tungurahua, Ecuador. This ancestral celebration blends Andean rituals with elements of Catholicism to give thanks to Pachamama (Mother Earth) and ask for prosperity in the new agricultural cycle.

Every year, the Salasaka Carnival brings music, dance, and the joy of a united people.

Water in the Carnival symbolizes life and renewal. Everyone joins in with joy.

The village elders watch the celebration with smiles, remembering their childhood.

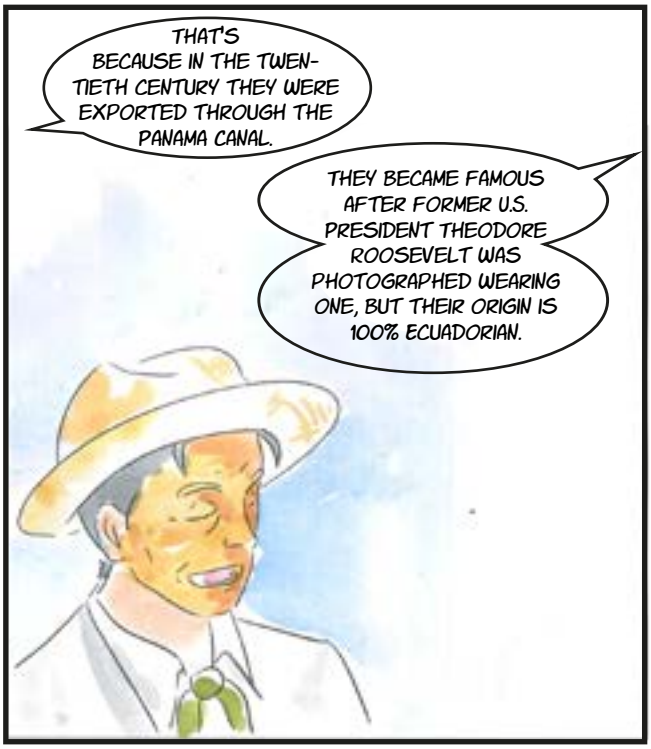
To dance, to laugh, and to share this is the true spirit of Carnival.

THE END

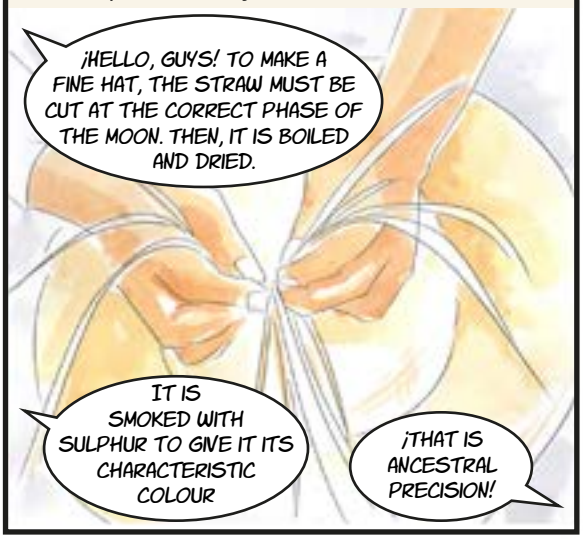
MANABÍ
THE SECRET OF THE PANAMA HAT.

In this new adventure, the students and their teacher head to their destination with a special purpose: To know the true origin of the Panama hat in Pile, Manabí.

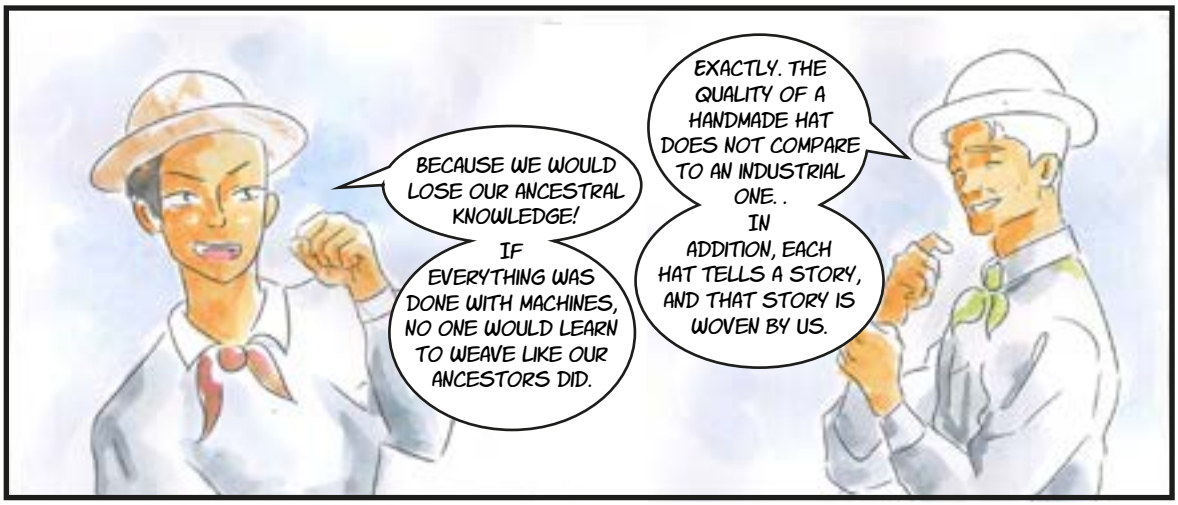
Teacher Lupita happily observes the students who meet her on the bus.



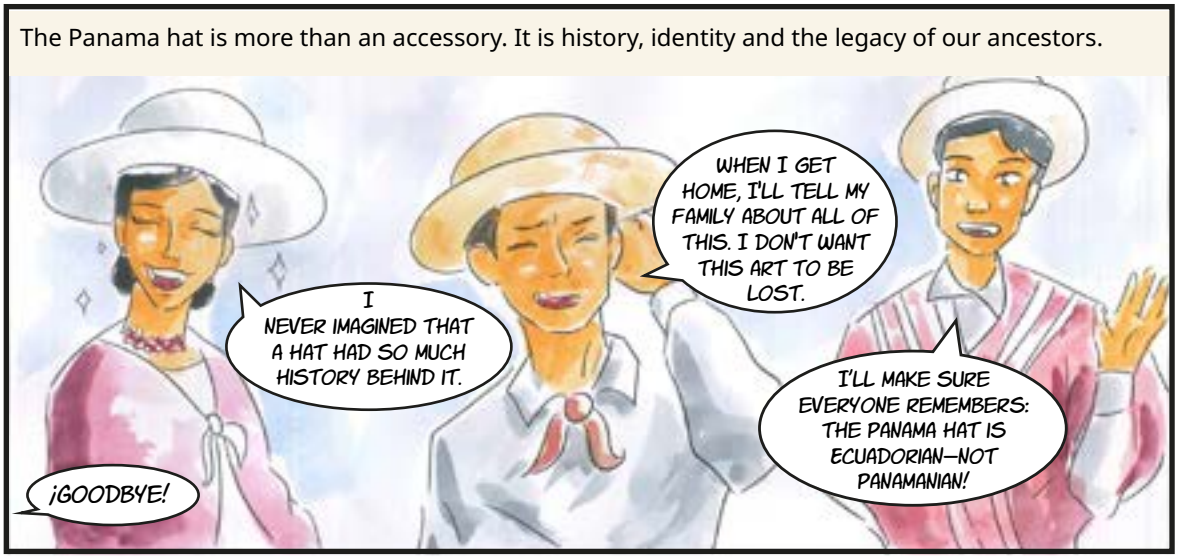
The students arrive at the Panama hat artisan workshop directed by Manuel.



A quality hat can take up to eight months to complete, depending on the fineness of the fabric.

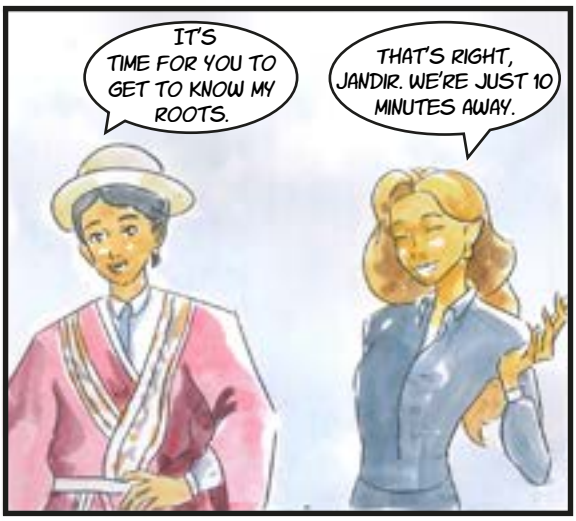


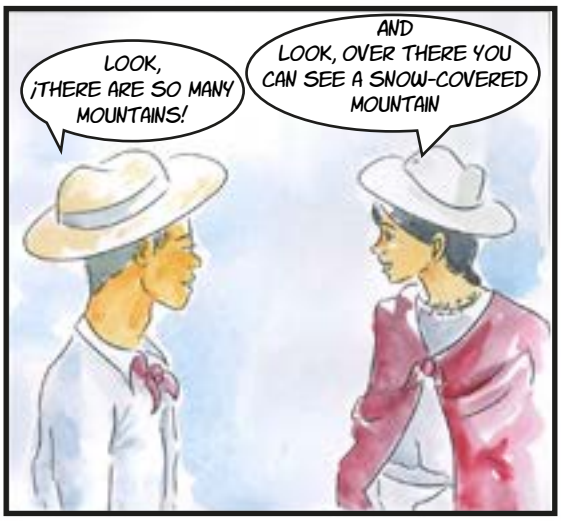
The Panama hat is more than an accessory. It is history, identity and the legacy of our ancestors.

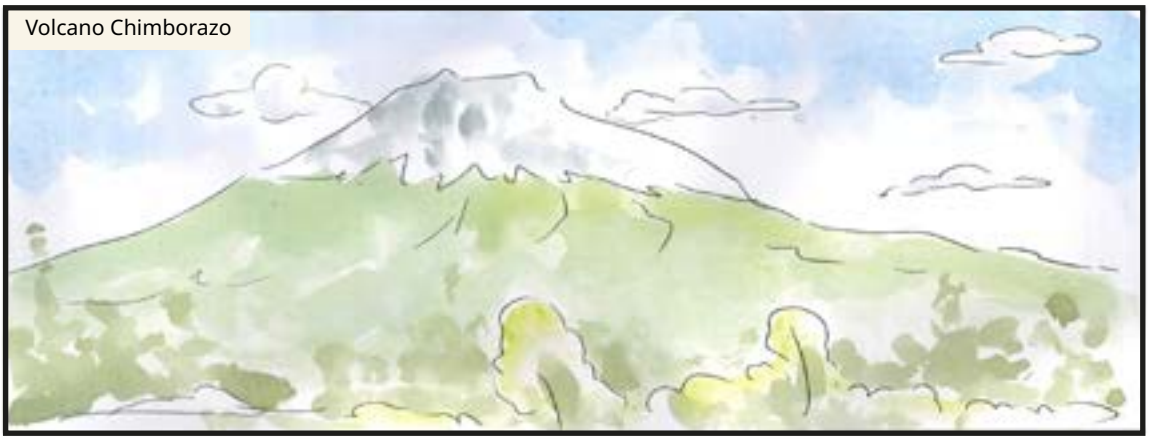


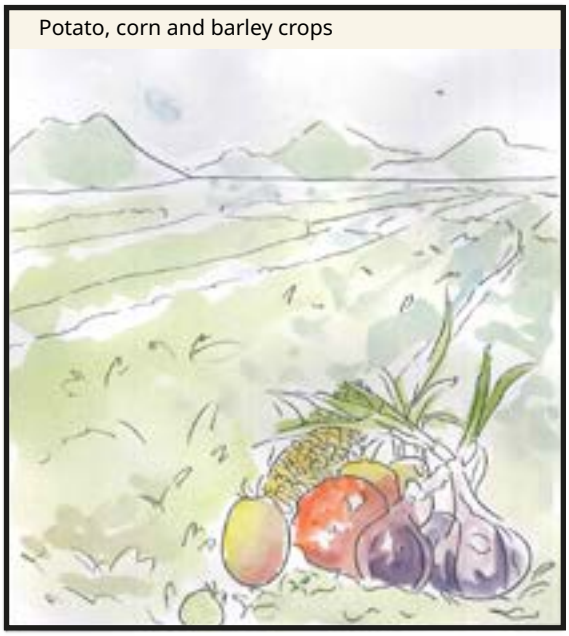
THE END

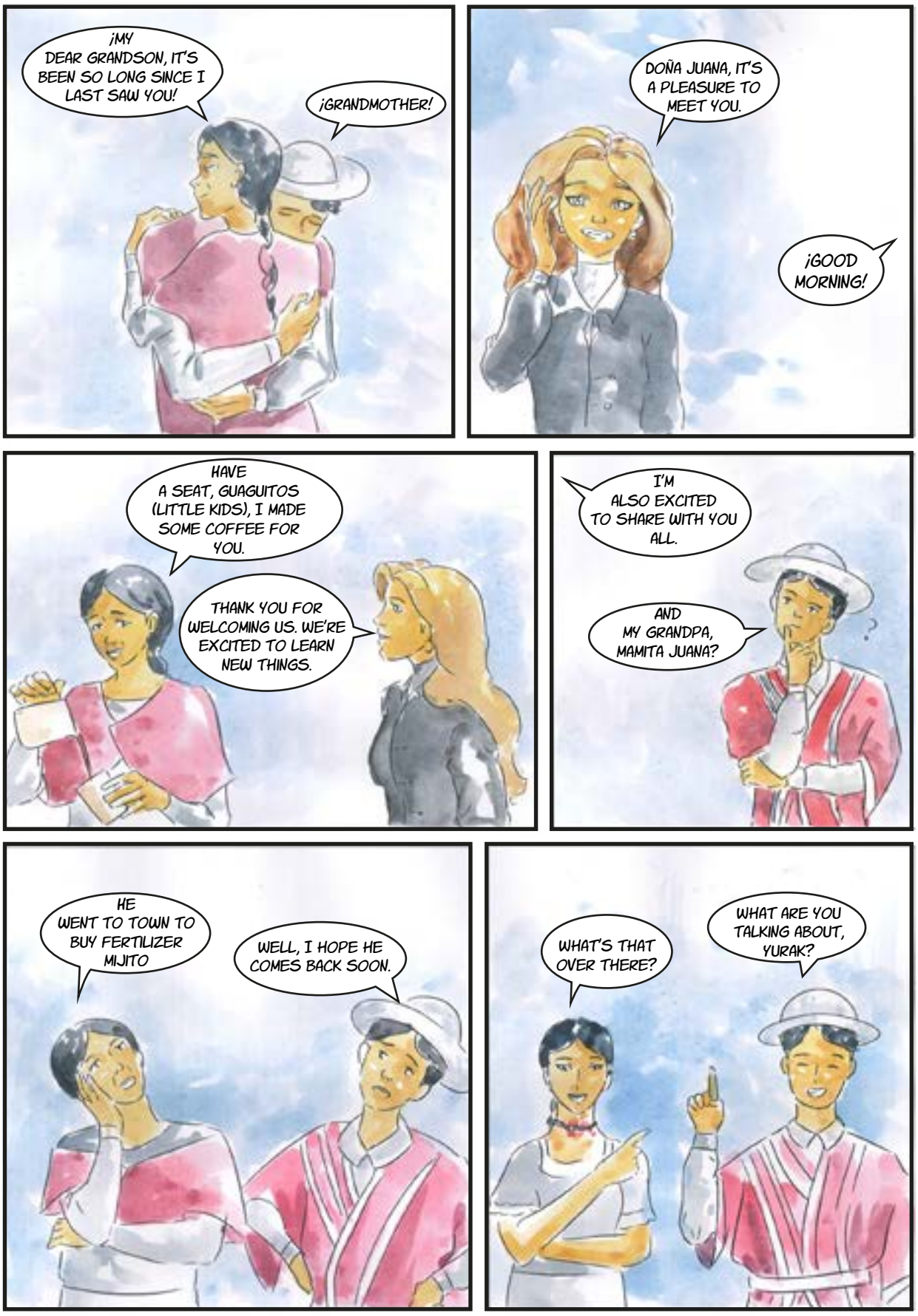
THE WEAVING OF OUR HISTORY



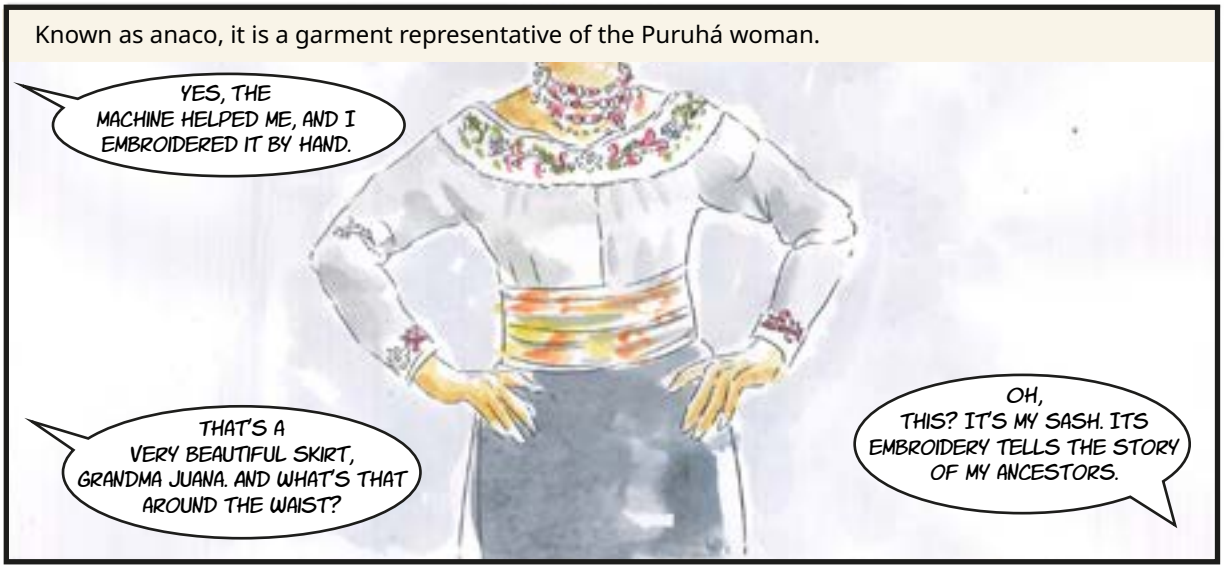


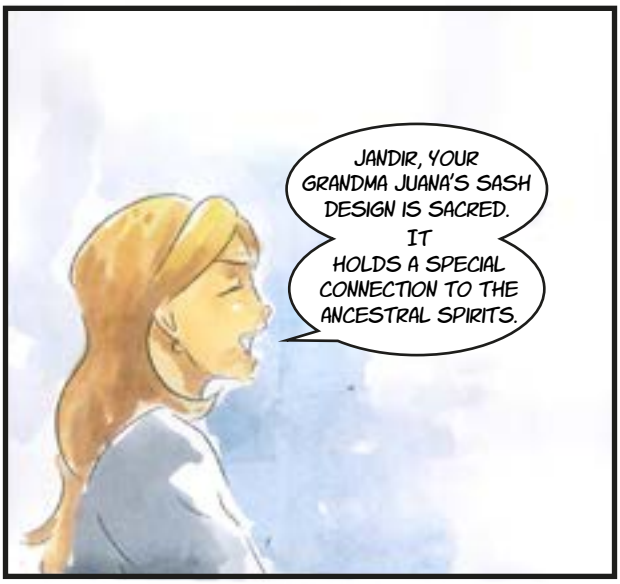





¡MY DEAR GRANDSON, IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I LAST SAW YOU!
¡GRANDMOTHER!
DOÑA JUANA, IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
¡GOOD MORNING!
HAVE A SEAT, GUAGUITOS (LITTLE KIDS), I MADE SOME COFFEE FOR YOU.
THANK YOU FOR WELCOMING US. WE'RE EXCITED TO LEARN NEW THINGS.
I'M ALSO EXCITED TO SHARE WITH YOU ALL.
AND MY GRANDPA, MAMITA JUANA?
HE WENT TO TOWN TO BUY FERTILIZER MIJITO
WELL, I HOPE HE COMES BACK SOON.
WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, YURAK?

Known as anaco, it is a garment representative of the Puruhá woman.





Bayetas

A brightly colored wool garment. Women like to feel vibrant and full of energy.

Necklaces and bracelets

They reflect the community's identity, connection to nature, and spirituality.

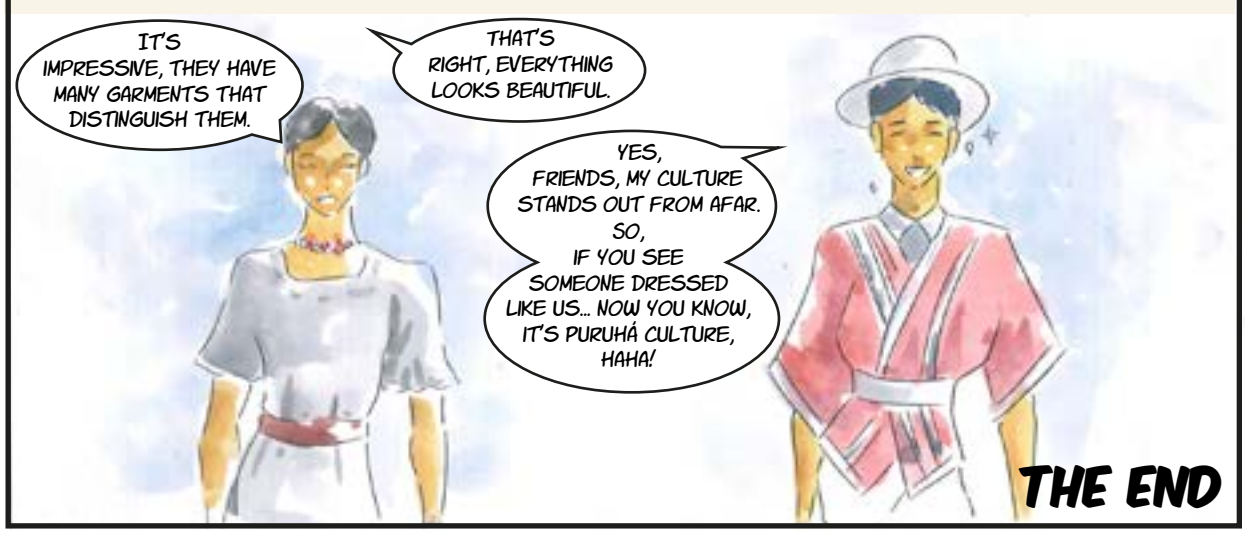
Hats

In Puruhá culture, the hat represents protection, wisdom, identity, and tradition.

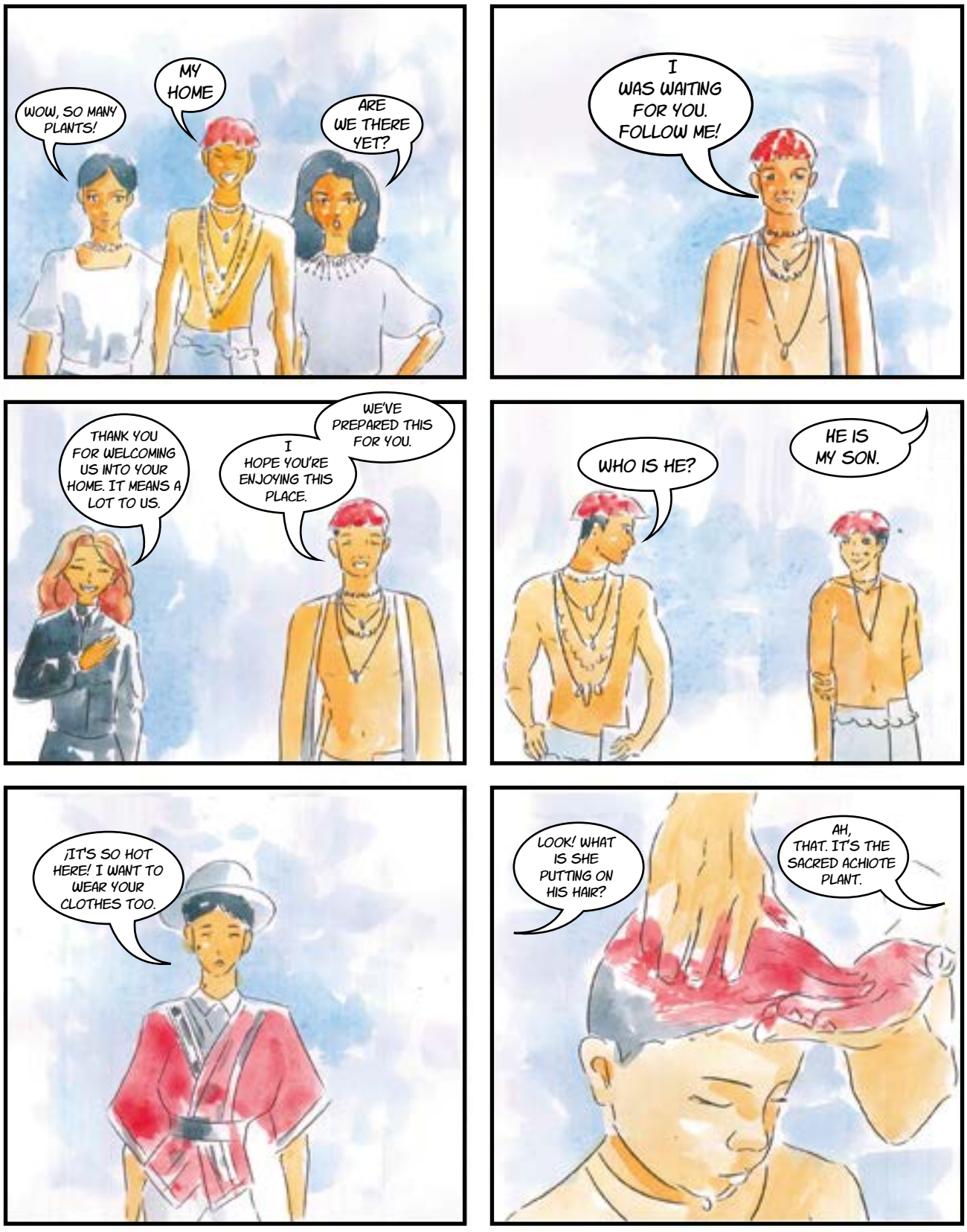
Cabuya fiber shirt

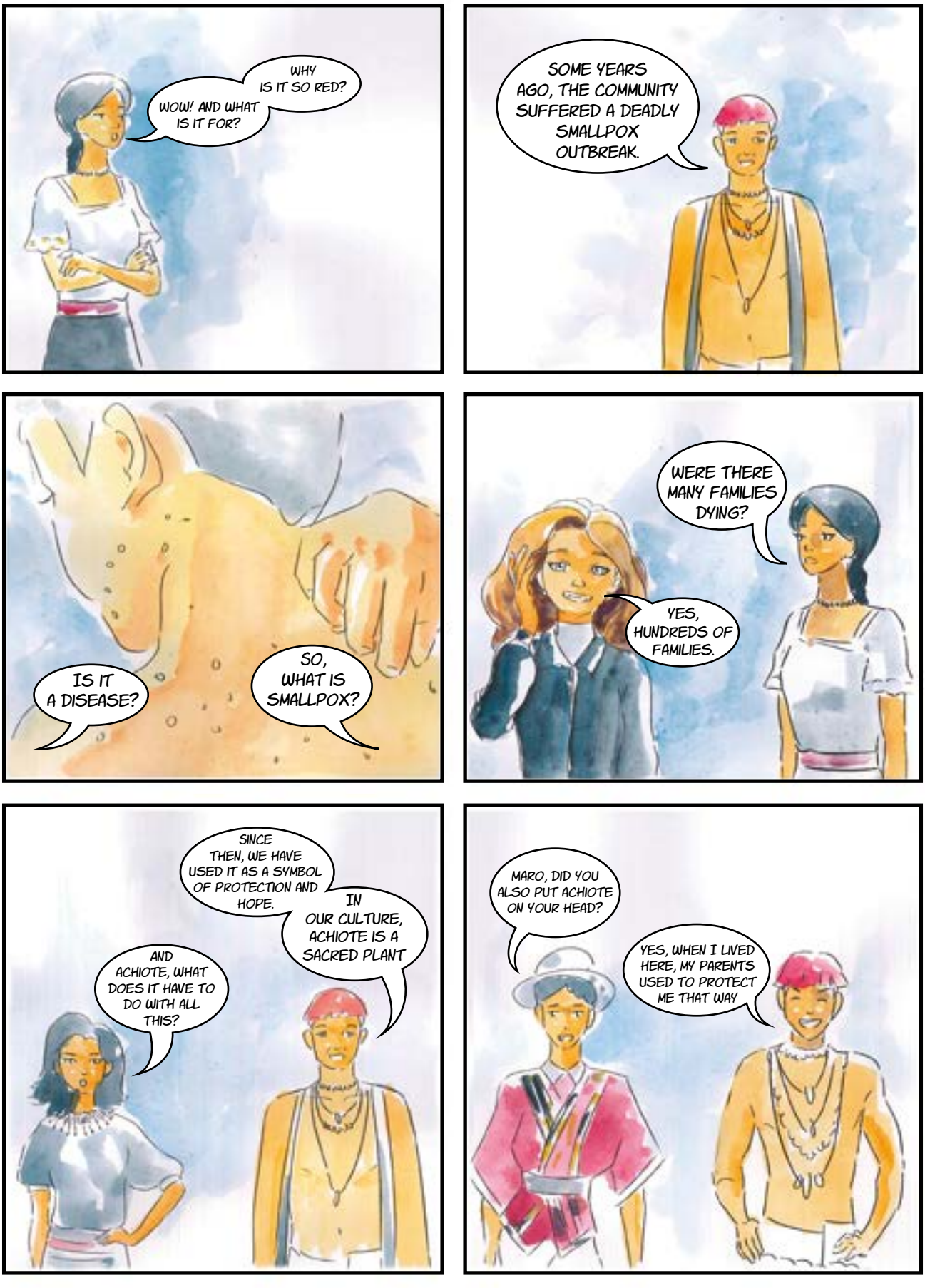
They represent the Andean trilogy of Inca culture

In our clothing we find a link to our past and a flag of our identity.



THE GUARDIANS OF THE RED



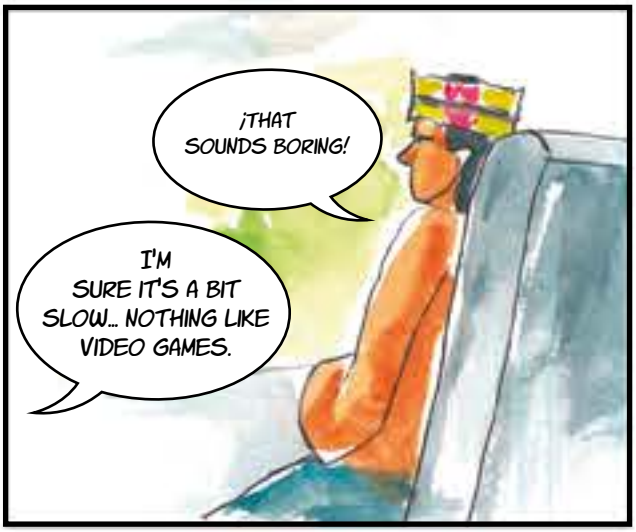

WOW! AND WHAT IS IT FOR?
WHY IS IT SO RED?
SOME YEARS AGO, THE COMMUNITY SUFFERED A DEADLY SMALLPOX OUTBREAK.
IS IT A DISEASE?
SO, WHAT IS SMALLPOX?
WERE THERE MANY FAMILIES DYING?
YES, HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES.
AND ACHIOTE, WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH ALL THIS?
SINCE THEN, WE HAVE USED IT AS A SYMBOL OF PROTECTION AND HOPE.
IN OUR CULTURE, ACHIOTE IS A SACRED PLANT
MARO, DID YOU ALSO PUT ACHIOTE ON YOUR HEAD?
YES, WHEN I LIVED HERE, MY PARENTS USED TO PROTECT ME THAT WAY

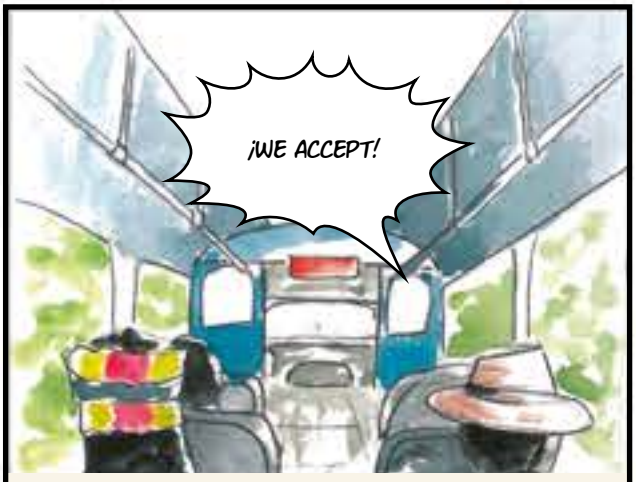
WELL, YOU'RE HERE NOW MARO, AT YOUR HOME.
PAINT YOUR HAIR, MARO.
I'LL DO IT.
REALLY? IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME...
IT'S TIME, MARO. GO FOR IT.
IT FEELS SO GOOD! I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW WONDERFUL MY CULTURE IS. THANK YOU!
YOU LOOK GREAT, MARO – RED COLOR REALLY SUITS YOU, HAHA.
THIS IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT OUR ROOTS: KNOWING AND SHARING WITH JOY...
THAT'S RIGHT, MY CULTURE HAS SO MANY THINGS THAT MAKE IT UNIQUE. I WILL NEVER FORGET IT; IT'S MY ESSENCE.
THE END

THE GAME OF THE JAGUAR SPIRIT

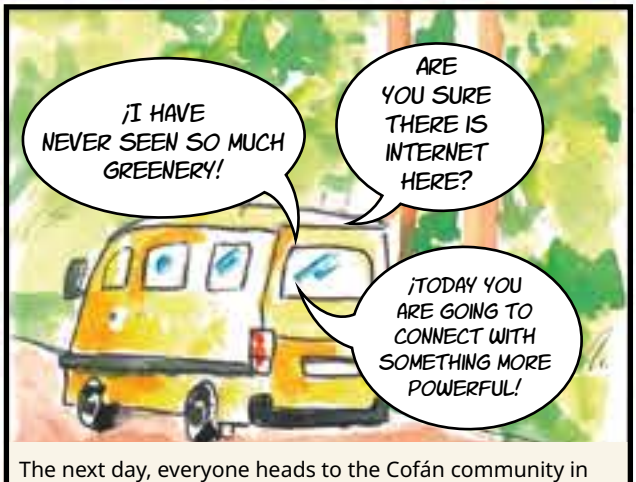
The students are traveling to a place unknown to them, while they look at their cell phones in concentration.

Teacher Lupita arrives and observes them with an intriguing smile.





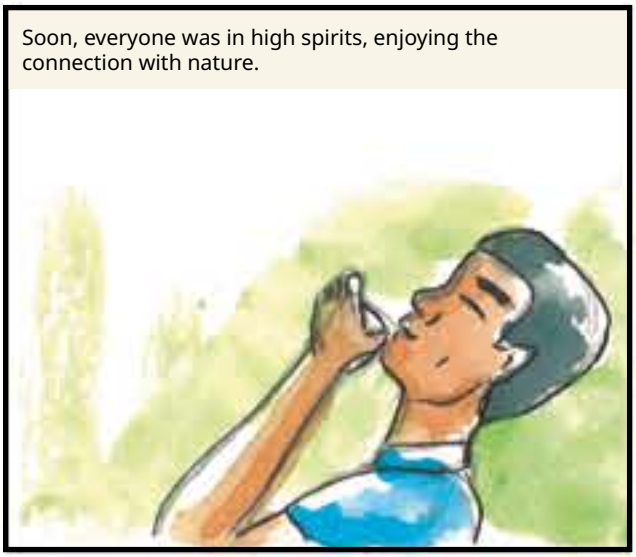
: The students accepted the challenge with curiosity.

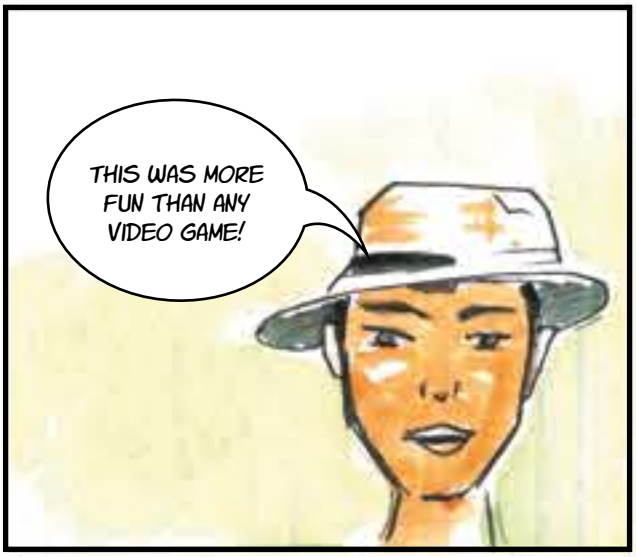


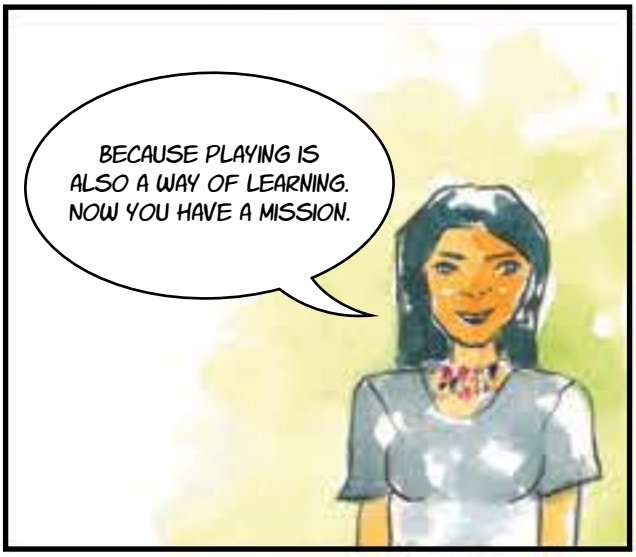
The next day, everyone heads to the Cofán community in Sucumbíos.

THIS RIVER IS OUR PATH AND OUR HISTORY. SOON THEY WILL KNOW SOMETHING THEY WILL NOT FORGET.
¡WHAT BEAUTIFUL COLORS!
WELCOME. TODAY THEY WILL PLAY U'MA FIU'GA, THE GAME OF THE JAGUAR SPIRIT.
TO UNDERSTAND OUR CULTURE, YOU MUST PLAY U'MA FIU'GA. HERE WE NOT ONLY IMITATE THE SOUNDS OF ANIMALS... WE BECOME THEM.
¡DON'T LET GO OF YOUR HANDS! THE JAGUAR WATCHES YOU FROM THE SHADOWS!
JAVIER, YOU'VE BEEN CAUGHT BY THE JAGUAR! NOW YOU MUST PAY THE PENANCE.
PENANCE? WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

Soon, everyone was in high spirits, enjoying the connection with nature.



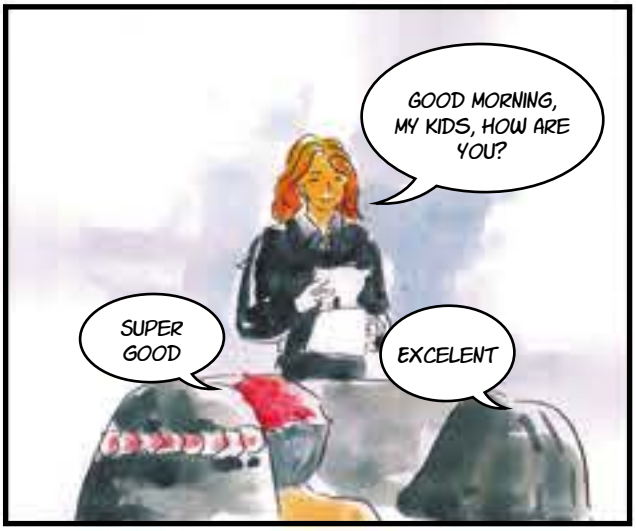


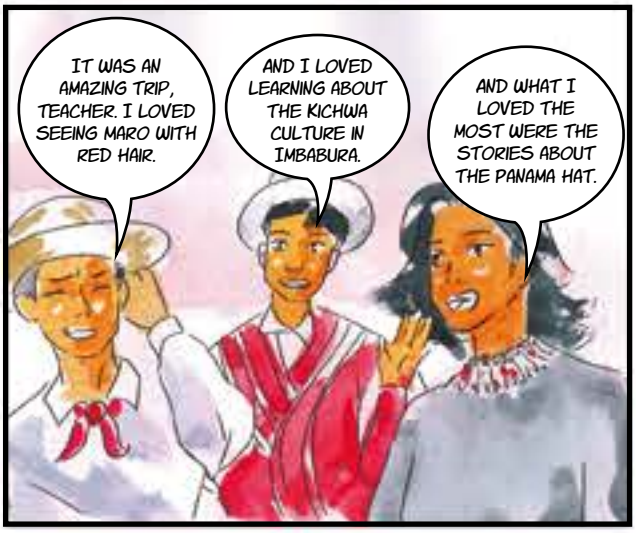


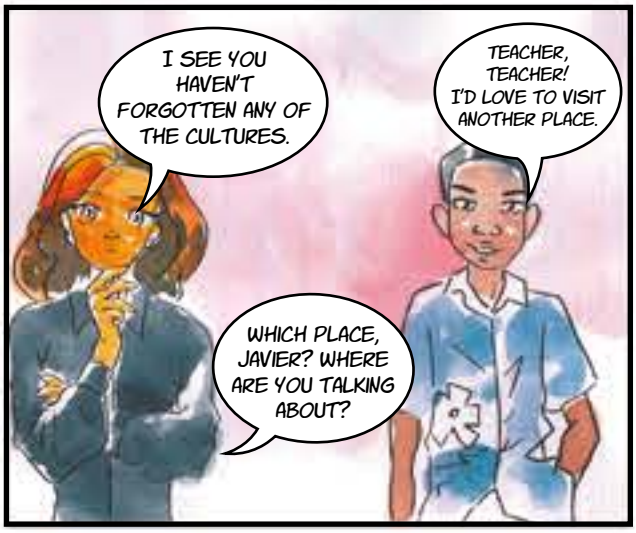
Intercultural learning is a way to honor and preserve our roots.

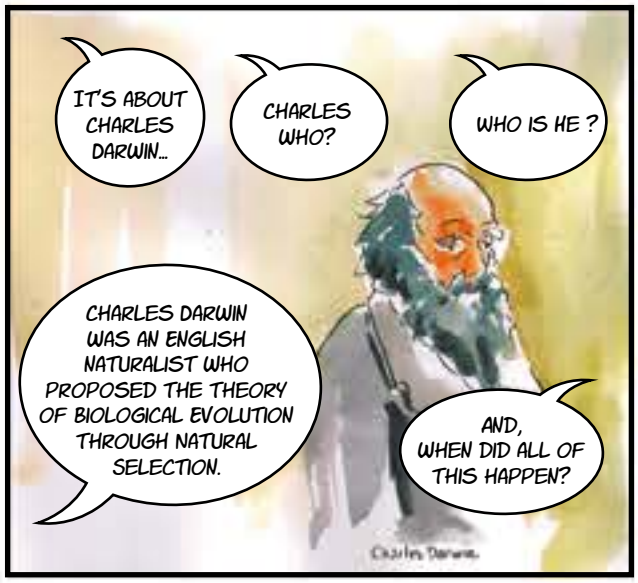
THE END

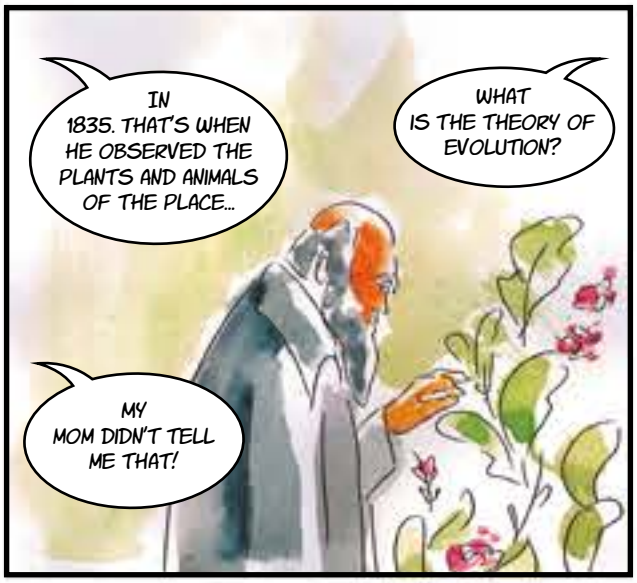
A PARADISE ON EARTH

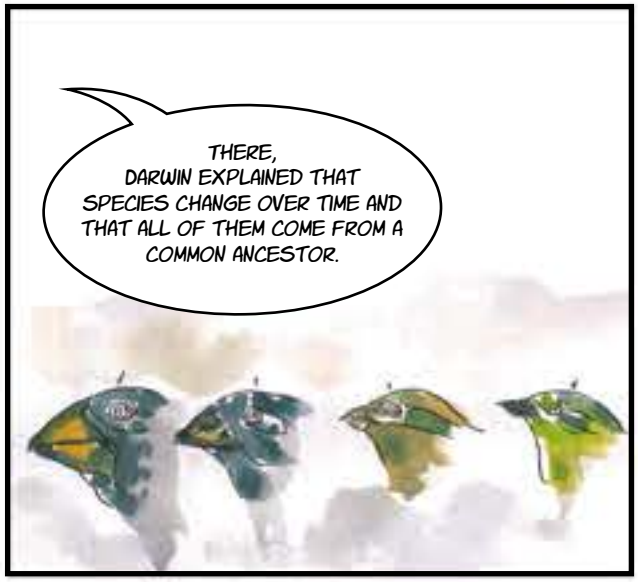


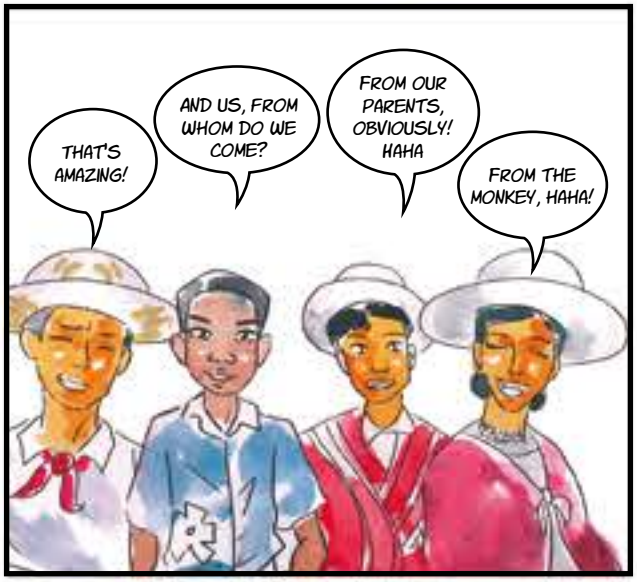





IT'S ABOUT CHARLES DARWIN...
CHARLES WHO?
WHO IS HE ?
CHARLES DARWIN WAS AN ENGLISH NATURALIST WHO PROPOSED THE THEORY OF BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION THROUGH NATURAL SELECTION.
AND, WHEN DID ALL OF THIS HAPPEN?


IN 1835. THAT'S WHEN HE OBSERVED THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS OF THE PLACE...
WHAT IS THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION?
MY MOM DIDN'T TELL ME THAT!


THERE, DARWIN EXPLAINED THAT SPECIES CHANGE OVER TIME AND THAT ALL OF THEM COME FROM A COMMON ANCESTOR.


THAT'S AMAZING!
AND US, FROM WHOM DO WE COME?
FROM OUR PARENTS, OBVIOUSLY! HAHA
FROM THE MONKEY, HAHA!

JAJAJA! YOU GUYS ARE SO FUNNY. WE WILL LEARN ABOUT OUR ORIGIN IN ANOTHER TIME...

YES, YES. NOW WE WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT GALÁPAGOS!
AND NOW, IF WE GO TO GALÁPAGOS, WHAT WILL WE FIND?

Galápagos is a paradise on earth; its ecotourism, culture, and biodiversity deserve global recognition.

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Chapter 7

Connecting worlds: Technology and diversity in the classroom

Connecting worlds: Technology and diversity in the classroom

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Introduction

Inclusive and social education is consolidated as a fundamental pillar in education. This approach proposes a transformative integration within academic life, where teachers and students actively participate in the teaching and learning processes, regardless of their individual, social or cultural differences (Fig & Charry, 2022). Romero et al. (2017) indicate that, with technological advancement, there has been a notable strengthening of inclusive and social education, facilitating the overcoming of barriers derived from cognitive, sensory, and motor disabilities, significantly contributing to the development of student autonomy and the improvement of educational quality.

A number of digital strategies promote educational inclusion, including assistive technologies that facilitates access and participation for people with disabilities. These include tools such as screen readers, voice recognition software and sign language interpretation systems, which promote more accessible and equitable learning environments (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022). Although the development of technological tools seeks the inclusion of the population, many platforms and digital environments remain inaccessible, severely limiting their participation in daily life. In the case of Ecuador, as in many countries, access to educational technologies is limited, especially in rural areas, where only 27% of

households have an adequate technological device, deepening the digital and educational divide (Boné-Andrade, 2023).

True educational inclusion begins when every voice is heard, and every story is valued. This chapter presents twelve narratives that bring to life school experiences in which students and teachers from diverse ethnic, cultural backgrounds and with different abilities actively participate in learning environments mediated by digital technologies. These stories illustrate how technology, used with an empathetic and inclusive approach, becomes a powerful tool to transform realities and generate environments where diversity is recognized and celebrated.

Thus, we aim to highlight the cultural and social richness of Ecuador, where diversity stands out alongside technology as an innovative, creative, and accessible digital tool that strengthens social inclusion. Furthermore, the intention is to promote respect for difference, the appreciation of identity, and the importance of inclusion, empathy, and, in general, to invite the reader to reflect on the potential of technology with purpose, sensitivity, and social commitment.

Digital Ethics and Interculturality

In an increasingly digital world, technology redefines the way we communicate, learn, and it acts as a bridge that links cultures, identities, and diverse realities. Through digital platforms, people can share their stories, traditions, and languages, generating intercultural meeting spaces that were previously unthinkable. This ability to connect the global with the local allows for greater visibility of historically marginalized communities and offers opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning.

Digital ethics, defined as the set of principles that regulate behavior in digital environments, demands an intercultural vision that respects diversity and fosters inclusion. In this way, Dennis and Clancy (2022) emphasize that digital ethics demands pluricultural approaches that allow for overcoming biases derived from Western normative perspectives and ensuring intercultural digital well-being. Currently, classrooms have become culturally diverse spaces, where technology can act as a connector between different worlds. Digital ethics refers

to the responsible use of technological tools, the recognition and respect for cultural differences among students, and the ethical integration of technology in education must focus on social inclusion and the development of digital competences that foster equity and participation. Thus, technology can become an ally to eliminate social and cultural barriers within the school environment.

Interculturality as an ethical principle demands an active commitment to dialogue and mutual recognition. In this sense, UNESCO (2020) highlights that "interculturality in digital environments must be based on mutual respect and cooperation, promoting dialogue between cultures to build a global digital citizenship" (p. 23). Multicultural classrooms, common in many countries, require students to interact with digital tools that are accessible and culturally sensitive. For example, the use of collaborative applications can facilitate projects where students from different cultures share their perspectives, promoting mutual understanding. However, without ethical guidance, these interactions can generate misunderstandings or reinforce stereotypes. Flores (2015) highlights that "interculturality in digital citizenship implies educating for mutual respect in virtual spaces" (p. 20). Teachers must teach students to question digital content and to create materials that reflect values of equity. This process strengthens intercultural competences and prepares students for an interconnected world.

Technology has the potential to connect worlds, but its design and application must be free of prejudice to guarantee equitable coexistence. The implementation of ethical and conscious digital practices can help prevent the exclusion of students belonging to cultural minorities. According to López (2018), digital governance with an intercultural perspective entails the creation of virtual environments that ensure users feel represented, respected, and safe. To achieve this, a critical review of digital content and platforms is necessary, promoting inclusion and respect as essential pillars of digital coexistence, to guarantee the appreciation of diversity by fostering equity, mutual recognition, and the enrichment of social and educational environments where all students feel valued and heard.

The development of an intercultural digital citizenship involves preparing students to participate in global environments where

multiple identities and worldviews coexist. This approach requires ensuring equitable access to information and communication technologies, as well as fostering the ability to use them to promote dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding. Thus, the classroom becomes a space for intercultural learning mediated by technology, in which diversity is valued as a collective wealth. Digital ethics, for its part, constitutes an essential framework that guides virtual interactions towards technical competence and cultural respect (Liu et al., 2023).

Technologies can and should be used as tools to make visible the narratives and knowledge of different cultures, promoting an inclusive and contextualized education. According to Hernández and Rodríguez (2021), it is necessary for digital resources to transcend hegemonic visions and offer content that reflects and represents the diversity of multiple cultures. This strategy promotes meaningful learning, strengthens students' cultural self-esteem, and combats the homogenization of knowledge, and through collaborative projects and diverse digital platforms, it is possible to create spaces where all voices are heard.

Thus, the "Connecting Worlds" approach alludes to technological connection, human interconnection mediated by respect, ethics, and diversity. Current education requires training individuals capable of living together and collaborating in plural and dynamic digital environments. According to Area (2020), digital literacy needs to be complemented by ethical and intercultural education that enables students to navigate cyberspace with critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of justice. Technology will cease to be a neutral tool and will become a transformative agent for more equitable and inclusive societies.

Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Platforms

Digital accessibility represents a fundamental pillar to guarantee educational equity in the technological era. Digital platforms, designed under principles of inclusion, allow students with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in teaching-learning processes. According to Pérez and Sánchez (2021), an accessible digital environment helps to remove technological

barriers and fosters students' active participation and autonomy. This approach contributes to democratizing access to education, recognizing diversity as a strength and not as a limitation.

Designing inclusive platforms involves considering multiple dimensions of accessibility, from simple navigation and the use of screen readers to adapting content to different learning styles according to students' needs. Ramírez and Torres (2019) state that "the implementation of Universal Learning Design (ULD) in digital environments offers an effective alternative to meet the diverse needs of students" (p.5). From this perspective, technologies should not be neutral, adaptive, sensitive to individual differences, and capable of offering multiple forms of representation, expression, and participation. In this way, paths can be opened for more equitable, personalized, and inclusive education.

In vulnerable contexts, digital accessibility must consider the availability of devices and connectivity. Therefore, a technically inclusive platform is not sufficient if students' environment limits basic access to technology. "Digital inclusion requires ongoing commitment to effective public policies that consider infrastructure, digital skills, and multisectoral collaboration to ensure equitable participation in the information society" (IIETA, 2024, parag. 5). Educational institutions must take an active role, managing resources and providing technical and pedagogical support so that all students can exercise their right to quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic context.

In this context, new technologies emerge as fundamental allies to support people, regardless of their abilities or conditions, provided that they are designed from the outset according to accessibility principles. According to Fundación Adecco (2022), accessible technologies enhance the autonomy and employability of people with disabilities in the educational sphere, while also promoting their complete inclusion. Inclusive platforms should not be considered an optional luxury; in fact, it is an ethical and pedagogical necessity that responds to the principle of equal opportunities. In this sense, educating in inclusive digital environments is a shared responsibility among authorities, teachers, and families. Through the conscious and equitable use of technology, it will be possible to build bridges between

diverse realities, eliminate gaps that hinder everyone's participation, and move towards truly transformative education, where diversity is recognized, valued, and celebrated, not marginalized.

Artificial Intelligence and Personalization of Inclusive Learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key tool in educational transformation, personalizing teaching-learning processes. This technological revolution promises more adaptive and inclusive education, capable of addressing students' specific needs and reducing structural barriers. In this context, AI seeks to optimize pedagogical efficiency and guarantee equity in access to knowledge and educational opportunities (Anchundia & Tubay, 2024). However, its implementation entails ethical and technical challenges that must be carefully addressed. Beyond content improvement, AI contributes to the development of methodologies, resources, and assessment systems that promote a truly student-centered education.

This approach is based on machine learning techniques and the analysis of large volumes of educational data, allowing the personalization of the learning experience effectively (Luckin et al., 2016). Educational applications include intelligent tutors, recommendation systems, predictive performance analysis, and assistive technologies that promote real inclusion of students.

Among the most notable applications in inclusive environments are adaptive algorithms that seek to analyze data in real time and adjust educational content according to each student's level of understanding. Alongside assistive technologies such as screen readers with natural language processing, these enable students with disabilities to access complex texts (Cruz, 2022). Finally, there are conversational interfaces such as virtual assistants and *chatbots* that answer questions, guide students in specific tasks, and provide personalized reminders, strengthening educational support.

The growth of AI in the educational field is accelerating. It is estimated that the global market for this technology will reach USD 6.000 million in 2025, while 60% of educational institutions are already implementing policies to integrate intelligent solutions. Platforms such as *Khan Academy* and *Duolingo* have proven being effective in offering personalized education to students in rural and low-

income contexts, such as in India and Brazil (WIRED 2025), this personalization increases both the effectiveness and motivation of learning. UNESCO (2023) points out that investment in artificial intelligence should be understood as a complement and not as a replacement for traditional resources allocated to education, to ensure fair and sustainable integration.

The convergence of AI and education points towards scenarios where platforms analyze student behavior in real time, allowing the optimization of the learning experience (Metaverso Pro, n.d.). This technology enables teachers to identify individual difficulties more accurately and offer personalized strategies to overcome them. AI must not replicate or exacerbate existing inequalities; it must act as a driver of transformation towards equitable education. This objective will only be achievable through interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers, engineers, psychologists, and inclusion experts.

Artificial intelligence represents a unique opportunity to transform education towards more personalized, adaptive, and inclusive models. Its responsible use can eliminate barriers, facilitate access to knowledge, and improve educational quality for all students, especially those with specific needs (Luna, 2018). However, its implementation must be supported by ethical public policies, investment in technological infrastructure, and ongoing teacher training. In this way, AI can be consolidated as a strategic ally to guarantee the right to education.

Innovative Experiences of Hybrid and Inclusive Classrooms in Ecuador

Education in Ecuador has experienced significant transformations in recent years, with a growing focus on inclusion and innovation in learning spaces that promote hybrid-teaching environments. This model allows educators to adapt their strategies to different learning styles, facilitating the participation of all students. According to Peñaherrera et al. (2021), the implementation of hybrid classrooms has proven to be effective in promoting inclusion, especially in contexts where student diversity and geographical inequalities represent significant challenges. The innovative experiences of hybrid classrooms in Ecuador reflect a growing willingness on the

part of educational institutions to incorporate flexible, inclusive, and contextualized models that respond to urban and rural realities.

Classrooms are considered educational spaces that combine face-to-face teaching with digital mediation. This mind-set allows for the integration of digital technologies with traditional teaching methods. Within the Ecuadorian context, classrooms have emerged as a response to challenges. Carazas et al. (2024) assert that this approach seeks to improve quality, promote the inclusion of students with diverse abilities and contexts, enabling them to participate equitably. Thus, these classrooms are not simply a change in methodology, but rather spaces where, regardless of their abilities, students can reach their full potential.

In Ecuador, the implementation of hybrid classrooms has been driven by the need to ensure educational continuity during and after the pandemic. Existing obstacles have been evidenced in both urban and rural areas. Various institutions have adopted innovative strategies aimed at integrating all students through adaptive uses of technological resources. Duque-Romero et al. (2023) state that the implementation of digital technologies has been fundamental to the inclusion of students with specific needs and in vulnerable situations. These efforts include the use of educational platforms, mobile applications, multimedia resources, and active methodologies such as project-based learning and gamification.

In cities such as Quito, Cuenca, and Guayaquil, some institutions have developed hybrid programs that combine synchronous and asynchronous classes, using tools such as Google Classroom, Moodle, and Zoom. These experiences have made it possible to adapt the learning pace to individual needs, while fostering collaborative work and the development of digital skills. Morales (2017) points out that, in rural contexts, the use of ICT represents an opportunity to overcome barriers of distance and lack of resources. Although his study does not focus exclusively on Ecuador, it applies to the Ecuadorian context due to structural similarities. In regions such as the Ecuadorian Sierra and Amazon, school radios, platforms accessible via mobile telephony, and community centers with shared connectivity have been implemented. These initiatives have been key to maintaining inclusion in hard-to-reach areas.

Binario (2025) highlights that one of the most significant contributions of these experiences has been the ability to adapt the content to the diversity of learning styles. In particular, programs were developed with automatic subtitles, materials in sign language, enriched visual resources, and differentiated activities according to the student's level of understanding, producing an increase in student participation in hybrid environments that allow for greater autonomy and participation. Temporal flexibility has favored virtual attendance in contexts of mobility or labor needs, fostering the development of digital skills, and both students and teachers have improved their competence in the use of technological tools.

Future perspectives in the field of hybrid and inclusive classrooms in Ecuador are outlined through various trends and the expansion of educational models, and there is an effort to increase the use of technologies such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality that can provide adaptive resources to the individual needs of students. Likewise, inclusion involves the integration of educational policies that promote a learning environment at all levels of education (Calle-Córdova, 2024). The implementation of awareness programs and continuous training for teachers is necessary to address diversity in the classroom. In the long term, inclusion and hybrid education in Ecuador guarantee a response to needs, which will be key instruments for building a fairer, more equitable society with opportunities for all.

Unequal Access to Technology in Rural Communities in Ecuador

For several decades, access to technology in rural areas has been a major challenge, which has limited the equitable participation of students in the digital classroom, generating inequalities and exclusion for students who belong to disadvantaged contexts (Torres et al., 2024). Several difficulties contribute to these challenges. Unequal access to technology is faced by the majority of students who do not have the same access to quality technological devices or to a reliable Internet connection. This is due to the lack of technological infrastructure that limits participation in the digital classroom and perpetuates educational inequality.

The high cost of mobile devices makes their acquisition difficult for low-income families, since a device with a stable network, software,

and online services are needed. The lack of knowledge and digital skills are other difficulties faced by people living in rural areas due to the lack of economic resources to hire trained teachers in those areas. This leads to a deficit in students' academic performance and lower participation in online educational activities (Pin-Zambrano, 2024).

To resolve these difficulties, it is necessary for the government to implement policies and programs that promote access to technology and training in rural areas, in order to close these gaps and ensure that students, regardless of their geographic location, have equal opportunities in their education (Pin-Zambrano, 2024).

The lack of empathy on the part of the authorities regarding cultural diversity can lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices in educational content. Therefore, it is essential to review didactic material before it is presented to students to avoid permanent stereotypes and prejudices. One of these factors may be the disintegration of cultural diversity in classroom materials, which in turn causes the omission of their internal diversity and affects the self-esteem of students who come from rural areas, generating low self-esteem.

Similarly, language barriers hinder communication and learning in multicultural digital environments. The lack of bilingual materials and limitations in automatic translation can generate exclusion for students who do not master the language. The unlimited content such as platforms and digital resources hinders learning due to language limitations. This, in turn, generates exclusion for students who do not speak different languages and only speak their mother tongue (Chyara, 2024).

The lack of infrastructure and literacy are considered barriers that affect technological advancement in rural areas. According to INEC (2020), only 27% of rural households in Ecuador have access to the Internet, compared to 67% in urban areas. These low connectivity rates are evident in Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities.

The lack of technological infrastructure is not limited to Internet connection, but also includes the absence of adequate and quality technological devices. Boné-Andrade (2023) mentions that digital

literacy is another critical factor affecting digital inclusion. This is due to the limited knowledge people have when trying to operate a device, generating frustration and low self-esteem in individuals who are unable to manage certain technological tools. Training in digital competencies is scarce in these areas due to the lack of resources to hire qualified teachers and obtain up-to-date devices.

Digital Literacy in Indigenous Communities

Currently, one of the concerns of countries is that most inhabitants are affected by the lack of infrastructure and investment from governmental entities, especially in rural communities. Consequently, this generates less inclusion in the digital context and illiteracy in terms of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Herrera, 2023). Following the arrival of the pandemic, the use of technologies became a necessity in education for the continuity of classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several broadcasts of educational programs were made through television and radio media to share academic content, thus overcoming barriers to access education (Condori, 2023).

In response to these measures, the government, together with the Ministry of Education of Ecuador has chosen to provide technological equipment to certain communities in Ecuador. On March 7, 2025, at the Ecuador Martínez Collazo Coliseum, the National Government presented the Digital Gap Reduction Project in the National Education System, an initiative that will modernize learning in the country's educational community with an investment of USD 92.5 million. The objective of this project is to equip schools with technological devices to strengthen education and the work of teachers, aiming to improve education and ensure equitable participation in digital competencies in vulnerable areas (Ministerio de Educación, 2025).

Similarly, the government of *El Nuevo Ecuador* (New Ecuador) seeks to reduce the digital gap in its three dimensions: access, use, and appropriation, integrating technology and connectivity as key tools in the educational process. The goal is for schoolchildren of different abilities, cultures, languages, socioeconomic contexts, and different ways of using technological tools, among others, to respond fairly

to the characteristics, needs, interests, talents, skills, and learning preferences of the entire student body (Pérez & Reeves, 2023).

The government and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador made decisions based on paradigms to promote equity and student participation, regardless of race, social status, or other factors. All institutions must now adapt to an inclusive approach. Today, all educational institutions must adapt to an inclusive approach in order to generate quality education, leaving behind certain gaps that exist in communities.

Institutions and teachers must fulfil the role of inclusion. Teachers must always be exploring certain inclusion techniques to improve relationships among students, considering equal opportunities for all. For the teacher to fulfil this role, they must focus on techniques, materials, and support for students, guiding them toward learning that can be transferred to other areas of knowledge and to everyday life (Gordillo-Fuentes et al., 2024).

In addition, for the objectives to be achieved, the teacher and the curriculum must be aligned to strengthen the use of digital tools in children, youth, and adults. Therefore, pedagogical integration between technology and teaching processes for learning is a necessity today. Technology has transformed education, and the way people access, process, and share information in all areas, including education. In this context, the role of the teacher must evolve to become a facilitator of learning adapted to the changing needs of students and to the demands of a digital society (Herrera, 2023).

During class, the teacher must apply strategies and teaching methodologies that encourage students to form active work groups, where collaboration and participation are central elements to achieve meaningful academic objectives. These dynamics promote cooperative learning, shared construction of knowledge, and the development of interpersonal skills.

On the other hand, typography constitutes an essential component in educational processes, as it directly influences the clarity, organization, and effectiveness of didactic materials. Its appropriate selection and use allow for the hierarchy of information, highlighting key concepts, and fostering attention and comprehension of content. According to Richardson (2022), typefaces can be classified into

various families that adapt to different functions and media, such as Serif, Sans Serif, Script, Display, and Monospaced, each with particular characteristics that facilitate legibility and visual impact depending on the context of use.

Proper knowledge and management of these typographic families, along with the use of appropriate digital tools, contribute to improving the quality of educational resources and enhancing students' meaningful learning. Below, Table 7 presents several audio-visual programs available for teaching use, which stand out for incorporating typographic options favorable to legibility and enhancing the visual impact of educational materials.

Table 7

Audio-visual programs available for teaching use

Programme	Description	Characteristics
Canva	Online platform for graphic design and presentations.	Wide variety of modern, legible typefaces; easy font combination possible.
Adobe Spark	A tool for creating videos, graphics and web pages.	Professional, customizable typefaces; options for animating text.
Powtoon	Platform for creating animated videos and presentations.	Clear and dynamic typefaces that are easy to read on screen.
Prezi	Non-linear presentation software with visual effects.	Clean, legible fonts; customizable sizes and colors for emphasis.
Microsoft PowerPoint	Classic programme for educational presentations.	Extensive font library; support for custom fonts.
Animaker	Platform to create animated videos with ease.	Varied and attractive typographies to capture attention in educational videos.
Filmora	Easy -to-use video editing software for teachers.	Supports multiple fonts; allows you to adjust text size, color, and animation.

Note. *Table created by the authors based on information gathered from various official websites.*

These applications foster inclusive education, ensuring high-quality, inclusive, and equitable learning for all. The ultimate aim of technological tools is to promote a free education where students can access an internet connection regardless of their abilities, capabilities, and personal and/or sociocultural characteristics.

These are particularly necessary, especially in vulnerable areas, as they help to recognize diversity as an enriching value that promotes equity, accessibility, and the participation of all in the educational process. This, in turn, creates flexible and adaptable learning environments, ensuring students feel welcomed, valued, and can reach their full potential. Learning is based on the principle that every student is unique and has the right to receive a high-quality education through new technologies and strategies, thus fostering inclusive education (Arteaga-Tuba, 2024).

Herrera (2023) states that the integration of ICT in the educational field enhances the teaching-learning process. Therefore, to maximize their effectiveness, teachers must undergo training in technological competencies, which will enable them to integrate digital tools into the design of tasks and activities.

Use of Mobile Technologies for Teaching Indigenous Languages

Ecuador stands out for its extensive linguistic and cultural diversity, with 14 indigenous languages existing, including Kichwa, Shuar, and Tsafiqui. Eight of these languages are disappearing, which represents a critical challenge to preserving the cultural and historical heritage that is integral to the country's identity as a plurinational and multi-ethnic state (CONAIE, 2022). Among the main factors, threatening indigenous languages are the socio-economic conditions faced by native-speaking communities, the imposition of Spanish as the dominant and official language, limited government support, and the progressive loss of linguistic interest and pride among young Ecuadorians. These obstacles weaken intergenerational transmission and the strengthening of indigenous identities, thereby endangering Ecuador's cultural diversity (Haboud, 2019).

According to Montes et al. (2024), technological advancements, especially mobile technologies such as educational applications, have emerged as innovative strategies to address the disappearance of indigenous languages. These tools facilitate the teaching and learning process of indigenous languages, offering interactive and accessible resources. Furthermore, mobile technologies enable meaningful learning using devices such as mobile phones, promoting individual

and collaborative educational experiences, and offering students a modern and accessible way to acquire knowledge.

A study conducted by Masaquiza (2021) highlights that mobile technologies, particularly educational applications, represent an innovative tool for the learning of indigenous languages, as they incorporate a social and cultural perspective closely linked to the users' everyday context. These technologies facilitate the acquisition of new vocabulary and information through interactive resources, such as audios and images, which reflect the daily life and traditions of indigenous communities. As a result, the learning process is enriched, an increase in the number of speakers is promoted, and Ecuadorian cultural identity is strengthened, thereby contributing to counteracting the progressive disappearance of these languages.

According to Ríos-Colmenárez (2020), the development of mobile technologies has transformed and modernized educational processes, offering innovative opportunities for teaching indigenous languages such as Kichwa. However, their implementation faces significant challenges, particularly in rural contexts across Latin America, including Ecuador. These include the lack of internet in some rural areas, which presents a major connectivity problem necessary for the use of educational applications. Furthermore, insufficient teacher training in the didactic use of technological tools and the limited adaptation of students to these platforms significantly reduces their effectiveness in the teaching-learning process.

Beyond technological challenges, the revitalization of indigenous languages in Ecuador faces deeply rooted cultural barriers, particularly among the new generations of young Ecuadorians, where a weakening of cultural identity is perceived. This stems from the hegemony of Spanish as Ecuador's official language, leading to a reduction in Ecuadorians' interest in learning and valuing their ancestral languages and intensifying their disconnection from the indigenous worldview. This lack of motivation cannot be attributed solely to the Ecuadorian population, as many mobile applications designed for teaching indigenous languages adopt a reductionist approach. These applications limit themselves to literal translations that omit the cultural and symbolic meanings of these indigenous languages, and often have a limited design that rarely implements interactive and cultural virtual spaces (Ríos-Colmenárez, 2020).

According to UNESCO (2023), mobile technologies influence the social and cultural development of indigenous languages, strengthening the transmission and preservation of these languages through the visibility and reach of such applications, thereby combating the stigma of indigenous languages being seen as old-fashioned or boring. In this way, Ecuador will manage to preserve this linguistic treasure, which strengthens Ecuadorian identity and contributes to the country's sustainable development, with its own citizens recognizing the importance of digital tools like "Singuistics", an application that teaches indigenous languages through traditional songs created by indigenous artists, thus highlighting Ecuadorians' commitment to keeping their culture alive.

Assistive Technologies for Special Needs

Assistive technologies (AT) have transformed educational inclusion worldwide by promoting and facilitating the participation of individuals with disabilities or special educational needs in social and academic environments, thereby fostering their autonomy and significantly improving their quality of life. It is important to emphasize that these tools seek to overcome barriers limiting inclusion by offering functional and comfortable solutions that respond to user needs, replacing traditional resources and giving rise to new practices that strengthen equity and cultural diversity (García, 2024).

According to Hess and Gutierrez (2018), assistive technologies strengthen the development of functional and learning skills in individuals with special educational needs or disabilities. They therefore encompass a wide range of digital tools, from a simple low-tech magnifying glass to a communication system based on algorithms and automated programming. Currently, these tools aim to provide digital solutions such as applications on computers, mobile phones, or tablets, featuring functions like voice recognition, screen readers, and screen magnification; similarly, other digital tools exist, such as Braille printers, hearing aids, and adapted keyboards with covers, among others (Fundación Adecco, 2022).

In Ecuador, assistive technologies are key to educational inclusion, as they enable the removal of barriers and promote equity across

the entire educational community, generating awareness and sensitization processes through accessible and innovative resources. According to a study by García (2024), 48.4% of surveyed teachers state that teaching and learning within classrooms has been facilitated by assistive technology. Furthermore, 48.4% concur on the importance of promoting and raising awareness among both students and teaching staff regarding the use of assistive technologies.

Assistive technologies drive diversity and empathy in Ecuadorian classrooms, providing modern, effective, and motivating support. The integration of assistive technologies into educational settings represents a significant advance in Ecuador, where education is characterized by being more accessible, equitable, and respectful of differences.

Regarding the limitations faced by assistive technologies for their proper integration into Ecuadorian classrooms, Troya et al. (2024) point to the lack of technological resources, insufficient teacher training, and opposition to change from some educators. These difficulties hinder the effective development of linguistic inclusion through technological tools. For this reason, various studies highlight the importance of providing sustained support to teachers, as they play a key role in implementing such technologies within the classroom, ensuring their equitable access and use among students who require them.

Conclusions

The integration of technologies in diverse educational contexts constitutes a strategic tool for democratizing access to knowledge and strengthening inclusion processes. In intercultural settings, technology should be conceived as both a functional tool and a facilitator of dialogue among diverse knowledge systems, languages, and cultural experiences. When effectively guided, digital mediation enhances the visibility of marginalized narratives and supports the creation of learning environments that embrace students' cultural diversity.

The use of technological resources in the intercultural classroom must be guided by pertinent pedagogical criteria that address the

sociocultural realities of the students. Educational platforms, mobile applications, and audio-visual tools can enhance active participation if they are contextualized and adapted to the needs of each community. The introduction of devices does not guarantee inclusion; it is pedagogical intentionality that transforms the digital environment into an opportunity for intercultural encounter.

Cultural products generated through technologies, such as digital comics, documentary videos, or visual narratives, enable students to express their identities and knowledge using accessible and creative codes. These productions, by incorporating indigenous languages, cultural symbols, and territorial references, strengthen the sense of belonging and validate community knowledge in traditionally hegemonized spaces. The collaborative creation of technological content thus becomes a strategy for educational and cultural empowerment.

For technology to be consolidated as a tool for intercultural inclusion, it is essential to guarantee teacher training in digital competencies with a critical and decolonial approach. Teachers must be capable of selecting, designing, and applying technological tools that do not reproduce colonial models of teaching, but instead promote intercultural dialogue, equity, and the recognition of diversity. Furthermore, it is urgent to overcome the structural digital divide that limits equitable access to technological resources, especially in rural and indigenous areas.

Comics

Connecting worlds: Technology and diversity in the classroom

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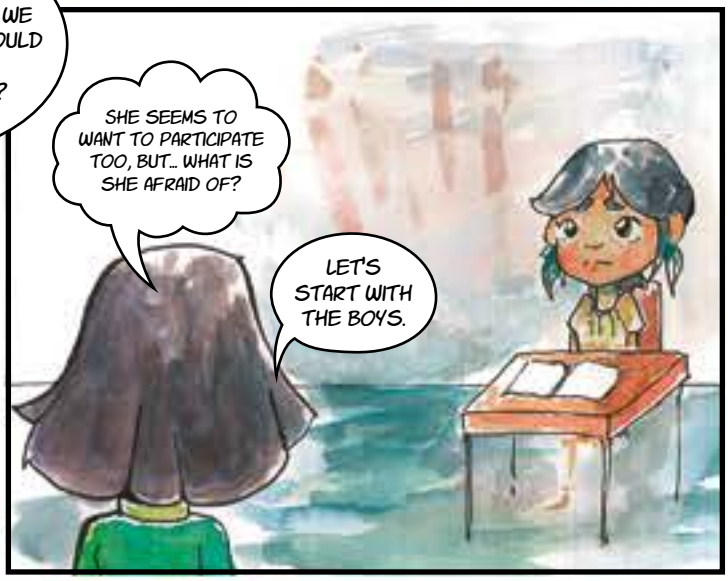
THE VOICE OF THE RIVER

In the Kichwa community of Pastaza, the river whispers. But Yura has no voice because she was born without one.

Yura did not join anyone for fear of making his classmates uncomfortable.

One day a new teacher arrived.

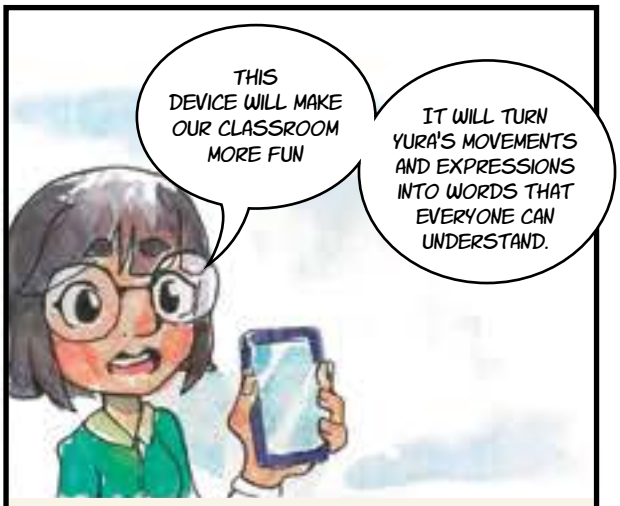


Camila couldn't ignore Yura's shy behavior, so to understand her better, she decided to get closer to her world by visiting her home and family

From a small wooden house by the river, Yura's mother greets Camila from afar.

Here, life flowed to the rhythm of the river and traditions. Yucca, a tuber similar to potato with a light nutty touch, was crushed by the family to make their typical fermented drink, "chicha de yuca".

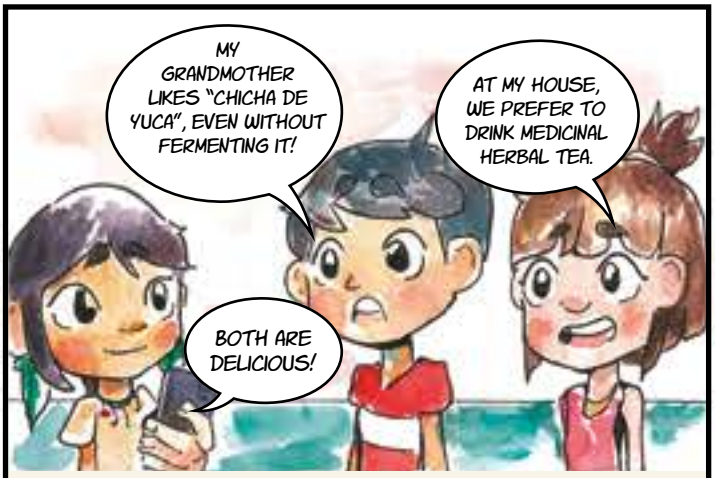
Camila decided to help Yura by giving her a "voice", she found a news article on her cell phone "Artificial intelligence with predetermined phrases".



The next day, Camila presented the new app in front of her class.

The teacher noticed Yura's doubt so she asked a question to motivate her to use the app.

Yura opened the app and easily found an image of chicha de yuca, so when she clicked on it, a robotic voice came out.



All the children surrounded Yura, because now they could get to know her better.

Inclusion is not a gift, nor a sign of pity. It is a reflection of a society that chooses to listen, learn and evolve. With technology, every voice will be the same song.

HANDS THAT SPEAK

The three friends worked hard on their project, '*Talking Hands*,' programming and collecting data day and night. They managed to make their program produce a voice at the same time it uses sign language

As her classmates and teachers stared at her, Lucia began to move her hands in front of the translator that they created

Everyone loved "Talking Hands " so they came over to see what else Lucia could do

Not only words come from the mouth, but also from the heart, when we learn to listen we break the barrier and become inclusive

THE END

A NEW HOME, A NEW OPPORTUNITY

When Juan lost his sight, he moved with his parents to a village called Pesillo. The new environment fills him with doubts, where his cane is his only ally as he makes his way to his new school.

At school, Juan feels nervous. Will they look at him with curiosity or pity?

In front of the class, Teacher Ana introduces him to his new classmates.

During recess, Juan sat alone on a bench so Karla and Luis approach him with a smile and invite him to join the group.

Though Juan listened carefully, he couldn't see what was written in his book, and frustration started to set in.

Ana searched for a solution on her computer. She knew that with the right tools, Juan could learn and participate just like any other child.

The next day, Teacher Ana gave Juan a tablet.

As Juan held the tablet, a robotic voice greeted him.

Seeing Juan's excitement, Karla and Luis decided to help him connect with the traditions of their village, Pesillo.

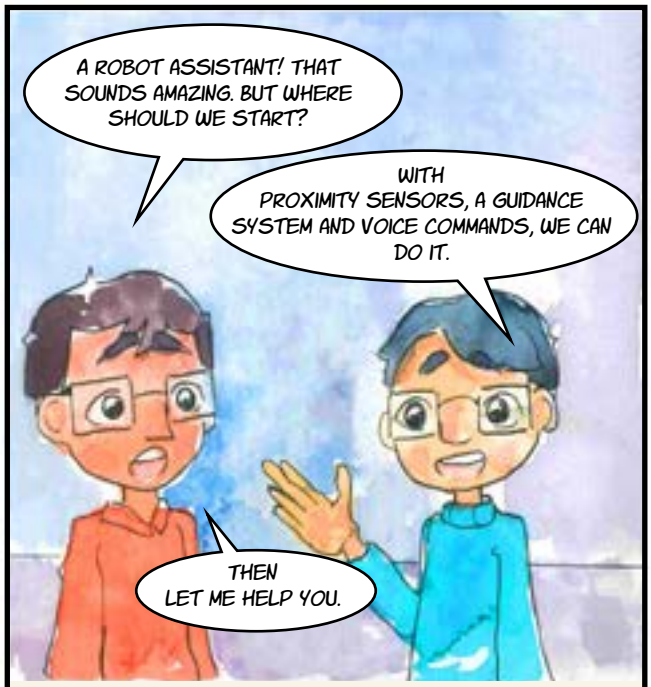
Juan and his friends began recording different legends that the village grandparents knew.

Inclusion is not about making things the same for everyone, it's about giving everyone the tools they need to grow.

MY SISTER, MY INSPIRATION

In Ecuador, many streets are not adapted for people with visual impairments. That's why children like little Sofía, who could not see, had to rely on someone else to move around safely.

Camilo, Sofia's older brother, has always been a fan of innovative and modern inventions. And now with that knowledge he was thinking about how to help his sister.



At his university, Camilo shares his idea with his friend Diego, coming up with the idea of making a robot.

It was days of trial and error, where both friends consulted with professors and classmates, researched similar projects, and looked for parts in local tech markets.

Camilo's house

With a knowing smile, Camilo showed Sofia how intuitive it was to handle LUX. All she had to do was give it voice commands, and the little robot would respond with Ecuadorian expressions and phrases.

From afar, Camilo held back his excitement as he watched his sister move forward with confidence. For the first time, she didn't need someone to guide her; LUX was doing it for her.

Camilo wanted to share his happiness with others, so he posted a video of his sister using Lux on TikTok.

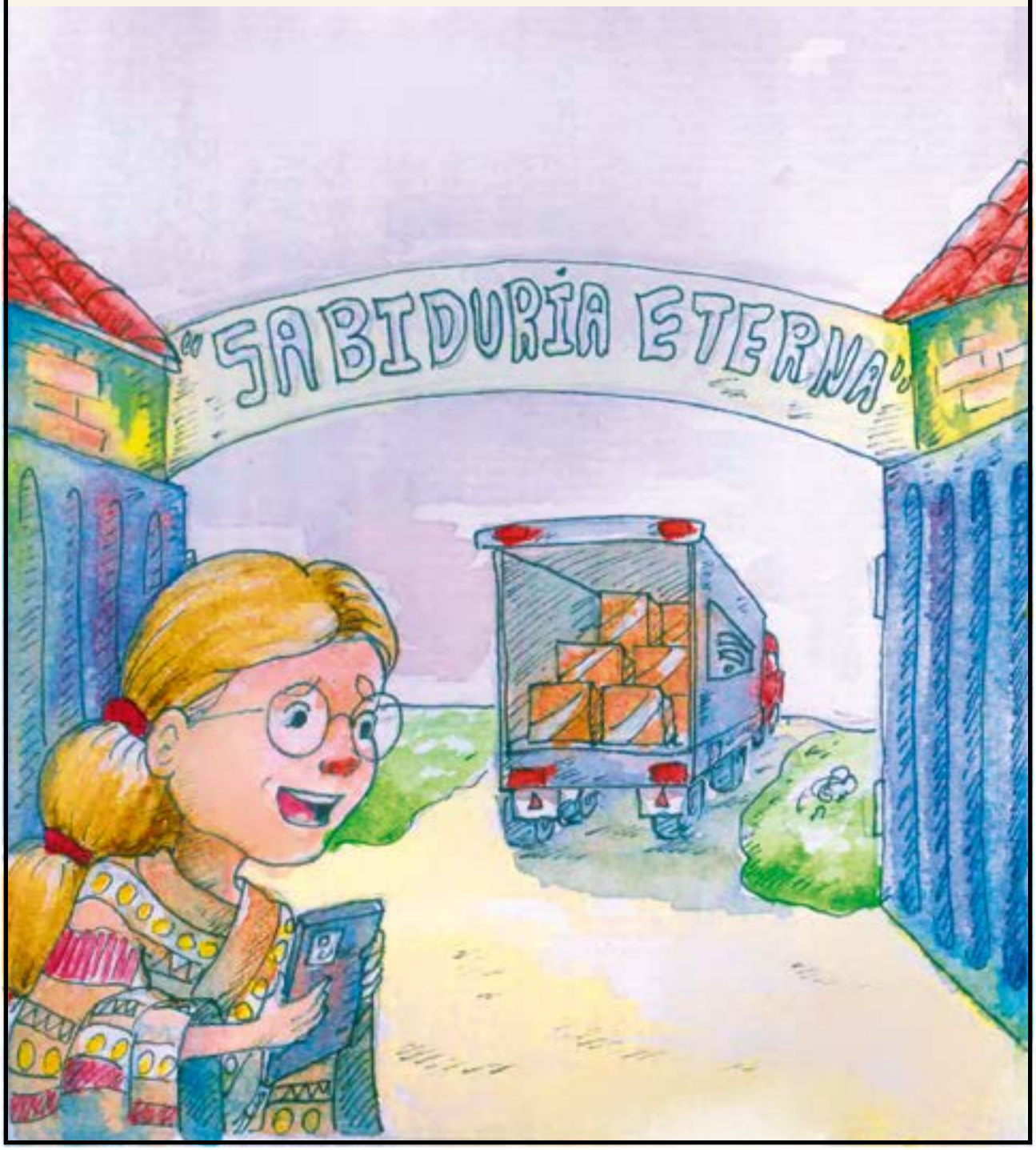
Camilo surprised seeing his cell phone with hundreds of notifications, highlighting comments from people from other countries interested in LUX.

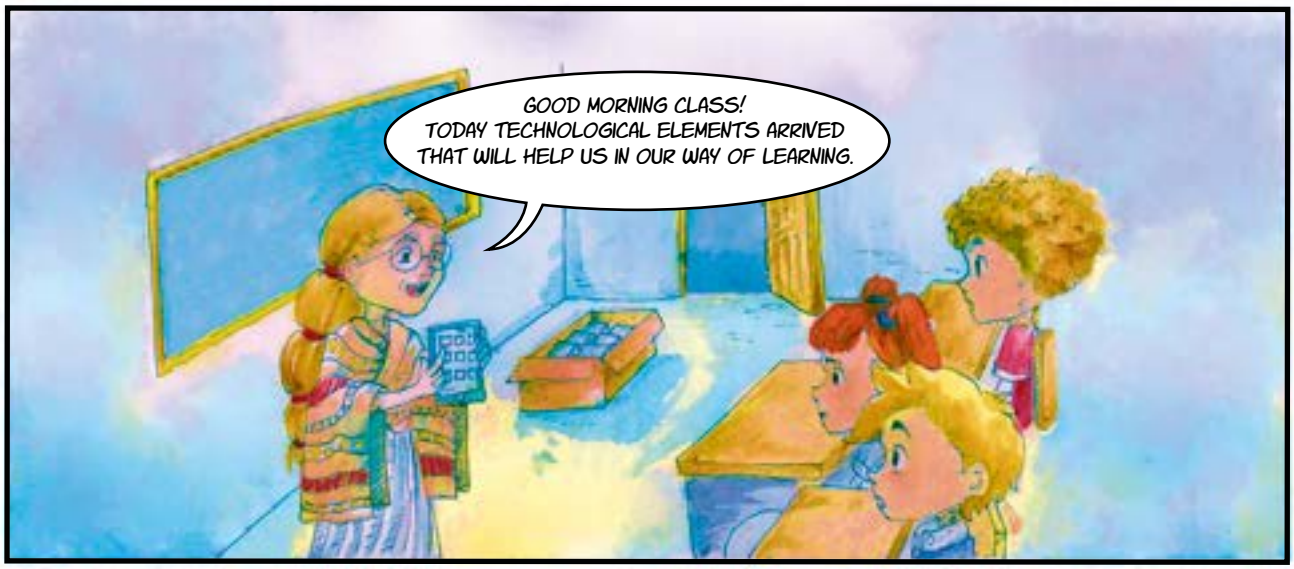
Sometimes inspiration comes from where we least expect it. What started as an act of love became a solution that could change lives.

THE END

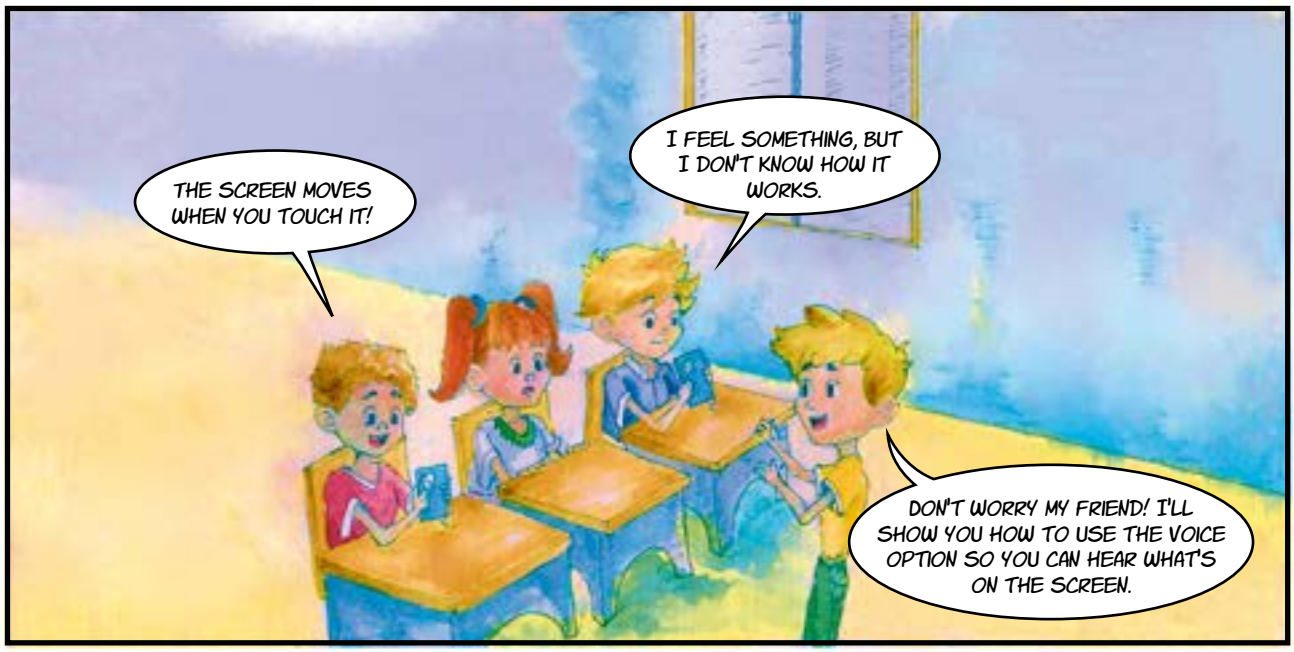
LEARNING NETWORKS

Inside the community school “Eternal Knowledge”, located in the Ecuadorian Amazon, children continue to study with the traditional methods of their grandparents; however, an educational program provides material to create their first digital classroom.



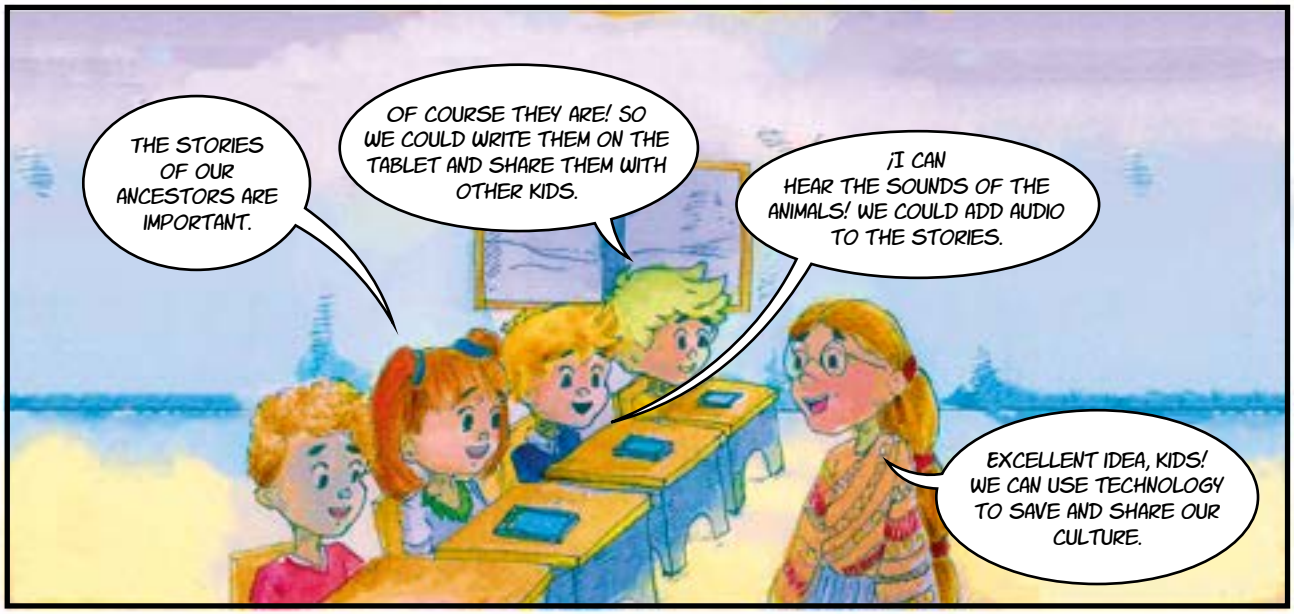


All the children are confused, and Ana is angry that this change could replace the ancestral stories.

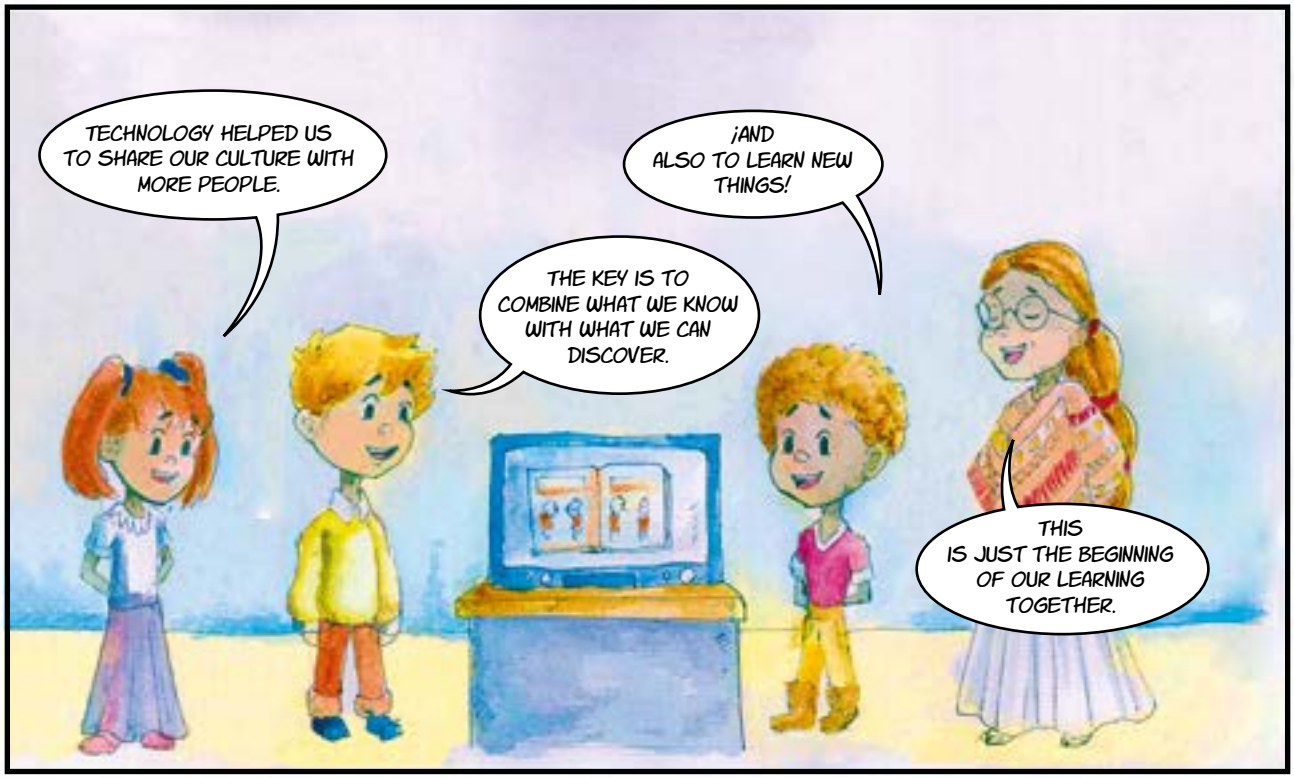


LOOK KIDS, WITH THIS VIDEO WE CAN NOT ONLY LEARN ABOUT ANIMALS, BUT WE ALSO SEE THAT TECHNOLOGY CAN TEACH US ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY.
THERE'S THE JAGUAR, I'VE SEEN A REAL ONE.
CAN WE ALSO FIND STORIES ON THE TABLETS?
YES, AND WE CAN READ THEM ALL TOGETHER.
IT'S AMAZING, I LOVE IT!

THEY'RE RIGHT. MAYBE TECHNOLOGY CAN BE A GREAT HELP TO OUR LEARNING.


THE STORIES OF OUR ANCESTORS ARE IMPORTANT.
OF COURSE THEY ARE! SO WE COULD WRITE THEM ON THE TABLET AND SHARE THEM WITH OTHER KIDS.
¡I CAN HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE ANIMALS! WE COULD ADD AUDIO TO THE STORIES.
EXCELLENT IDEA, KIDS! WE CAN USE TECHNOLOGY TO SAVE AND SHARE OUR CULTURE.

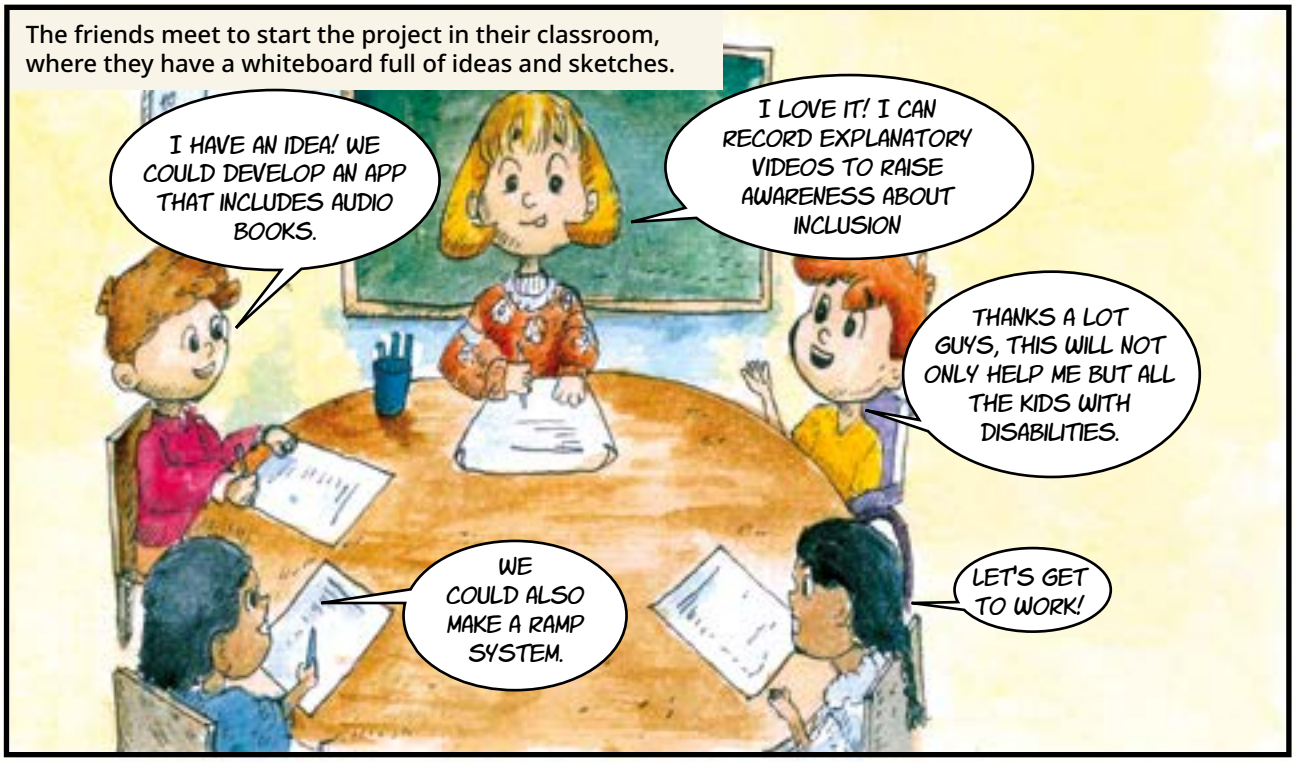
I'LL HELP WITH THE DRAWINGS!
I'LL ADD THE SOUND TO THE STORY!
I'M GOING TO WRITE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF OUR CULTURE.
AND I'LL HELP DIGITIZE IT!


TECHNOLOGY HELPED US TO SHARE OUR CULTURE WITH MORE PEOPLE.
¡AND ALSO TO LEARN NEW THINGS!
THE KEY IS TO COMBINE WHAT WE KNOW WITH WHAT WE CAN DISCOVER.
THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF OUR LEARNING TOGETHER.

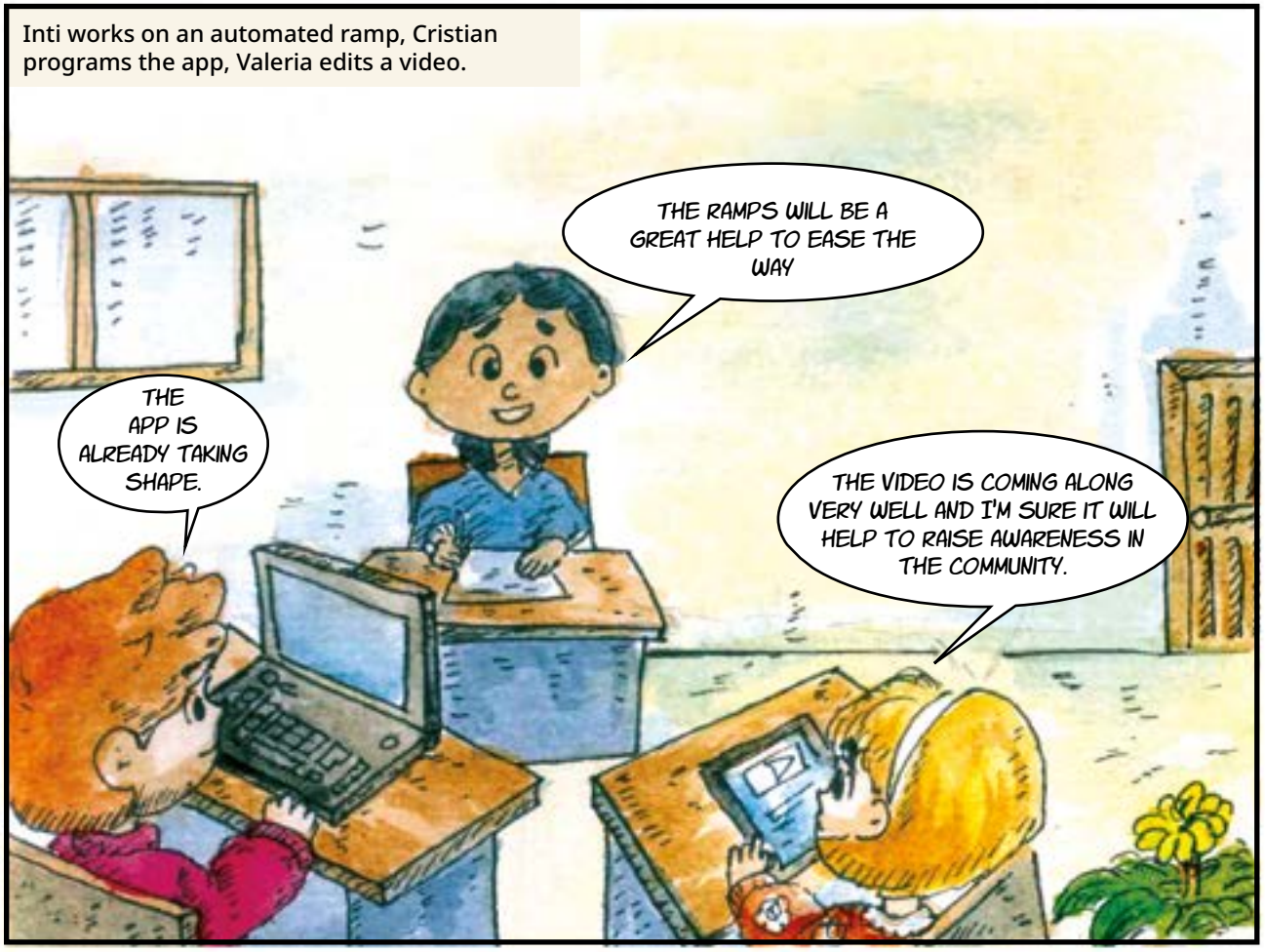
THE END

INNOVATORS OF TOMORROW

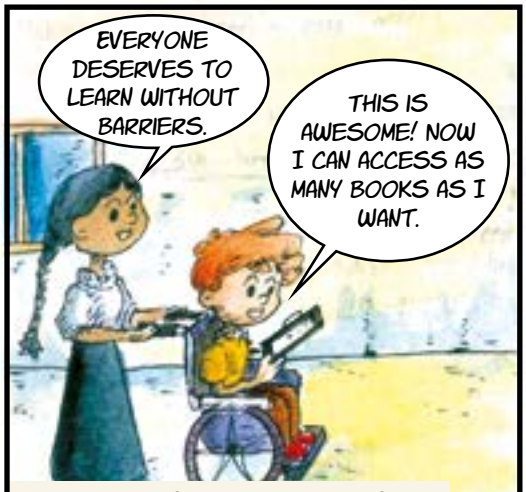
The friends meet to start the project in their classroom, where they have a whiteboard full of ideas and sketches.



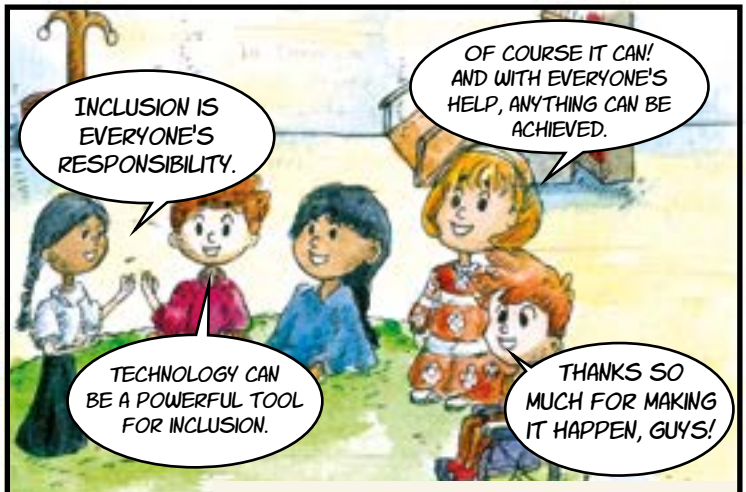
Inti works on an automated ramp, Cristian programs the app, Valeria edits a video.



The students present their project to the school principal.



Mateo uses the app to access the audiobooks.

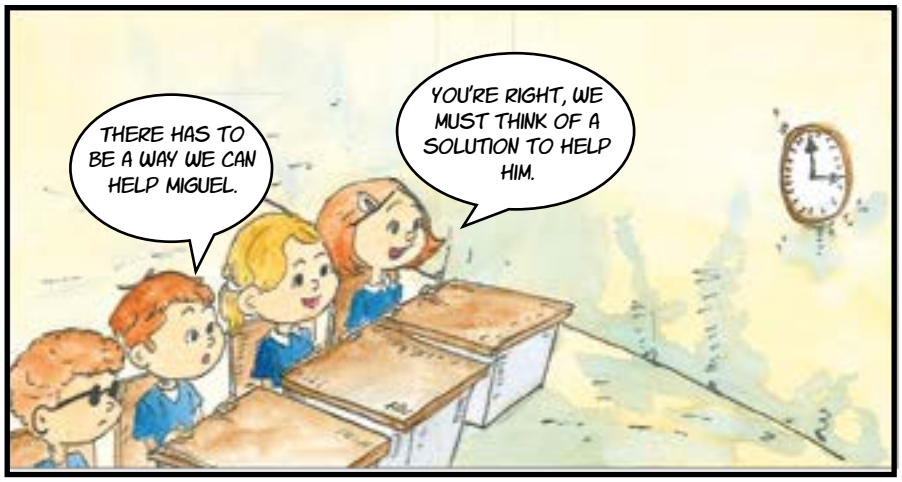


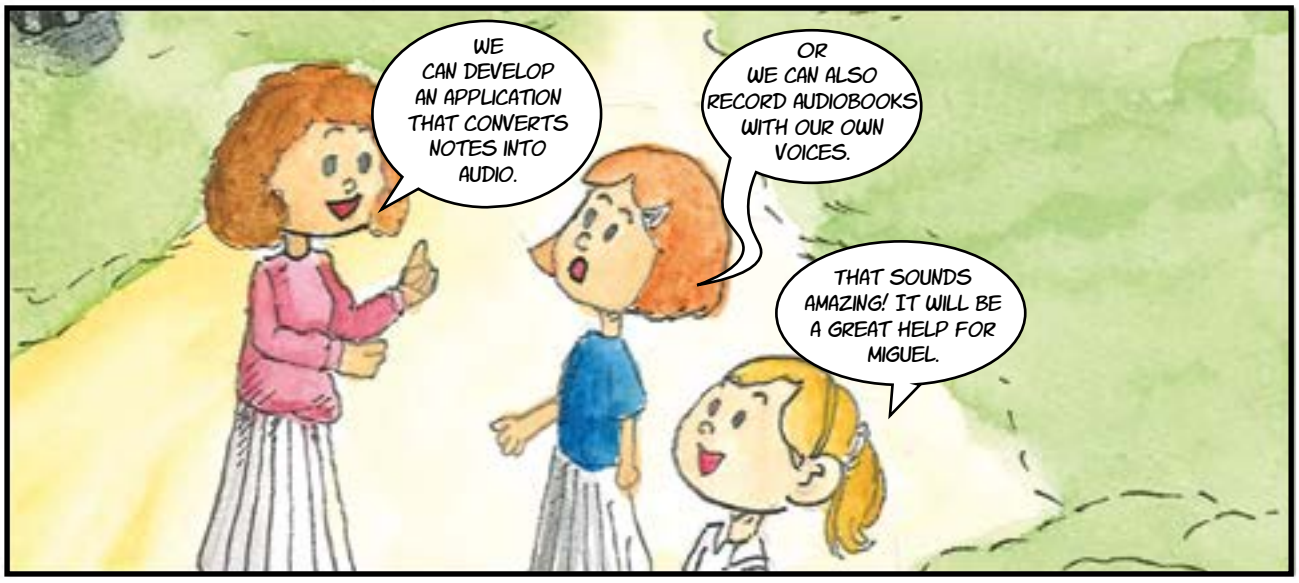
The group of friends smile as they observe the impact of their project at school.

THE END

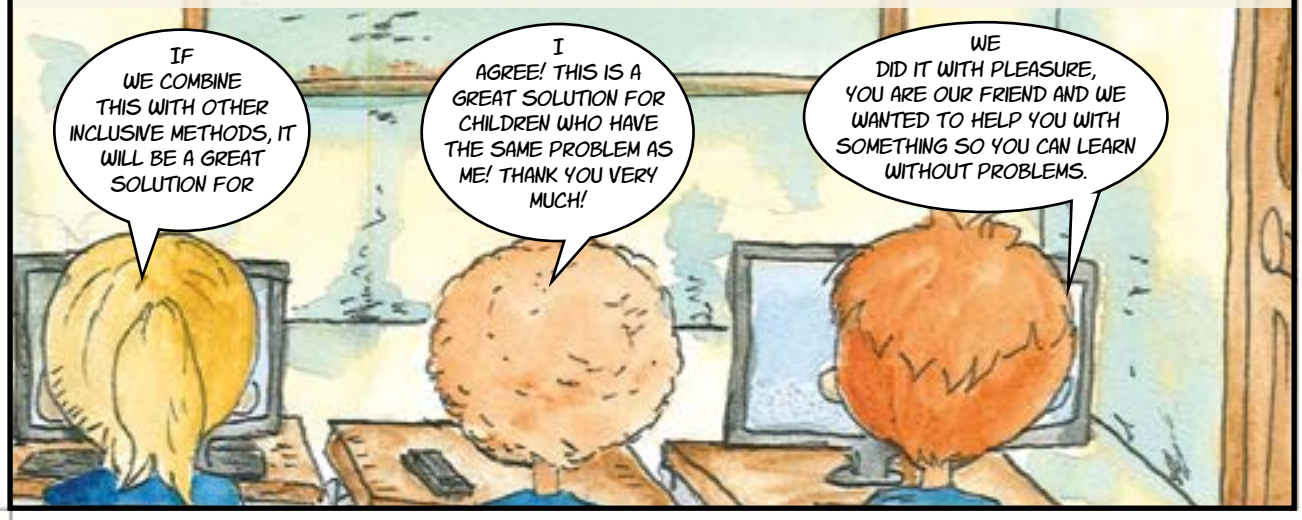
CLASSROOMS WITHOUT BARRIERS

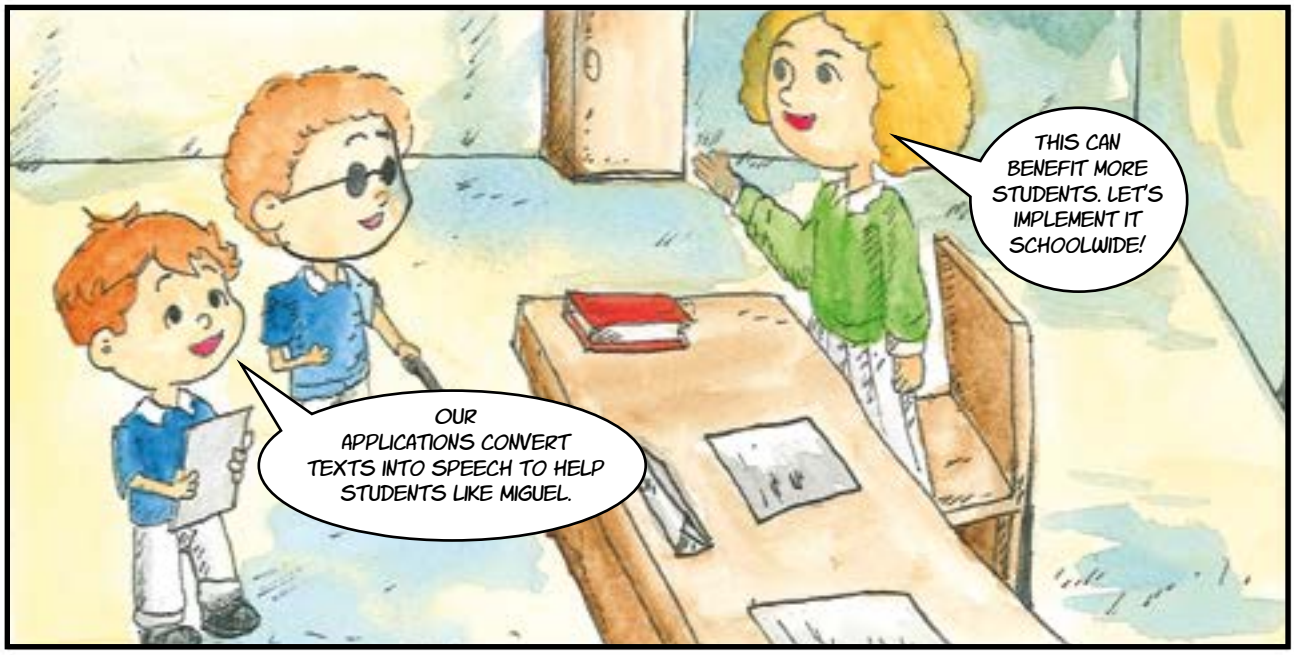
Miguel is a student with a visual disability trying to adapt to his lessons.





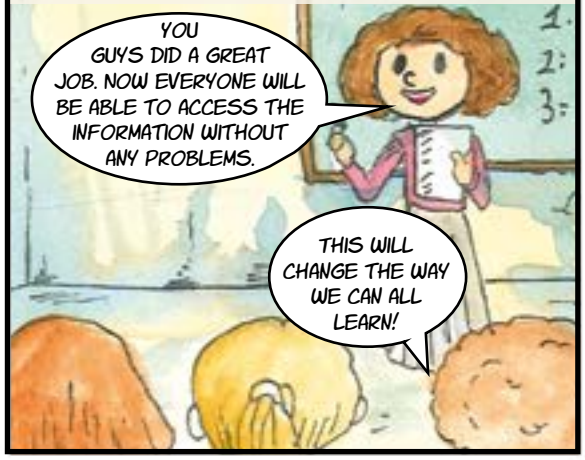
Miguel's friends get together to create their inclusive app. Leonardo programs the app while Luisa designs the app`s interface, Rosa tests different forms of inclusive teaching methods, and Miguel uses headphones to listen to the beta version of the app.

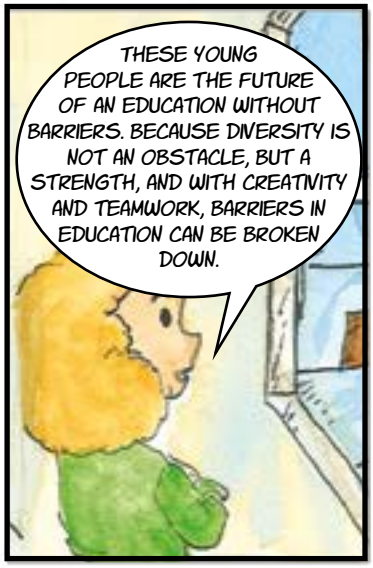


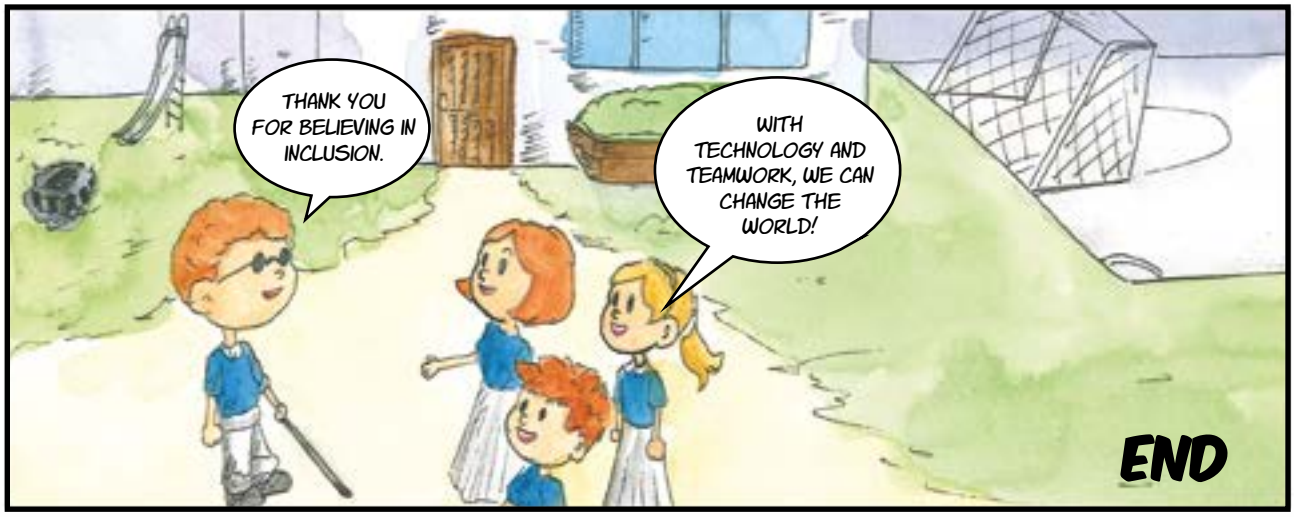


In class, teacher Elena uses the app to read aloud a text.

In the classroom, teacher Elena uses the app to teach all her students, make the class much more dynamic and fun.

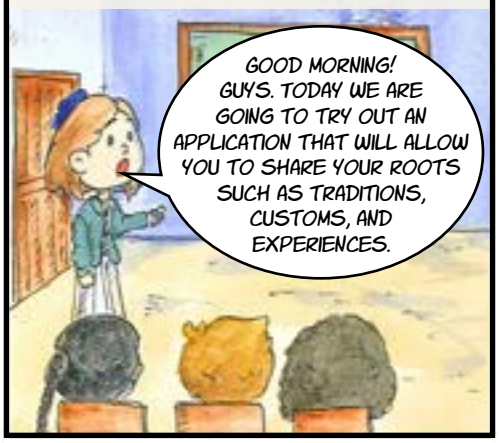






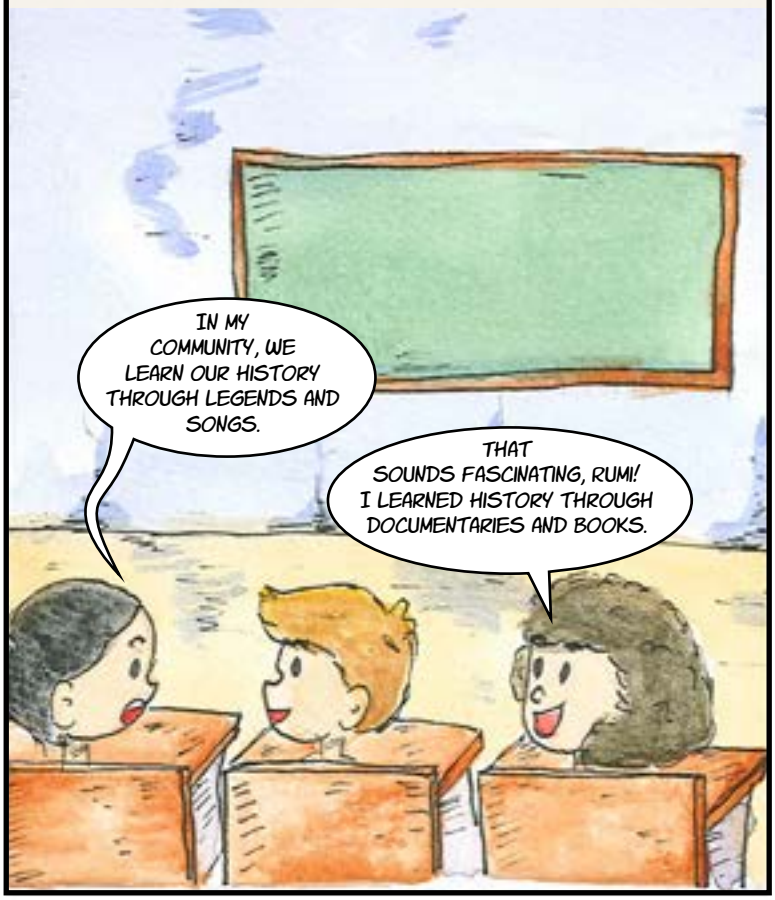
THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRATION

Teacher Lili walks into her classroom, where all her students are waiting for her.

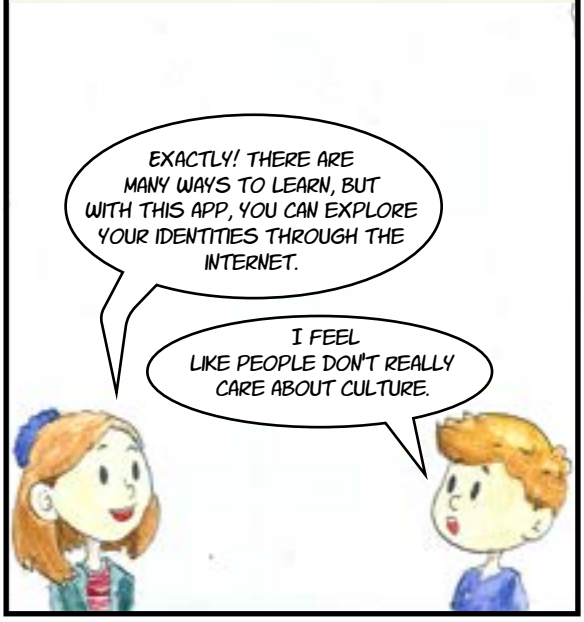


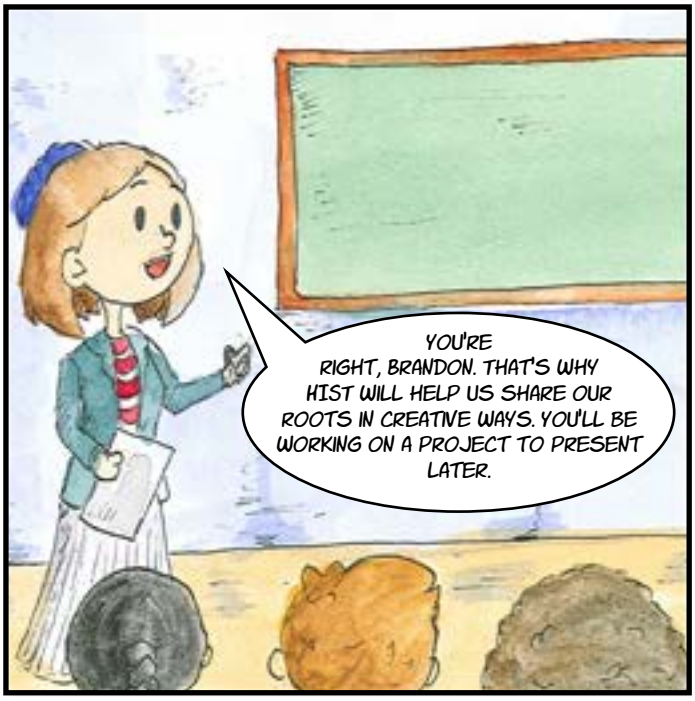
Teacher Lili displays the app on screen. It's called HIST. The students are amazed.

Rumi, a boy from an Indigenous community, remembers how he learned about his culture.

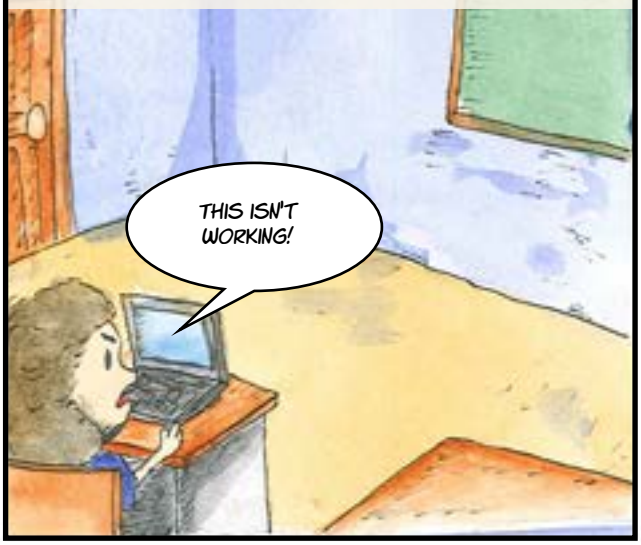


Brandon, a tech-loving student, reflects on the lesson

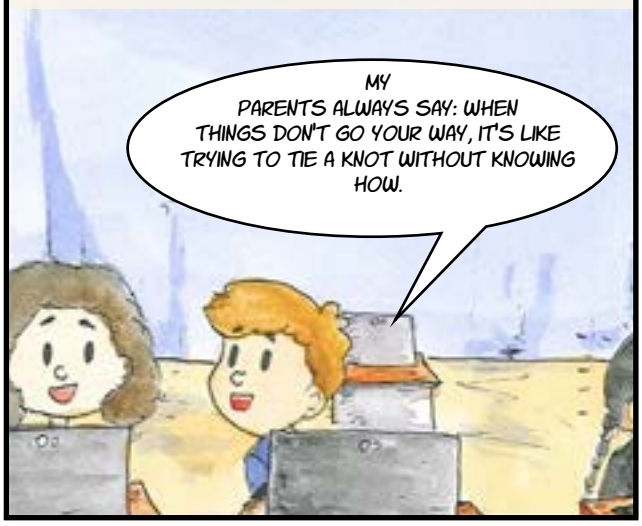




Sofia starts working in class, but the app begins to lag.



Brandon offers her a piece of advice his family often shares.



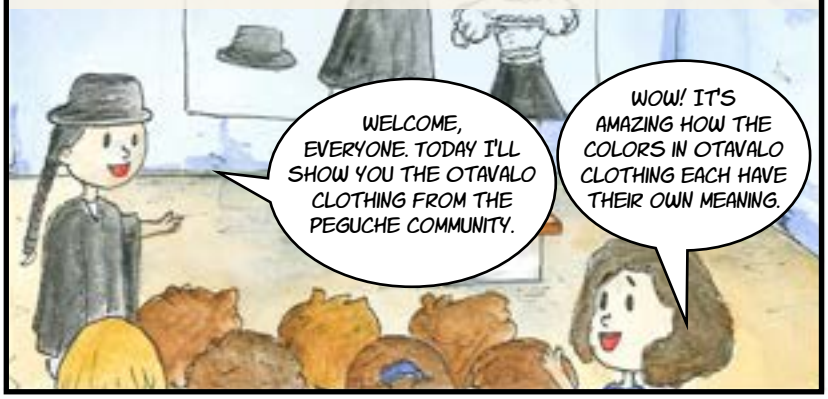
Rumi listens to Brandon and recalls what his grandfather used to say.

Sofía begins to relax.

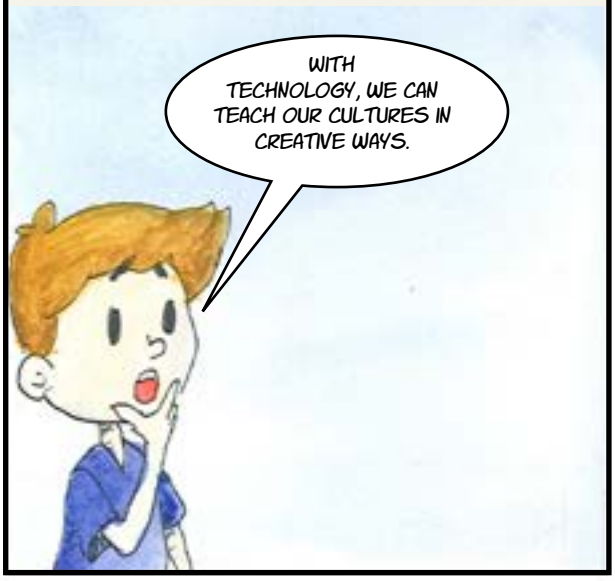
The three of them work on the cultural project, excited and surprised by what they've learned.

Ms. Lili sees how focused and engaged her students are with the app

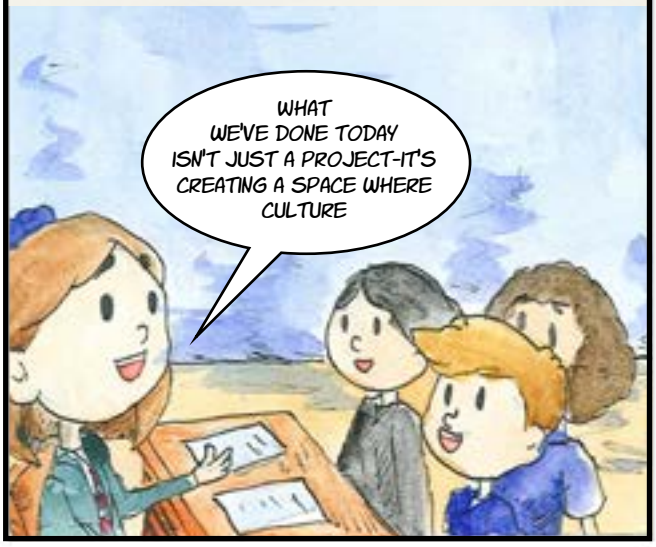
Presentation day arrives. Rumi is excited to showcase traditional Otavalo clothing..



Brandon starts to reflect after seeing how much everyone enjoyed the projects.



After the presentations, Ms. Lili calls her students to the classroom to congratulate them for blending culture and technology.



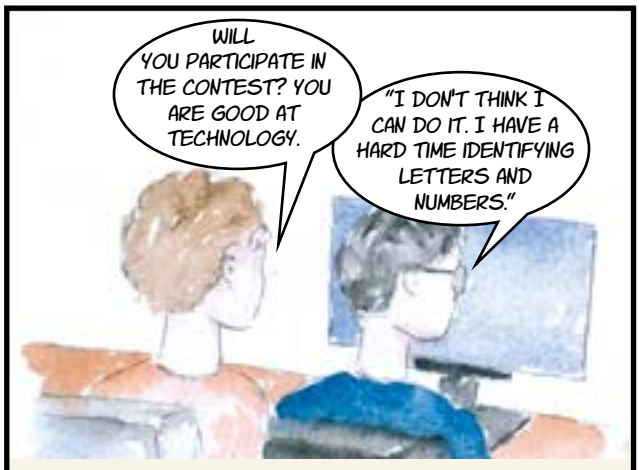
The students are proud of their work and everything they've learned.

They all hug their teacher for helping them connect with their roots.

Diversity is a strength when we foster respect and collaboration.

THE END

THE VIRTUAL CHALLENGE

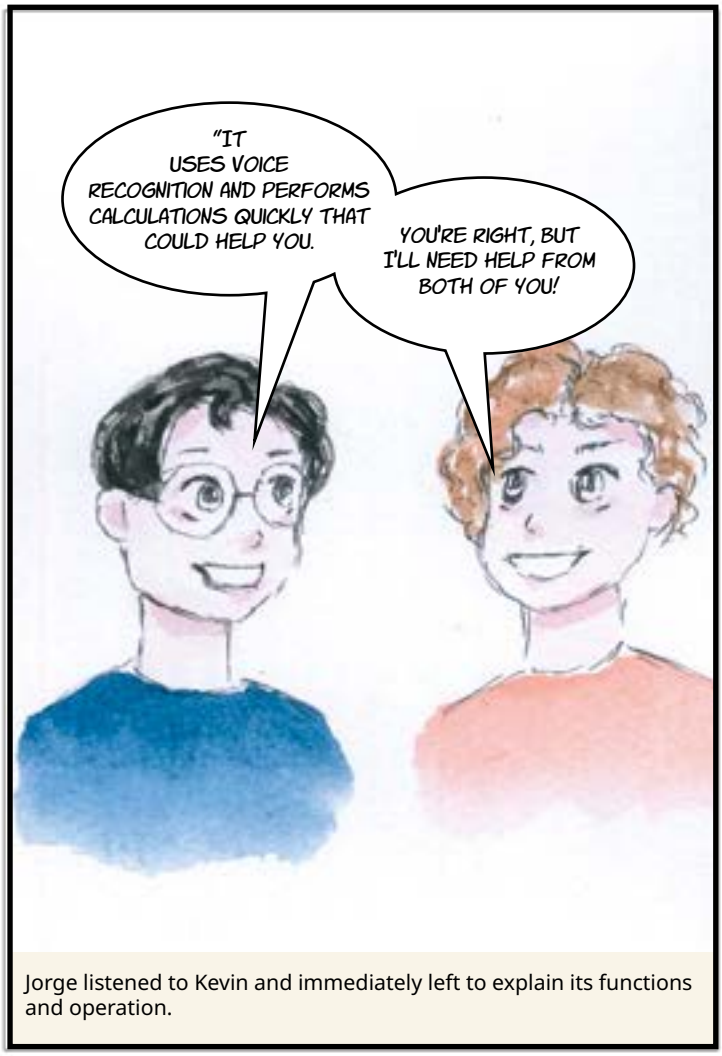


In an institution will hold a technological project competition, Jorge, a student, wants his classmate Kevin to participate, however, he does not feel he can.

Once they got out of class Jorge started researching something that could help them with Kevin's case.

the next day Jorge shows Maria what he found and tells her to present it in class.

Listening to Mary's presentation, Kevin is taken aback.



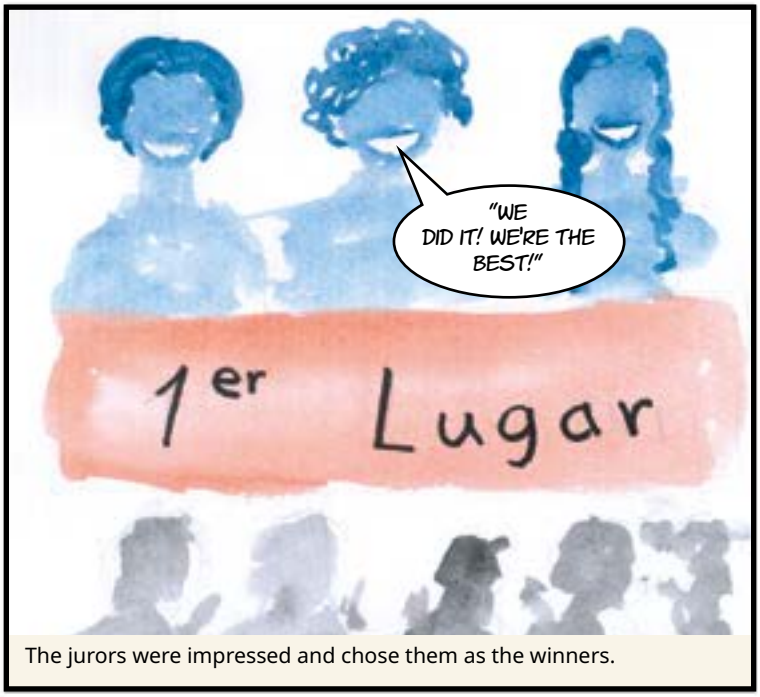
Jorge listened to Kevin and immediately left to explain its functions and operation.

The screen stops working and locks up with every word spoken.

Kevin gets home and starts trying again and realizes that CoVo is crashing so he has an idea.

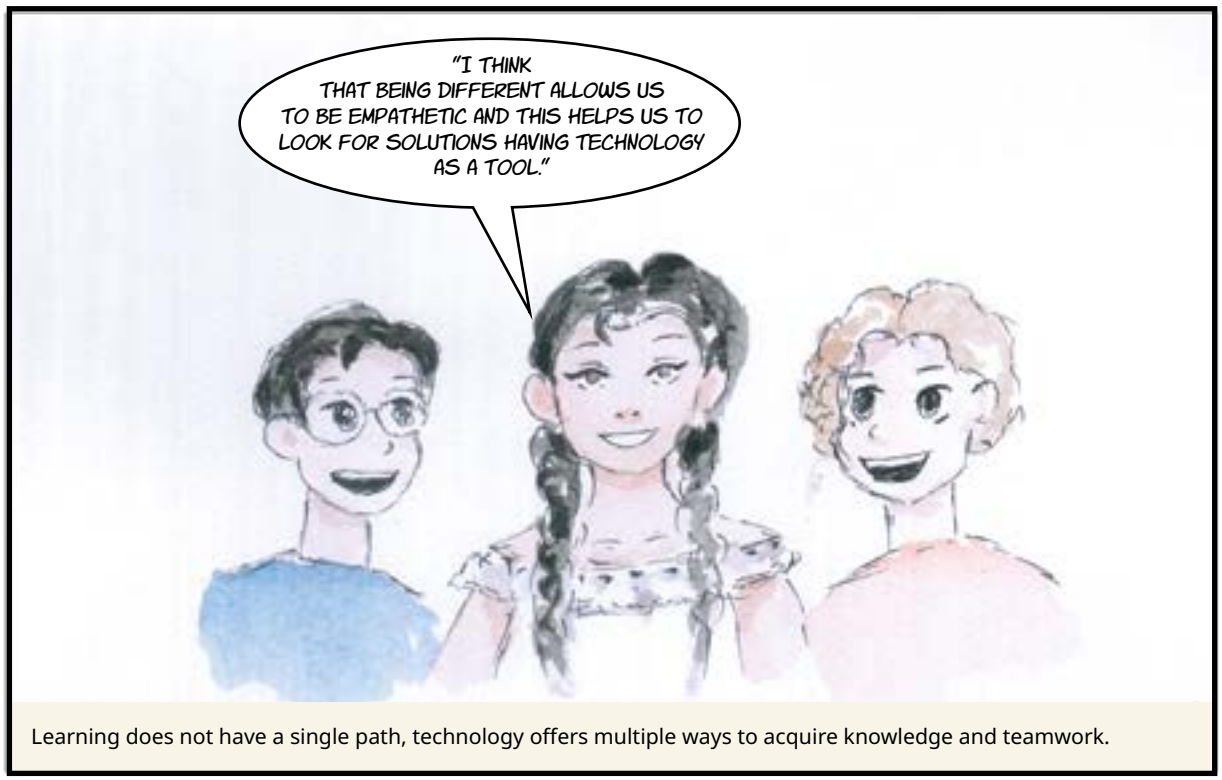
The next day in class, Kevin tells his classmates to improve CoVo and enter it in the contest. They agree and work on the project.

The day of the competition arrives and the three students are ready for the presentation.



The jurors were impressed and chose them as the winners.

Kevin thanks his classmates for their support and trust.



Learning does not have a single path, technology offers multiple ways to acquire knowledge and teamwork.

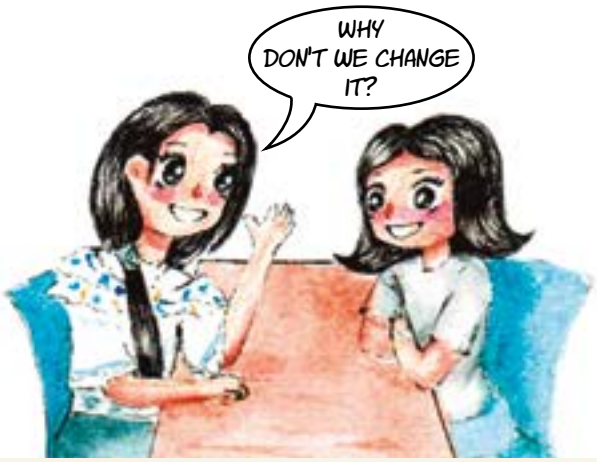
END

AUGMENTED REALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

At Costas del Mar University, third-year technology students are taught through augmented reality glasses.

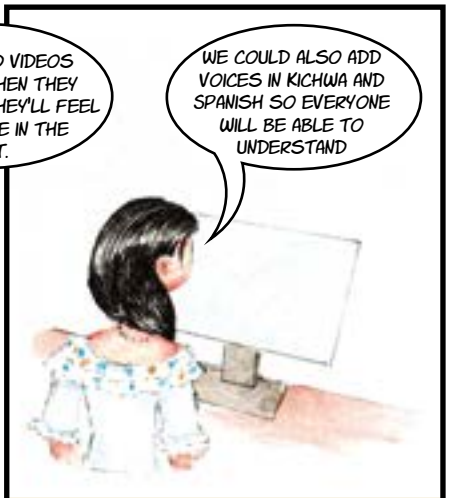
Students are surprised to see that the classes are about European cultures, not their own national ones

Emma, a student of Otavaleña culture, tells Carlos that she can't find anything similar to their cultures.



Lucia suggests Ema work on animations, but with Carlos, about their own cultures.

Both students, upon leaving class, go home to research how to do it in a better and more creative way.



Lucia, she believes that adding languages would give it another essence.

Next day in classes

The next day they go to class and one of their classmates heard them talking and told them it was a waste of time.

Professor Ramiro listens to them and thinks it's a great idea and he should put it into action.

Emma, Carlos, and Lucia feel motivated and continue to work even harder outside of class until the day of the presentation.

In the presentation

Emma explains to the rector that the project aims to go beyond a simple cultural video.

The teacher looks at them with great pride.

Education must adapt to new technologies without losing our cultural focus.

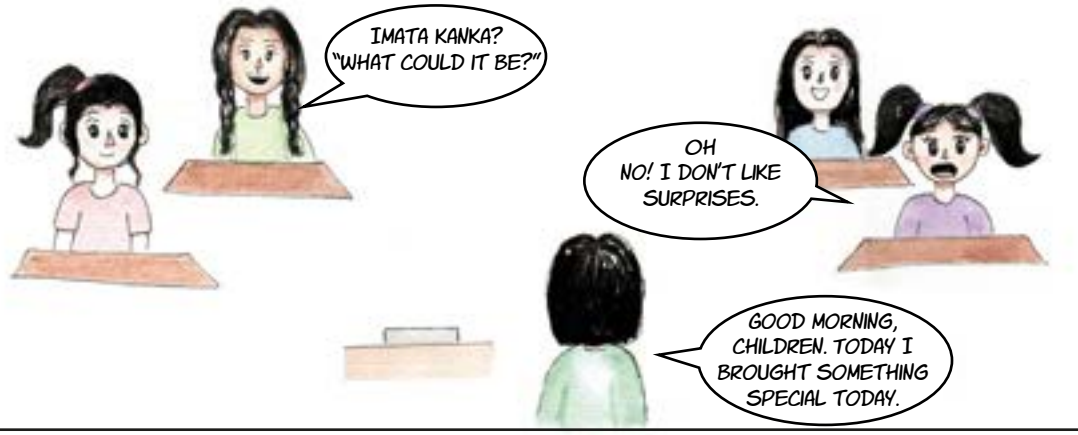
THE END

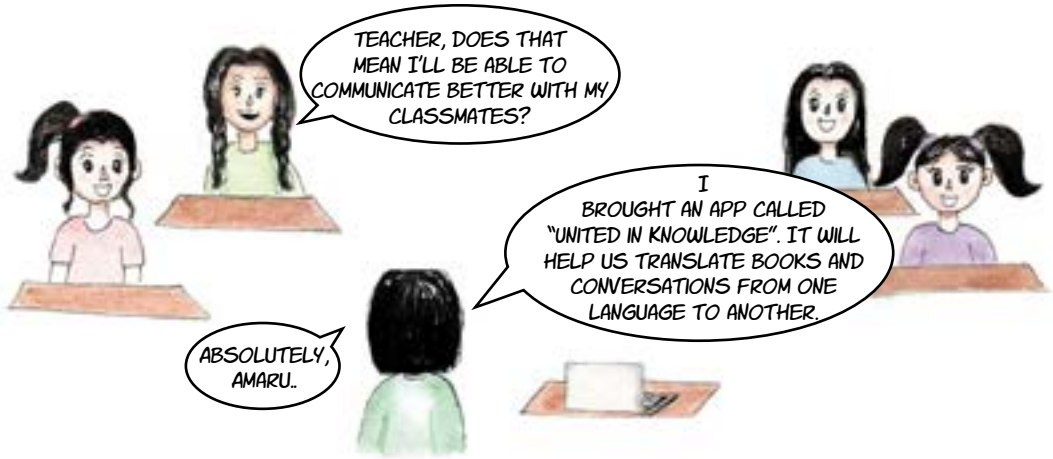
UNITED IN KNOWLEDGE

Mercedes, a young teacher, found an application she couldn't ignore. It would help a special student, Amaru, a little girl who struggled to follow lessons because she didn't understand Spanish very well.

Excited, Mercedes went to show the app to her husband, Ronald.

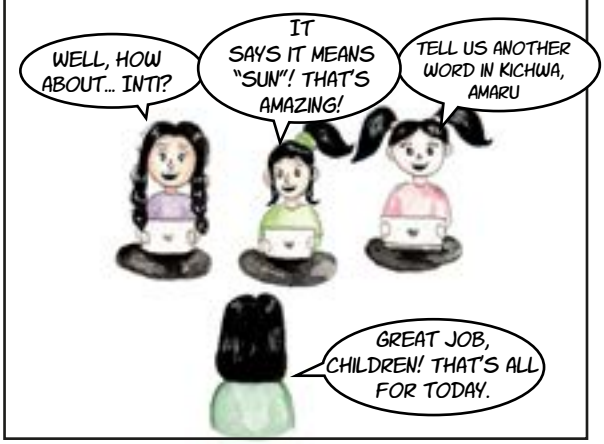
The next day at school.



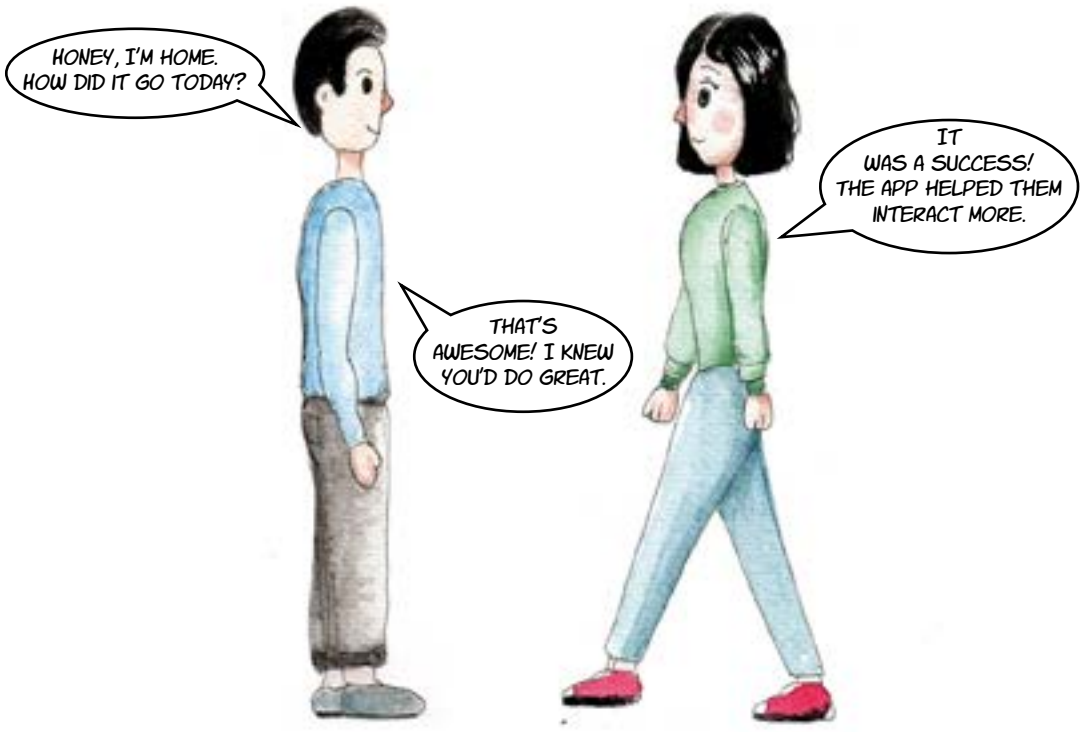


The children head to the playground to test the app their teacher gave them.

The children were thrilled, asking Amaru for words in Kichwa, her native language, eager to test the app.



That night, Ronald came home, eager to hear about his wife's class.

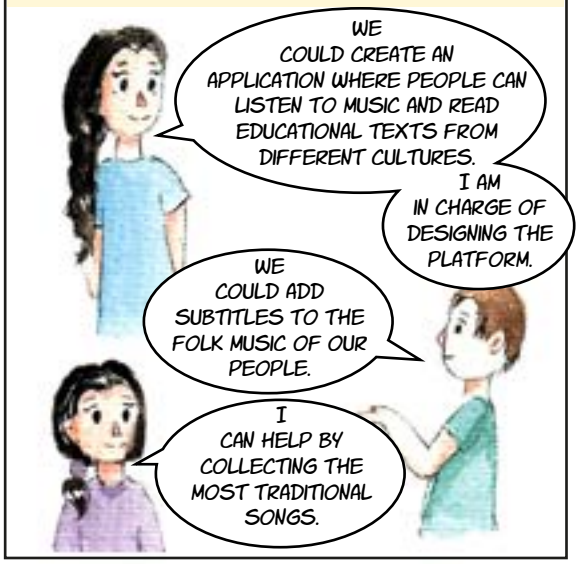


Technology can be a powerful ally for inclusion, but true communication and empathy come from the effort and willingness to learn together.

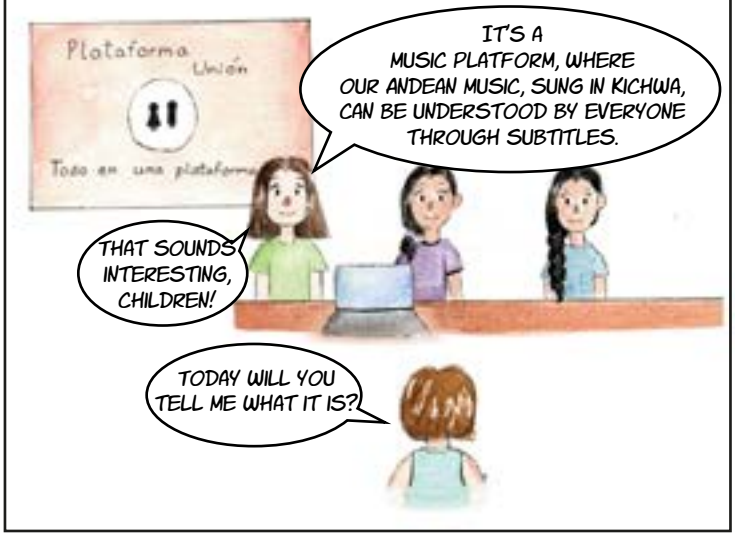
THE END

TECHNOLOGY CONNECTING WORLDS

One day, Teacher Ana, proposed an idea in class.

The students head to the playground, to come up with ideas for the homework the teacher left them.

All the children came together as one group, and with each of their strengths they were able to slowly create their cultural platform.

Finishing a few details on the final application, the children presented the project to the teacher, naming their project "Plataforma unión".



When technology is used creatively, everyone can learn in a more fun way.

THE END

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Chapter 8

Celebrating our roots: Ecuadorian festivities in the classroom

Ecuadorian festivities in the classroom

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Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape, cultural diversity occupies a central place in pedagogical reflection. Against this backdrop, the incorporation of traditional festivals into the school curriculum emerges as a key methodological strategy to strengthen cultural identity, foster respect for otherness, and enrich intercultural learning processes. By integrating these celebrations into the educational sphere, a deeper understanding of the symbolism underlying different cultures is enabled, as well as their historical, social, and spiritual dynamics.

Ecuadorian festivities constitute complex and deeply rooted cultural expressions, where Indigenous, colonial, and modern elements converge. These celebrations, featuring music, dance, rituals, and traditional attire, are tied to religious commemorations or agricultural cycles and are fundamental to the construction and reinforcement of social fabric (Valarezo & Escobar, 2009). In a context marked by structural violence, the advance of neoliberalism, and the consolidation of imperial logics, the voices of Indigenous peoples resurge in demands for recognition and cultural justice (Dávalos, 2005).

In this framework, education fulfils an irreplaceable role in the transmission, resignification, and preservation of cultural traditions. In the face of the fragmentation of a solid identity that characterizes

many school contexts, it becomes imperative to design pedagogical methodologies that foster a sense of belonging and reconnect individuals with their ancestral roots.

Festivities, in this context, constitute privileged spaces of convergence between education, culture, and art, facilitating experiential engagement and analysis of these unique expressions. Through their study and enactment in the classroom, a critical analysis is fostered that interrogates essential aspects of every cultural manifestation: the way it is performed, the time in which it is situated, the place that sustains it, and the profound meaning that legitimizes it in collective memory.

Afro and Montubio Celebrations: Living Memory of the Ecuadorian Coast

The cultural wealth of Ecuador's coast is manifested through the expressions and celebrations of its diverse peoples, including the Montubios and Afro-Ecuadorians, whose practices constitute a living and dynamic memory of their identity and historical resistance to processes of exclusion and colonization. The analysis of the construction of these identities reveals that they are not immutable qualities, but positional and relational processes consolidated in the "logic of difference," requiring a "constitutive exterior" to affirm themselves. Interaction with the Ecuadorian State and social movements has been fundamental in this identification process.

- **Montubio culture**

The Montubios, settled mainly in Manabí (Chone, El Carmen, Portoviejo, Tosagua), maintain a rich oral, musical, and festive tradition that includes *amorfinos* (popular poetic expressions that exalt wit and popular wisdom), as well as myths and legends, customs, gastronomy, attire, traditional dances, and celebrations such as the *rodeo Montubio* and *Chigualos*, which are also celebrated in other coastal areas.

> Montubio cultural manifestations have been revalued through art, education, and media, in this case, comics, which enable

the intergenerational transmission and visibility. In localities like Calceta, Rocafuerte y Portoviejo, these traditions remain alive and have been respectfully represented in graphic narratives integrating rituals, poetic, and musical elements (Jiménez, 2025). These expressions strengthen the sense of belonging in the face of cultural homogenization.

Since the early twentieth century, especially in the 1930s, thanks to the work of intellectuals like José de la Cuadra and the Guayaquil Group. These authors sought to rescue the Montubio symbolic and linguistic universe to establish a coastal national identity from there, transforming the Ecuadorian coast.

The Montubio Solidarity Movement recovered this representation to give it new meaning from a political dimension. Its leader, Luis Alvarado, defended the need to recover identity, culture, and dignity, proposing endogenous, community-based, and solidarity-driven agro-productive model. This movement drove the creation of the Council for the Development of the Montubio People of the Coast (Consejo de Desarrollo del Pueblo Montubio de la Costa, CODEPMOC), after intense social mobilizations and negotiations with the State (Ecuador, Presidencia de la República, 2001).

Executive Decree No. 1394, signed in 2001, institutionalized this identity by establishing that the Montubio people were a productive human group of significant national impact and should organize into an entity to execute plans with criteria of self-management and community participation (Ecuador, Presidencia de la República, 2001). Although the Decree emphasizes their role as producers, the movement articulated this definition with a specific cultural identity.

- **Afro-Esmeraldean culture**

Afro-esmeraldean culture articulates a profound spiritual vision of life and death through ritual songs: ***Chigualos*** and ***alaba'os***. According to Clavijo (2020), these practices are complex expressions of an ancestral worldview where orality, religious syncretism, and history converge.

Chigualos are festive celebrations dedicated to children considered "angelitos" [Little angels], including lullabies, games, and music with marimba, *cununo*, and *guasá* (regional instruments). In December, this ceremony honors deceased children through songs, food, and dances, strengthening community bonds (CODEPMOC, 2001). In contrast, *alaba'os* are solemn songs, sung a cappella for adults, oriented toward forgiveness and salvation of the soul. A highlight of the ritual is the *grito* (cry), in which, at midnight, the coffin is taken out to "gather the footsteps of the deceased," reinforcing the bond between body, soul, and community.

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage of Ecuador (2022) and UNESCO (2015) emphasize that these practices are not merely musical expressions but acts of Afro-descendant resistance that have endured through processes of syncretization between African rites and Catholic liturgy.

The institutionalization of Montubio and Afro-ecuadorian identities occurred in a context of neoliberal crisis, in which social movements demanded their inclusion as collective subjects with rights. The 2008 Constitution consolidated the recognition of Montubios, along with indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples, as subjects of collective rights (arts. 56 and 59). Official recognition was achieved with the creation of CODEPMOC (2001) and the Afro-Ecuadorian Development Corporation (CODAE) in 2005, as well as the inclusion of these categories in the 2010 national census.

Some celebrations are described below:

- **The Marimba Festival**

The Ecuadorian marimba, especially present in Esmeraldas and the Chota-Mira Valley, represents an emblematic expression of Afro-descendant collective memory. Recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, this practice brings together music, dance, orality, and spirituality (UNESCO, 2015). Festive spaces associated with the marimba promote community cohesion and the transmission of

ancestral knowledge. However, stereotypes abound, and a focus is proposed that rescues silenced memories through festivals, artistic projects, and intercultural education.

- **New Year's Eve festival: the burning of the monigote (dummy)**

In the province of El Oro, the year culminates with the burning of a giant monigote (dummy), accompanied by rhymed testaments that humorously critique the year's events. This tradition reinforces neighborhood identity and promotes collective creativity (Cascante Moreira, Clavijo Barzola & Martín, 2019).

The origin of this festival dates back to a tragic event in Guayaquil in 1895. During a yellow fever threat, residents burned the clothes of the deceased with branches and straw in the streets to ward off the plague, which over time transformed into the symbolic ritual of leaving behind the year's misfortunes (Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio, 2021). Thus, the monigote represents the farewell to the past and the collective hope for a new cycle full of promise.

This tradition has extended to other regions, where it has been reshaped to reflect local cultural identities. In Atuntaqui (Imbabura), the burning of the "monigote" [dummy] stands as the centerpiece of a vibrant and complex celebration known as the Fiesta Popular de Inocentes y Fin de Año [Popular Festival of the Innocents and New Year's Eve]. This festival was officially recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ecuador on December 11, 2007. Since the 1920s, initiated by workers from the historic Fábrica Imbabura [Imbabura Factory], preliminary acts—such as the "Bando-Bando" procession [Bando-Bando parade] and "La Agonía de Papá" [The Agony of Papá]—have set the stage for the grand parade on December 31. The festivities include elaborate floats, creatively handcrafted costumes, and satirical readings, all culminating with the burning of the monigote [dummy] in Plaza Libertad [Liberty Square] (El Universo, 2018; Turismo, 2012).

Agricultural Calendar and Ancestral Rites in the Andean Worldview

The agricultural calendar in the Andean worldview is intimately linked to the rhythms of nature and the ancestral rites that mark the cycle of life. Festivities in the Ecuadorian Highland form fascinating symbolic systems that intertwine ancestral memories, colonial struggles, and processes of religious syncretism. As Valarezo (2009) mentions, these manifestations operate as "mechanisms of cultural reproduction that reactivate identities through collective performativity" (p.32).

This section highlights various celebrations that mark the different phases of the agricultural cycle, such as planting, harvesting, and other agricultural activities. Each of them represents the culture and ancestral beliefs of the communities. On this occasion, festivities specific to the provinces of Tungurahua, Cotopaxi, and the northern the Highland region, each with a unique historical background, festive calendar, symbolic attire, and gastronomy that express the identity of each territory.

- **The Diablada de Píllaro**

  Originating in the town of Píllaro, in the province of Tungurahua, this festival dates back to colonial times, emerging as a form of Indigenous resistance against the colonial system, wherein "the devils embodied the subversion of imposed hierarchies" (Dávalos, 2005, p. 42). According to El Mercurio (2017), the *Diablada* is celebrated from January first to sixth and consists of a parade of *comparsas* (masked troupes), in which hundreds of dancers wearing devil masks and embroidered costumes gather in *partidas* to dance in honor of the new year. The typical attire includes a carved wooden mask, a brightly colored poncho, knee bells, and a vest adorned with mirrors that reflect sunlight, symbolizing the expulsion of dark forces (El Mercurio, 2017). The devil masks are meant to represent the colonizer and to express the resentment and anger of the Indigenous people toward them. This is why they seek to be frightening and unpleasant.

If we take a look at the old masks, we will find that many of them were made from tins and painted with, at most, two to three colors. This is because the Indigenous people during colonial times would save throughout the year in order to buy a tin of paint, which was expensive, in order to paint the masks, since it was between the first and sixth of January that the colonizers allowed the Indigenous people to spend time with their families after a long period without seeing each other, and this celebration took place (El Mercurio, 2017).

- **The Mama Negra**

The Mama Negra, celebrated in Latacunga, Cotopaxi, is a syncretic festival blending indigenous, Spanish, and African traditions. Its origin dates to the eighteenth century, after the eruption of Cotopaxi volcano, as an act of gratitude to the Virgin of Mercy, patrons of the canton, for protecting Píllaro during the event. According to Valarezo and Escobar (2009), it takes place on two key dates: the weekend before September eleventh in honor of the Virgin, and a second edition in November. The main event is the parade of the "Mama Negra," a character dressed in colorful attire, a wide-brimmed hat, a neckerchief, and a face painted black, symbolizing gratitude for protection after the volcanic catastrophe.

Typical costumes include the *guarichas* (joyful women), *capariches* (men with whips), and *escaramujos* (acrobatic dancers). Culinary highlights include *fritada* (fried pork with spices), *mote pillo* (tender corn sautéed with egg and onion), and *chicha de jora* (fermented corn drink), accompanying each parade (Valarezo & Escobar, 2009).

- **The Yamor Festival in Otavalo (September)**

This festival preserves Kichwa rituals of gratitude to the *Pachamama* [Mother Earth]. The *Aya Huma* [Aya Huma (Masked Spirit Head)] dances and lake regattas "reinterpret agrarian worldviews through performative narratives" (Narváez, 2006, p. 18). Chicha de Yamor, a fermented drink

made from seven types of corn, embodies what Narváez (2006) calls "agricultural bio-memory: gustatory knowledge resisting food homogenization" (p. 23).

These festivals create unique intercultural pedagogies where, as Dávalos (2005) notes, "the dancing body becomes a political text inscribing memories of resistance in public space" (p. 51). Far from being static folklore, they represent ancestral epistemologies challenging hegemonic discourses on national identity.

- **Inti Raymi**

In the Ecuadorian Highland, *Inti Raymi* or Festival of the Sun, celebrated on June twenty-first, is one of the most significant events in the Andean ritual calendar. This commemoration of the winter solstice and the agricultural cycle is an act of gratitude to *Taita Inti* (Father Sun) and *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) for the harvests, representing the spirit of the Indigenous peoples (Campoverde-Aguirre et al., 2022).

This festival takes place annually at the Ingapirca Archaeological Complex, in the province of Cañar, Ecuador, where community rituals, traditional dances, artistic exhibitions, and other activities that reinforce cultural identity are held. Although it is promoted in various communities of the Ecuadorian Highland, such as in Otavalo, where it begins with the purification ritual or *Armay Chisi*, in which participants immerse themselves in rivers or springs to renew their energy, in Cotacachi, with traditional dances in the central park, and in Saraguro, a community with direct lineage from Inca settlers, the festival maintains its authenticity; at Ingapirca, the event acquires a unique dimension thanks to the heritage value of the site and the institutional support of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage, which ensures its continuity and preservation. These celebrations share common ritual elements, such as purification through water, ceremonial flute music, the selection of *Ñusta* and the *Pambamesa*, which represents the union of the community through food.

> Historically, the Inti Raymi was established around 1430 by Inca Pachacútec as the most important ceremony in the agricultural and astronomical calendar of the Tahuantinsuyo. According to the chronicles of Garcilaso de la Vega, the celebration used to last approximately fifteen days included purification rituals, sacrifices of animals, dances, songs, and offerings to the sun, with the purpose of renewing its energy and ensuring the fertility of the crops (Garcilaso de la Vega, 2009; Ticket Machu Picchu, 2024). Banned in 1572 by Viceroy Toledo in the context of the Spanish colonization, the Inti Raymi was revived in 1944 as a theatrical representation in Cusco, under the Faustino Espinoza Navarro's initiative. Nowadays, it is a living practice that continues constructing an identity and will be represented in the comics created.

- **Pawkar Raymi**

The micro-story *Pawkar Raymi retador* narrates the symbolic depth of this festival:

> The crowd gathered on the highest hill. The four *Taitas* shaped silhouettes on the ground in the form of a cross, using seeds and fruits. The sun was perfectly aligned with the food. A Taita began the ceremony when suddenly raindrops fell, causing participants to let go of hands and seek shelter. At that moment, a lightning bolt struck, and the rain turned into a gale. Frightened, were happy and whispered among themselves: The earth embraced and challenged us; from now on, there will be abundance in our crops (Tséntsak, 2023).

El Pawkar Raymi, known as the festival of blossoming, is one of the four main celebrations of the Andean agro-festive calendar: Pawkar Raymi (Festival of Blossoming), Inti Raymi (Festival of the Sun)], Kulla Raymi [Festival of Fertility)], and Kapak Raymi (Festival of Abundance).

It is held between February and March to thank Pachamama for the harvests and renew the bond with nature. This festival, which includes

rituals such as the Tumarina, reflects the connection between forms of cultural resistance and identity for the Otavalo, Colta, and Punin peoples, preserving ancestral knowledge amid mestizaje.

Its intercultural characteristic is manifested through musical festivals and tributes to women. As Rizo (2013) highlights, interculturality implies a living communication between cultures, and the Pawkar Raymi allows this knowledge to be shared with visitors, strengthening the cultural fabric.

Amazonia: Dance, Color, and Gratitude to Nature

In the Amazon region, the Shuar people celebrate the *Fiesta de la Chonta* to thank *Pachamama* for the *uwi* harvest, a typical fruit. The celebration includes dances, songs, and *chicha de yuca*, expressing their spiritual bond with the forest (Valarezo & Escobar, 2009).

The *Fiesta de la Chonta*, celebrated between March and April y the Shuar, honors the harvest of this sacred fruit and connects the community with the land and its protective spirits. The ceremony includes dances, songs, and rituals reinforcing harmony between humans and nature (Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio, 2023). It is believed that if the celebration is not performed correctly, spirits may bring illness scarcity, evidencing the deep spiritual meaning of this practice (SENESCYT, 2020).

Women play a central role in this festival. They prepare *chicha de chonta*, a ceremonial drink made with ancestral techniques, demonstrating the active role of Shuar women as bearers of wisdom, memory, and worldview (Gualinga, 2018). Their participation is vital, ensuring that rituals remain alive and respectful of ancestral norms.

Galápagos: Sustainability and Tradition on Changing Islands

In Santa Cruz (Galápagos), the Sustainable Lobster Festival is celebrated with parades, contests, and typical dishes. Although it originated before the arrival of fishermen, today it seeks to promote responsible fishing and marine conservation form an early age (Jerez, 2022).

Since 2015, Santa Cruz has hosted the Sustainable Lobster Festival to highlight the relationship between the Galápagos community and marine conservation. The festival combines gastronomy, art, and environment education to promote responsible fishing, avoiding the capture of lobsters out of season or of prohibited size (WWF Ecuador, 2022). The initiative aims to Foster a culture of care ensuring the sustainability of the resource for future generations.

The Galápagos National Park and local governments regulate fishing through bans, monitoring, and training. During the festival, there are fairs, culinary contests, and activities to raise awareness among locals and tourists about the archipelago's unique biodiversity (Dirección del Parque Nacional Galápagos, 2022). Thus, this festival represents a model of integration between culture, economy, and environmental conservation (Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal de Santa Cruz, 2022).

The Importance of Festivities to Teach Art, History, Music, Gastronomy, and Values: A Journey through the Cultural Meanings in Different Regions of Ecuador

Festivities in Ecuador constitute privileged spaces for teaching and transmission of art, history, music, gastronomy, and fundamental values, articulating essential bridges between different generations and regions of the country. These cultural manifestations reinforce the collective identity in a significant way, promote learning through direct experience, and foster an appreciation of the diversity that characterizes the Ecuadorian society.

- **Educational and cultural dimensions**

  In their development, the festivities integrate artistic manifestations and historical traditions of great relevance. Dramatizations, performances in typical costumes, and visual expressions allow children and youth to access tangible knowledge of their regions and nation's cultural and historical richness (Mero-Alcívar et al., 2024; Parra & Parra, 2025).

  Traditional Ecuadorian music, vibrantly presented at school and community festivals, strengthens cultural values and local

identity. Its practice fosters recognition and appreciation of the national music heritage among students and educational authorities (Gómez-Ullate & Saraiva, 2024; Loaiza, 2024).

For its part, gastronomic festivals such as the renowned one in Guayaquil or the Red Crab Festival, go beyond mere culinary promotion. These spaces motivate substantive learning about native ingredients, ancestral techniques, and food customs, generating a deep sense of belonging and satisfaction among locals and visitors (Campoverde-Aguirre et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2017; Villagómez-Buele et al., 2020).

It should be noted that these celebrations also foster essential values such as gratitude, mutual respect, and harmonious coexistence, exemplified in ceremonies like Inti Raymi, which unites communities around nature and agricultural production, or in school festivals that reinforce collective identities and community spirit (Carvache-Franco et al., 2018; Loaiza, 2016; Mero-Alcívar et al., 2024).

- **Regional manifestations and their meaning**

Regional diversity is clearly expressed in these celebrations. In the Highland region, Inti Raymi synthesizes gratitude to nature through ancestral music and dances, reinforcing Andean identity and its value system (Carvache-Franco et al., 2018). On the Coast, the Raíces Festival stands out for its celebration of traditional gastronomy and culinary art, enhancing local culture and tourism development (Campoverde-Aguirre et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2017). School festivals, meanwhile, bring together musical expressions, dramatizations, and gastronomic displays, becoming ideal spaces for experiential teaching and the transmission of community values (Loaiza, 2016; Mero-Alcívar et al., 2024).

Ecuadorian festivals function as comprehensive educational tools that, through artistic, historical, musical, and gastronomic experiences, transmit fundamental values and strengthen identity bonds across all regions of the country. Their importance lies in their capacity to connect people with

their cultural roots, fostering respect for Ecuador's cultural fabric.

- **The role of women in the traditional Ecuadorian festivities**

Women play a central role in the traditional Ecuadorian festivities, as transmitters of knowledge and as active leaders in the rituals. In the *Fiesta de la Chonta*, for instance, it is Shuar women who prepare the *chicha* in a ritual process which symbolises gratitude and connection with the rainforest, reaffirming their role as guardians of the spiritual memory of the community (Martínez, 2020).

In the celebrations of New Year in Atuntaqui, women have been a key in the elaboration of the rhymed testaments, a practice that demands historical memory, humour, and social creativity (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana, 2016). During the *Lobster Festival* in the Galápagos Islands, women actively participate in gastronomy, commerce, and environmental education, showing how festive spaces can be sceneries for rural empowerment (Morales, 2020). These experiences demonstrate that festivities are spaces of celebration, female agency, and cultural continuity.

Contemporary Transformation of the Traditional Festivities

The traditional festivities have undergone diverse transformations in the current context, in which the ancestral cultural elements are interpreted and modified to be adapt to contemporary social, economic, and political dynamics. They reflect how festivities adapt to the social, cultural, and modern, changes, exploring new forms of celebration and how these transformations maintain their essence alive in the present day. In this sense, the construction of ceremonial territories through the festivities is fundamental to identity, as observed in the *Fiesta de la Yaguarmik´a* in CotacachI (Cazar, 2024, p.280).

One of the most relevant aspects in these processes is the way in which the ritual practices are configured, combining folkloric elements,

social and migratory conditions, and new forms of expression, with recent influences. Digital technologies have played a relevant role in the diffusion of these festivities since they provide interest among new groups in their traditions.

However, this modernization also brings with it new challenges, such as the loss of specific forms of knowledge or the weakening of the customs, particularly within Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, which show remarkable resilience in the face of external influences (Paucar, 2021). On the contrary, they demonstrate a notable capacity to adapt without ceasing to express their meanings. In fact, it has been observed that "advanced capitalism, with all its tragic social, political, economic, and ecological consequences, is far from having put an end to festivals and rituals, nor has the current pandemic done so, nor will it" (García, 2021, p.3). Thus, festivities appear as dynamic spaces of ethnic expression, in which elements of heritage, change, and innovation converge.

The capacity of communities to negotiate these spaces reveals their knowledge, such as the ingenuity to find new mechanisms for collective experience in a rapidly transforming world. As Yépez (2024) rightly states: "The Holy Week of the Black people of Telembí reveals the syncretism, as well as the strategies of collective identity of a people within a context of new social spaces" (p.169).

Conclusions

The incorporation of Ecuador's traditional festivals into the school context represents a valuable pedagogical strategy to promote the recognition of cultural diversity. These celebrations are not isolated events; they are living expressions of collective memory, local worldviews, and historical processes that shape national identity. Integrating them into the curriculum re-signifies their educational value, transforming them into opportunities for meaningful learning and the strengthening of community bonds.

The intercultural approach applied to school festivals allows them to move beyond superficial presentations and become participatory processes of cultural dialogue. Pedagogical planning must transcend the reproduction of folkloric stereotypes, instead promoting critical

analysis of traditions, their origins, meaning, and transformations. Including the voices of local sages, families, and communities adds depth to the process and contributes to building reflective citizenship.

School festivals strengthen the cultural self-esteem of students, especially those from historically marginalized people and nationalities. Seeing their traditions reflected in the educational space validates their belonging and breaks the monocultural logic if the school. This visibility also allows other student to broaden their understanding of the country as a plurinational and diverse territory, promoting mutual respect and coexistence.

To ensure that festivals in the classroom fulfil a true educational and intercultural role, it is necessary to institutionalize their planning through integrative projects linking various area of knowledge. Activities such as cultural fairs, dramatizations, local research, and multisensory exhibitions can connect content from history, art, language, and social sciences, generating contextualized learning. Furthermore, these actions should be evaluated not only for their aesthetic execution, but also for their ability to generate awareness, participation, and critical thinking.

Cómics

Celebrating our roots: Ecuadorian festivities in the classroom

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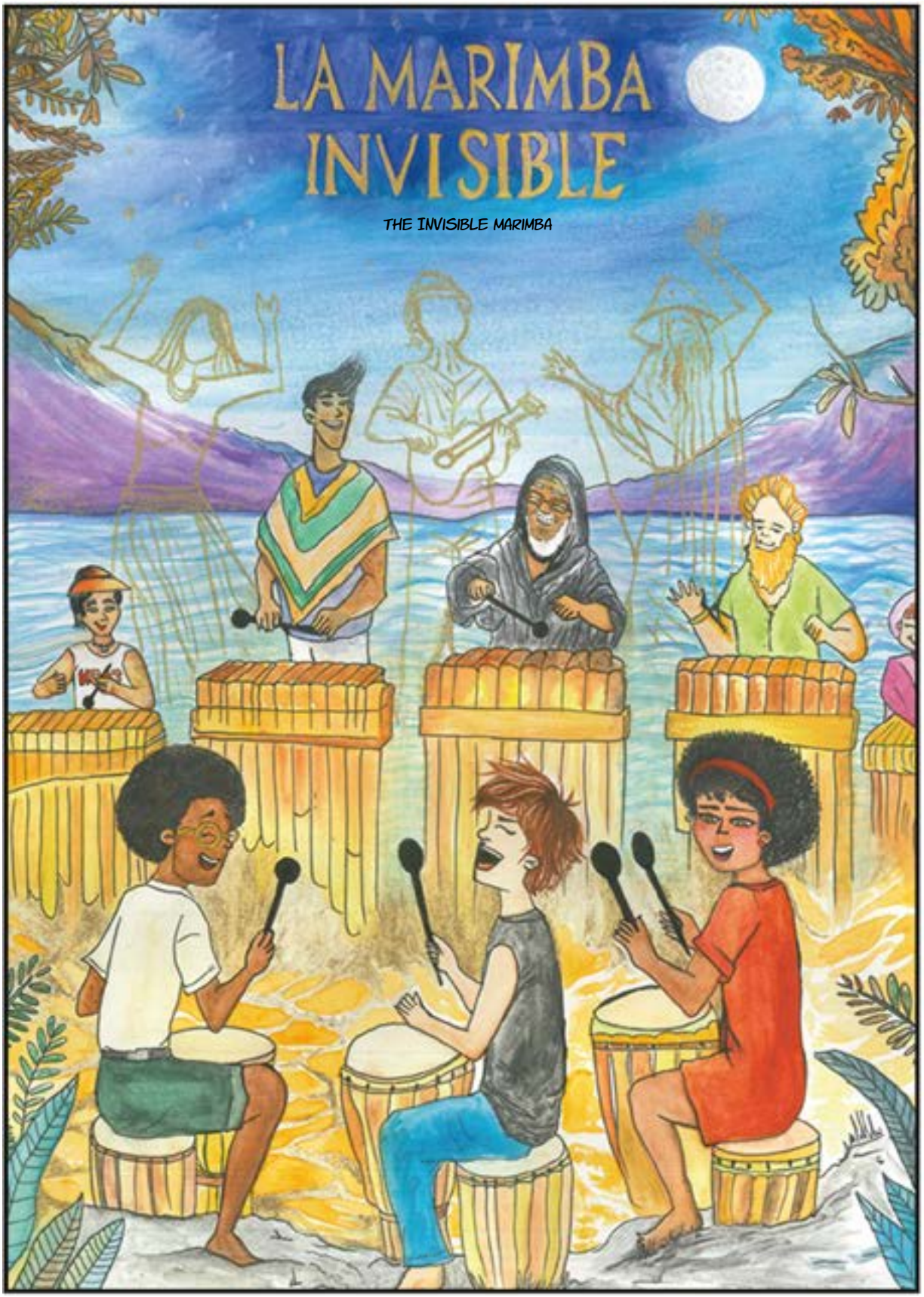
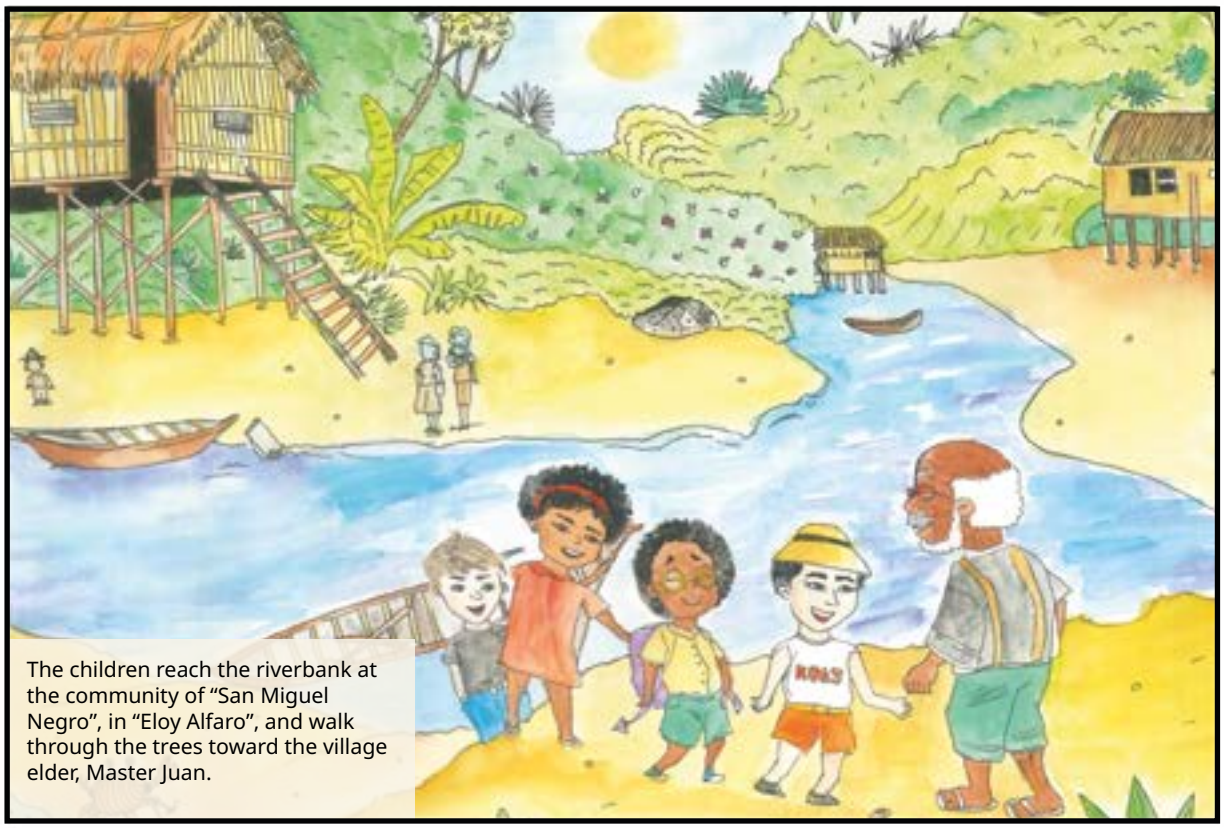

LA MARIMBA
INVISIBLE
THE INVISIBLE MARIMBA

"Esmeraldas", province of Ecuador, where the music of the 'marimba' tells ancestral stories.

In its festivities, dance, joy, and passion blend with tradition, creating an unforgettable experience.

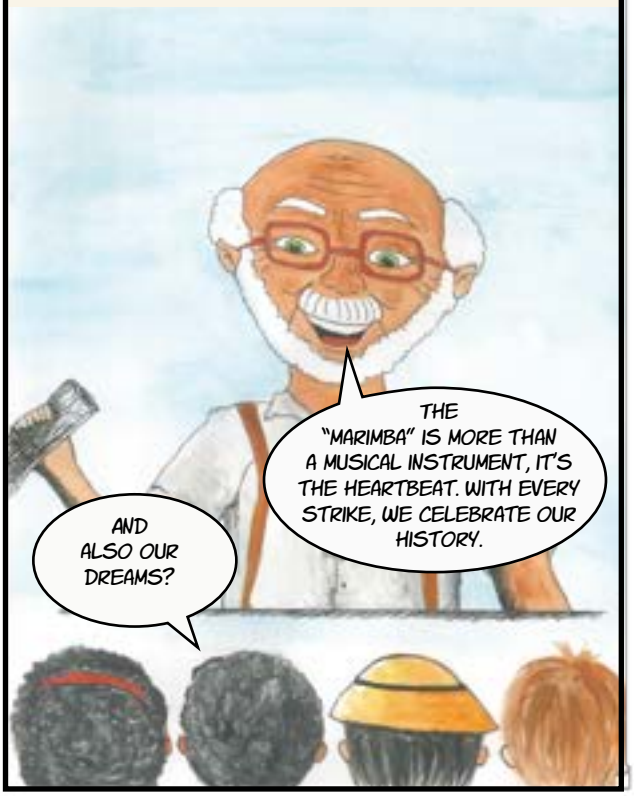
The "Cayapas River", like a thread of life, connects our hearts to 'Afro-Ecuadorian' roots...

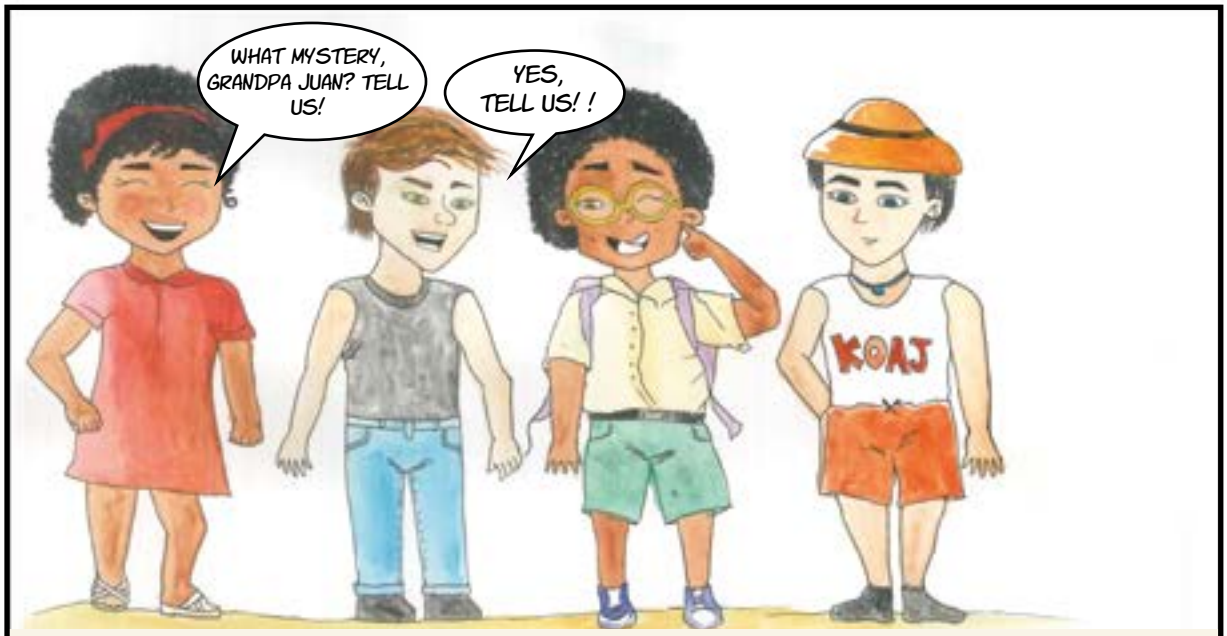
The children open the chest and find an ancient scroll with a handwritten message.



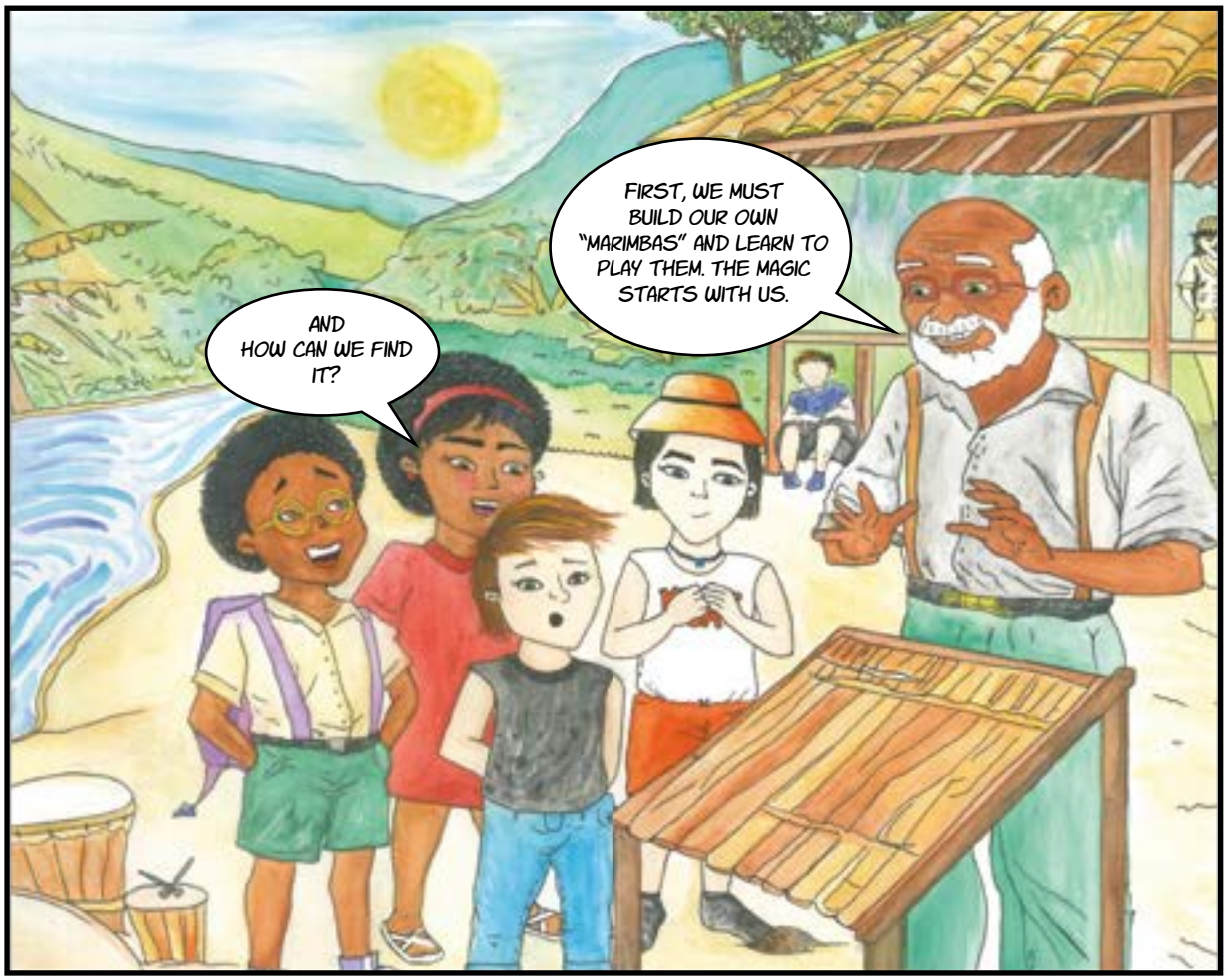
The children reach the riverbank at the community of "San Miguel Negro", in "Eloy Alfaro", and walk through the trees toward the village elder, Master Juan.

Juan shows the children a "balsa" log.





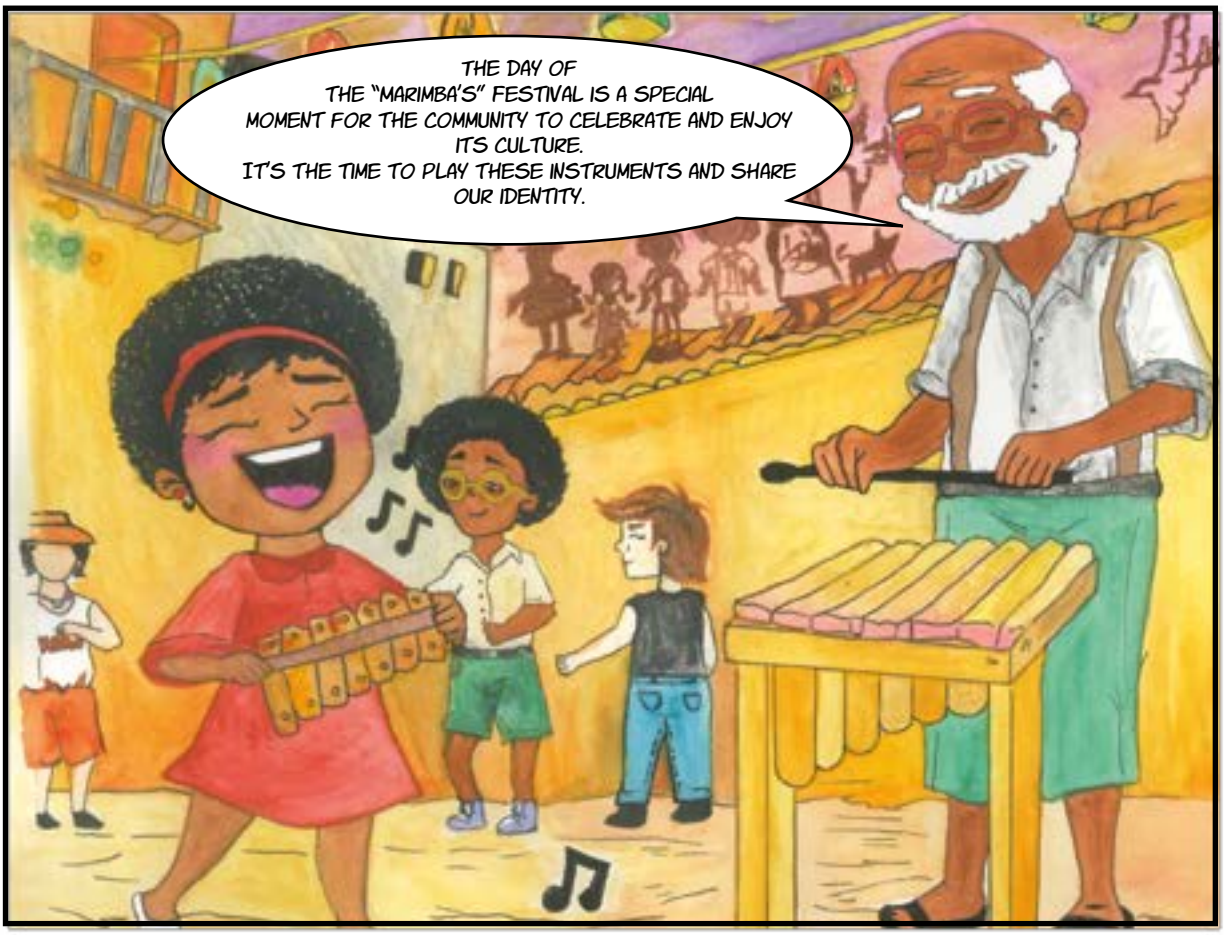
They say there is an invisible "marimba" that only those with a pure heart can hear. Its music can save the village in times of need.



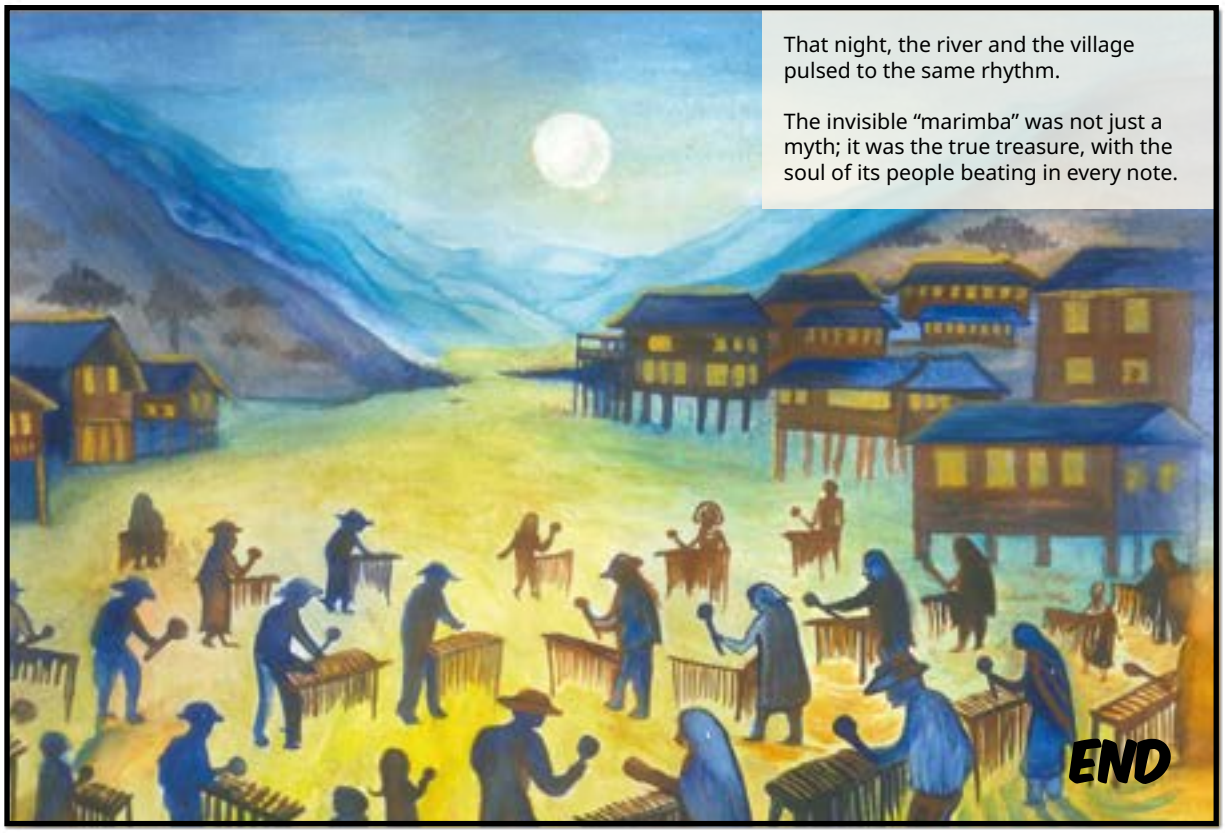
¡HACIENDO MARIMBAS!
MAKING MARIMBAS

VERY WELL DONE, LITTLE ONE. REMEMBER THAT EACH NOTE YOU PLAY CARRIES A PART OF YOU.
LOOK WHAT I MADE, JUAN! IT SOUNDS BEAUTIFUL!

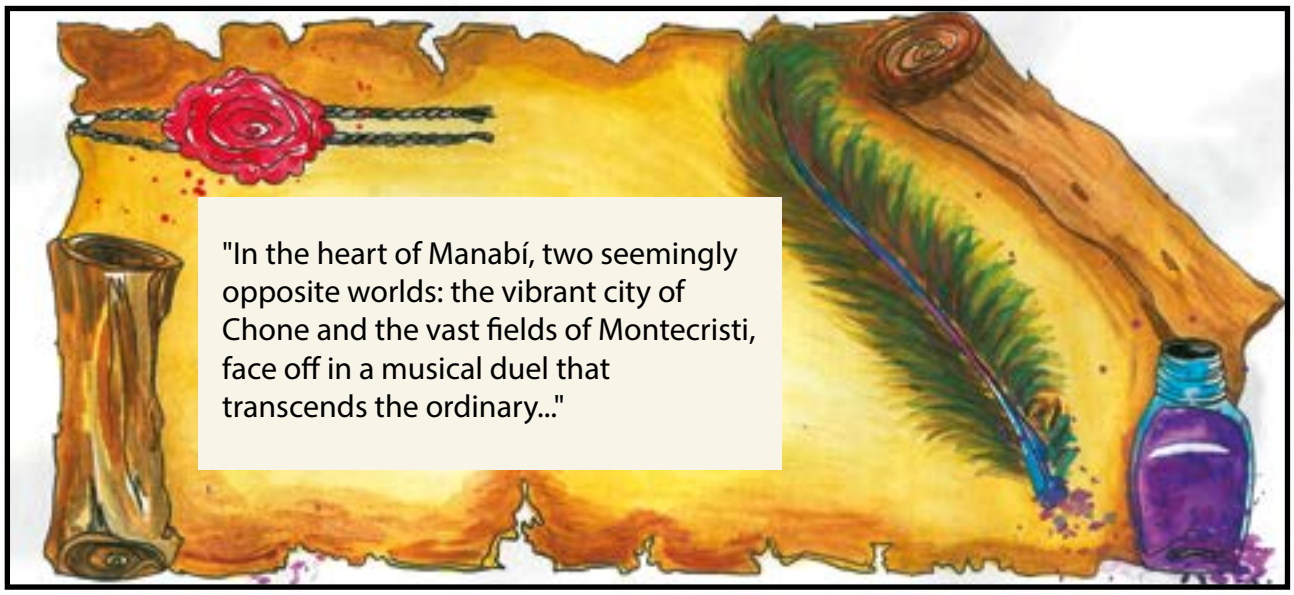
YES!
WE'LL BE THE HEART OF THE CELEBRATION.
LET'S PLAY AT THE FESTIVAL! OUR "MARIMBAS" WILL SOUND AMAZING!
KOAJ


THE DAY OF THE "MARIMBA'S" FESTIVAL IS A SPECIAL MOMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE AND ENJOY ITS CULTURE.
IT'S THE TIME TO PLAY THESE INSTRUMENTS AND SHARE OUR IDENTITY.

LOOK AT THE RIVER! THE MUSIC IS SHINING ON IT!
THE INVISIBLE 'MARIMBA'... THE SPIRITS OF OUR ANCESTORS HAVE HEARD US.


That night, the river and the village pulsed to the same rhythm.
The invisible "marimba" was not just a myth; it was the true treasure, with the soul of its people beating in every note.
END

VOICES OF THE FOREST: STORY OF THE MONTUBIAN HARP AND THE CHIGUALO


"In the heart of Manabí, two seemingly opposite worlds: the vibrant city of Chone and the vast fields of Montecristi, face off in a musical duel that transcends the ordinary..."

"MUSIC NO LONGER INSPIRES ME... I NEED SOMETHING DEEPER."
MARKET

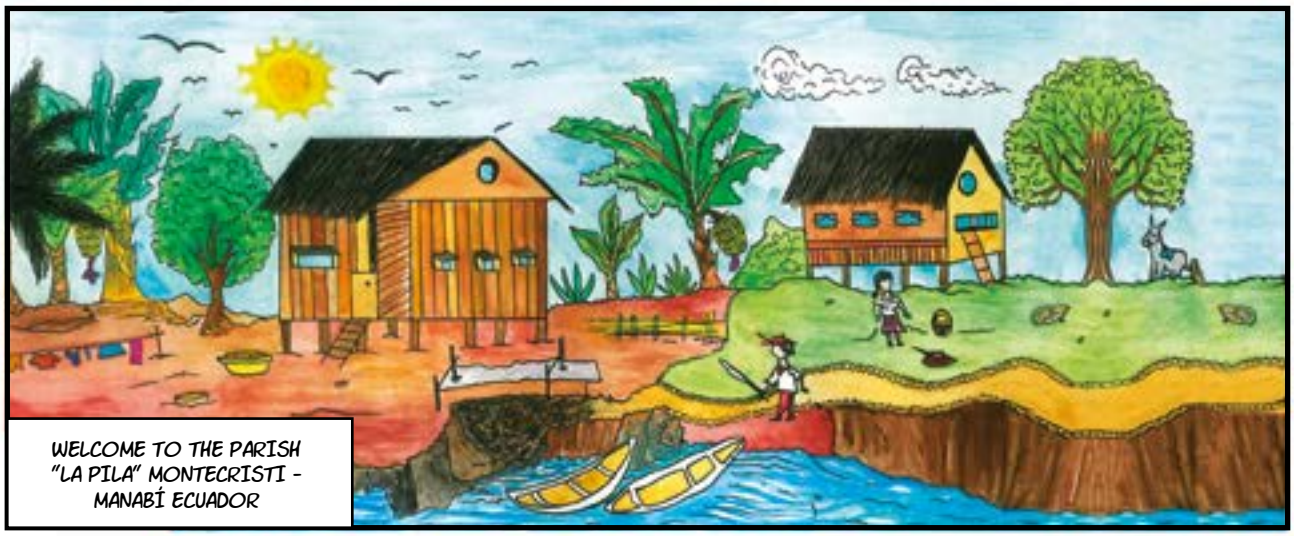
WHAT IS THAT SOUND?

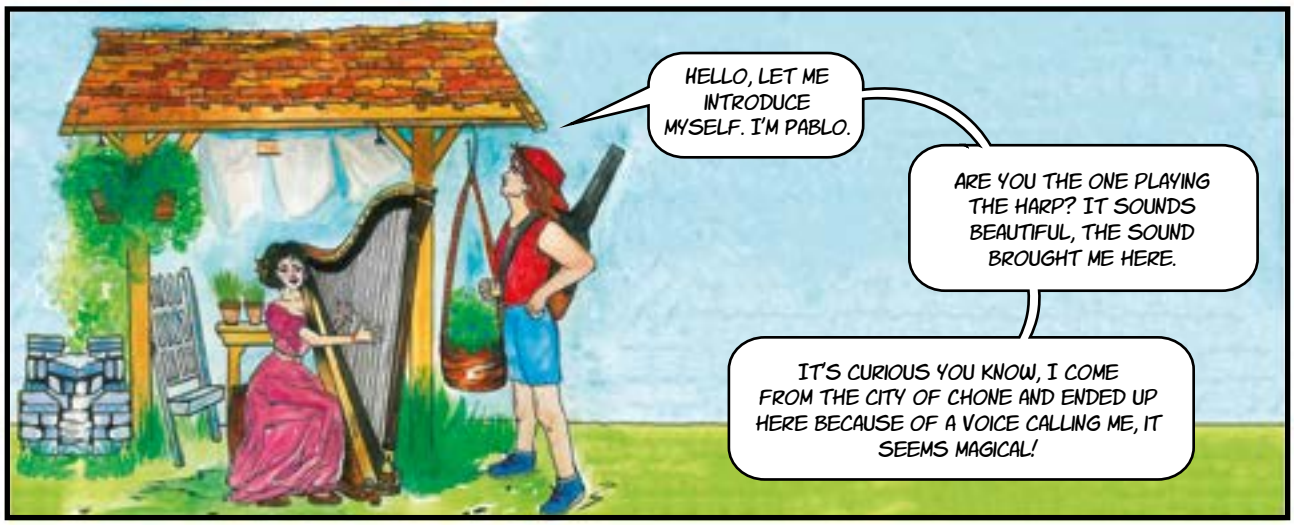
A STRANGE VOICE IS CALLING ME...

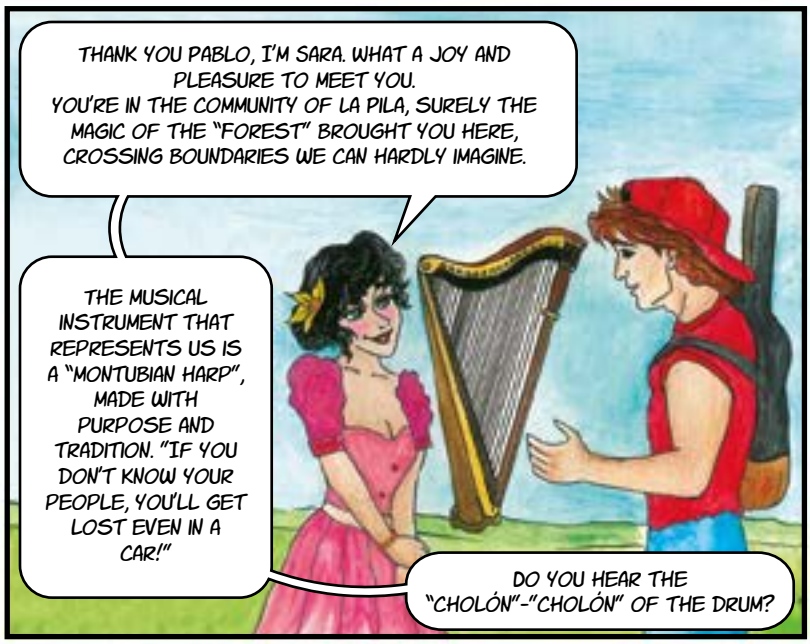
"FOLLOW THE SOUND OF THE HARP THAT WILL GUIDE YOU."

"THE FOREST CALLS YOU TO DISCOVER ITS WONDERS."

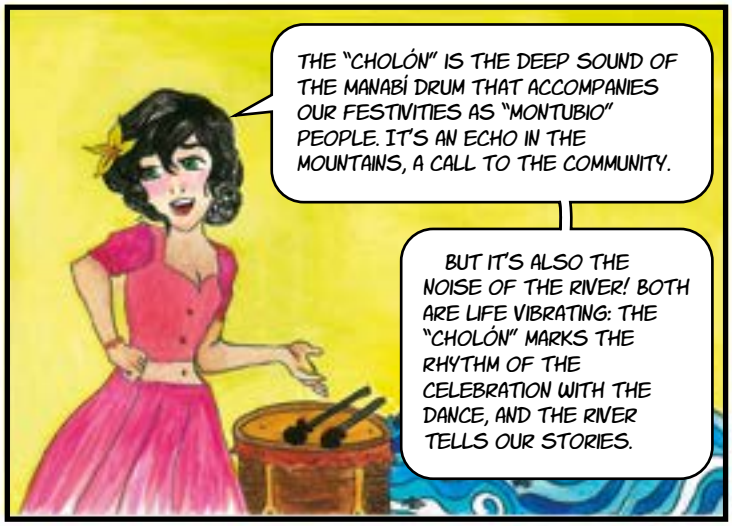
NOW I'M IN THE COUNTRYSIDE! BUT, HOW?... I'LL EXPLORE THE PLACE.


WELCOME TO THE PARISH "LA PILA" MONTECRISTI - MANABÍ ECUADOR


HELLO, LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF. I'M PABLO.
ARE YOU THE ONE PLAYING THE HARP? IT SOUNDS BEAUTIFUL, THE SOUND BROUGHT ME HERE.
IT'S CURIOUS YOU KNOW, I COME FROM THE CITY OF CHONE AND ENDED UP HERE BECAUSE OF A VOICE CALLING ME, IT SEEMS MAGICAL!


THANK YOU PABLO, I'M SARA. WHAT A JOY AND PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
YOU'RE IN THE COMMUNITY OF LA PILA, SURELY THE MAGIC OF THE "FOREST" BROUGHT YOU HERE, CROSSING BOUNDARIES WE CAN HARDLY IMAGINE.
THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT THAT REPRESENTS US IS A "MONTUBIAN HARP", MADE WITH PURPOSE AND TRADITION. "IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR PEOPLE, YOU'LL GET LOST EVEN IN A CAR!"
DO YOU HEAR THE "CHOLÓN"-"CHOLÓN" OF THE DRUM?

"CHOLÓN"? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?


THE "CHOLÓN" IS THE DEEP SOUND OF THE MANABÍ DRUM THAT ACCOMPANIES OUR FESTIVITIES AS "MONTUBIO" PEOPLE. IT'S AN ECHO IN THE MOUNTAINS, A CALL TO THE COMMUNITY.
BUT IT'S ALSO THE NOISE OF THE RIVER! BOTH ARE LIFE VIBRATING: THE "CHOLÓN" MARKS THE RHYTHM OF THE CELEBRATION WITH THE DANCE, AND THE RIVER TELLS OUR STORIES.

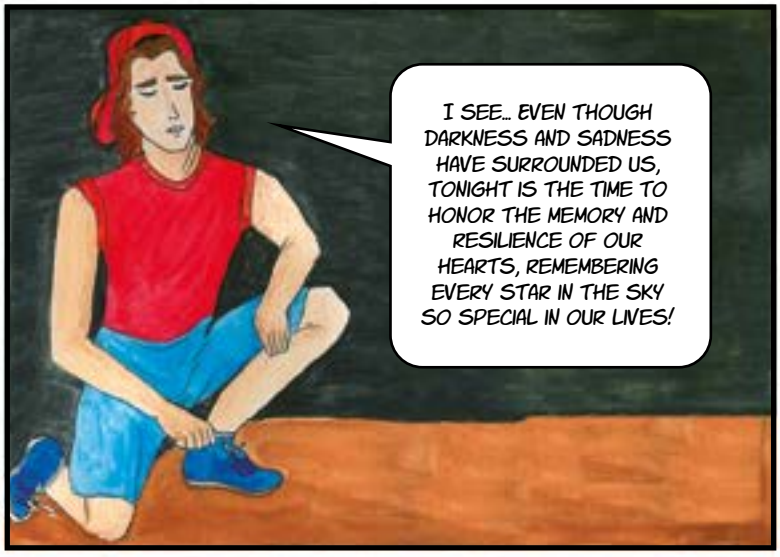
I CAN IMAGINE IT... IT SOUNDS LIKE EACH DRUMBEAT AND EACH STREAM OF WATER TELLS A STORY.

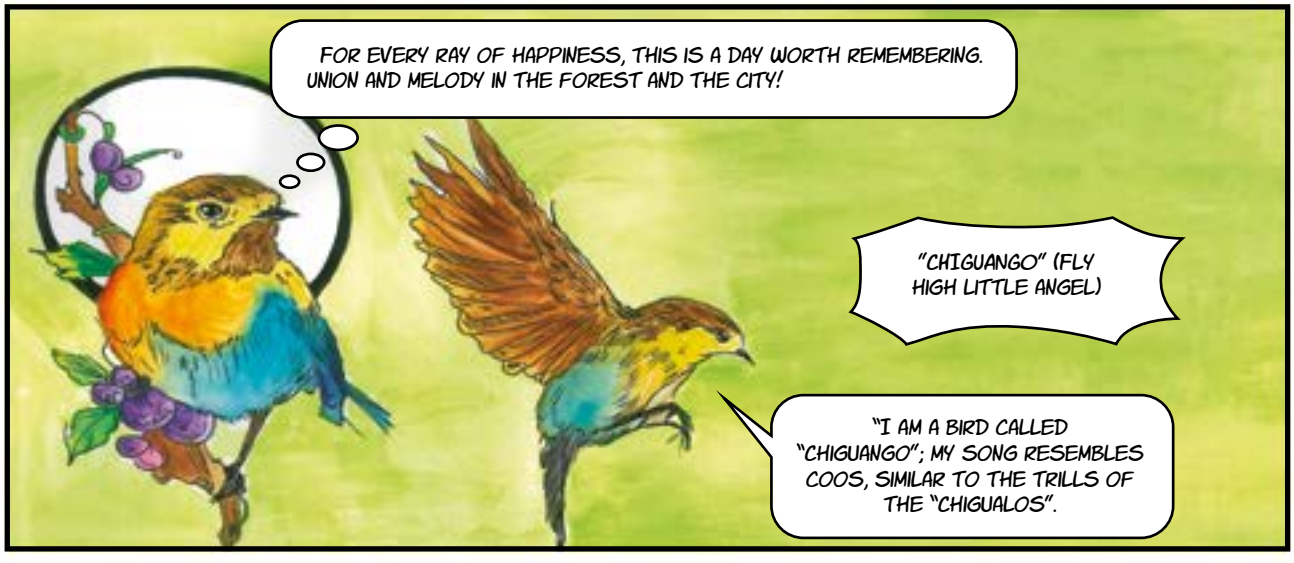
THE "CHOLÓN" CONNECTS US TO OUR IDENTITY AND REMINDS US THAT TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER.
EXACTLY!

DO YOU DARE TO BLEND YOUR MUSIC WITH MINE SO THE "CHOLÓN" RESOUNDS EVEN LOUDER?

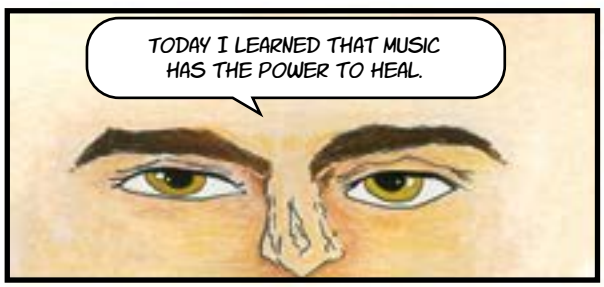
COME, THE MUSICAL DUEL BEGINS. THE TRADITION OF SINGING "CHIGUALOS" COMES ALIVE ON DAYS LIKE THIS.
"CHIGUALO"? WHAT'S THAT?

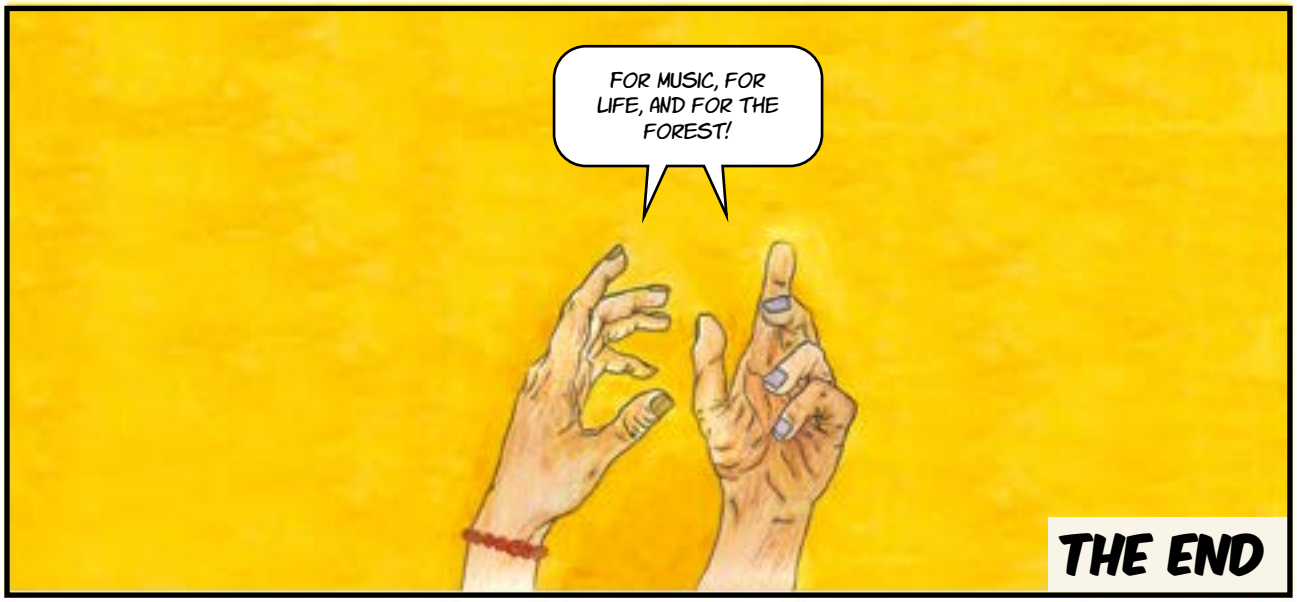
IT'S A SONG PERFORMED TO BID FAREWELL TO CHILDREN WHO LEAVE THIS WORLD TOO SOON; IT'S A TRIBUTE TO THEIR LIGHT...


I SEE... EVEN THOUGH DARKNESS AND SADNESS HAVE SURROUNDED US, TONIGHT IS THE TIME TO HONOR THE MEMORY AND RESILIENCE OF OUR HEARTS, REMEMBERING EVERY STAR IN THE SKY SO SPECIAL IN OUR LIVES!

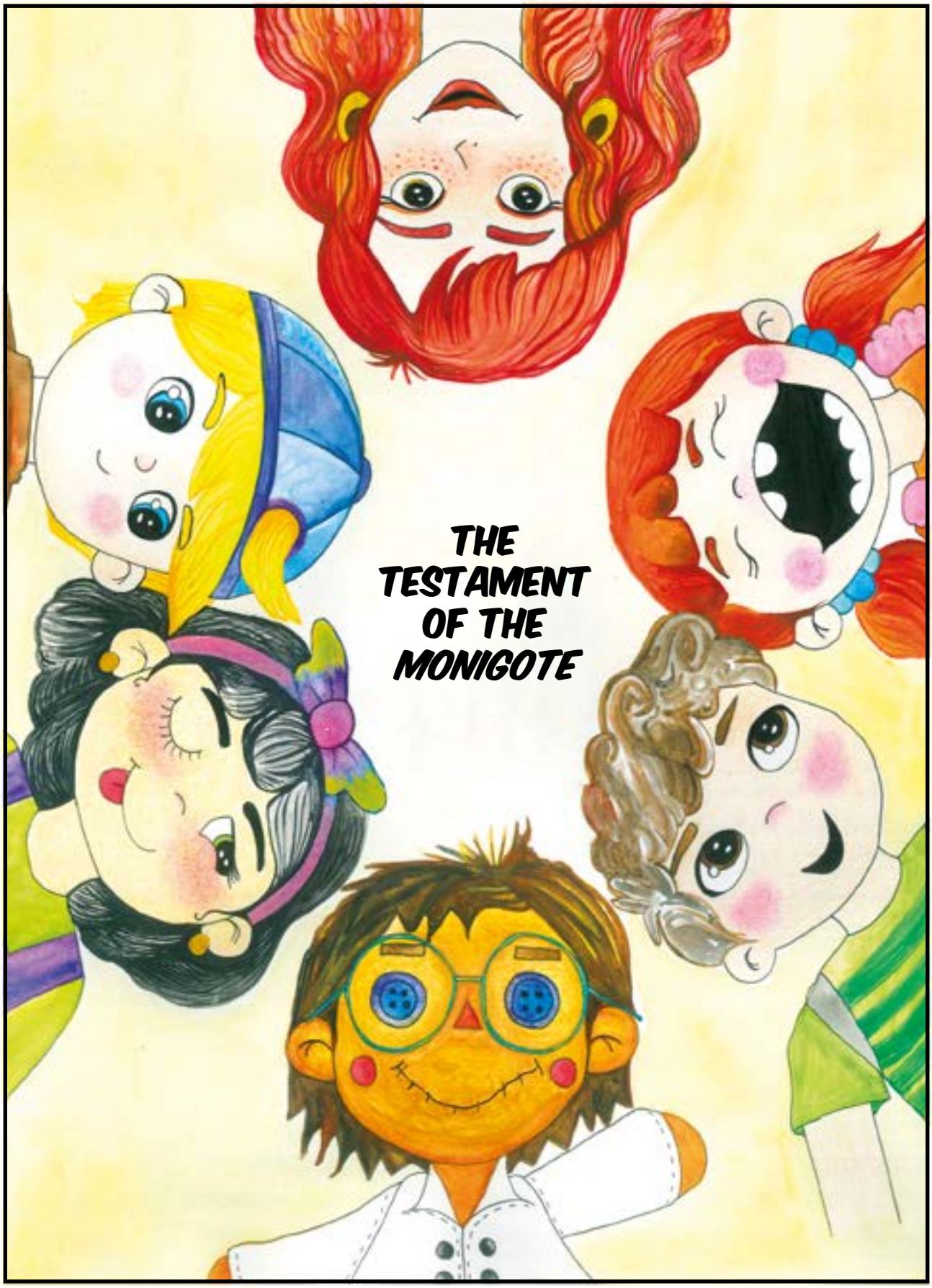

FOR EVERY RAY OF HAPPINESS, THIS IS A DAY WORTH REMEMBERING. UNION AND MELODY IN THE FOREST AND THE CITY!
"CHIGUANGO" (FLY HIGH LITTLE ANGEL)
"I AM A BIRD CALLED "CHIGUANGO"; MY SONG RESEMBLES COOS, SIMILAR TO THE TRILLS OF THE "CHIGUALOS".

Music unites hearts, also honoring those who have left... A "Chigualo" and a "montubian harp" are gifts to the heart!




FOR MUSIC, FOR LIFE, AND FOR THE FOREST!
THE END

FIN

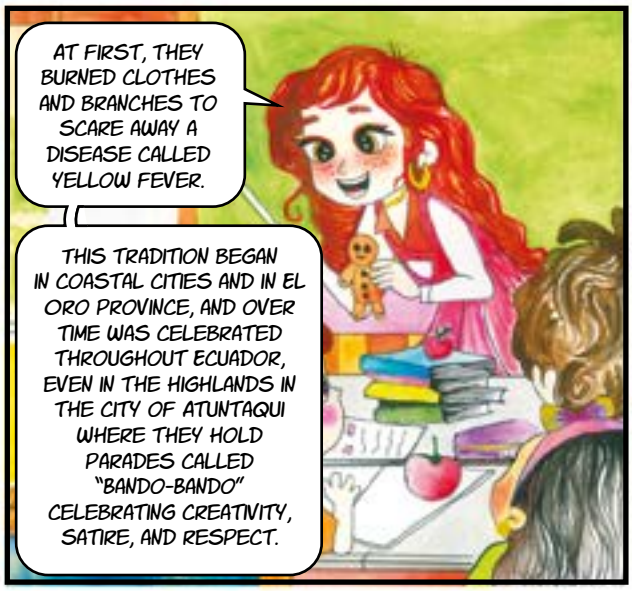

THE
TESTAMENT
OF THE
MONIGOTE

It was a day at San Vicente Ferrer School.
TODAY WE WILL TALK ABOUT ONE OF THE MOST CREATIVE FESTIVITIES IN ECUADOR.
EL TESTAMENTO DEL MONIGOTE
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THE "MONIGOTES" AND "AÑOS VIEJOS"?

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?
I LOVE THE "MONIGOTES"!
WHAT AN INTERESTING TRADITION!

EVERY YEAR, IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, A GIANT MONIGOTE IS MADE TO BID FAREWELL TO THE OLD YEAR.
DID YOU KNOW THIS TRADITION BEGAN MORE THAN 100 YEARS AGO IN GUAYAQUIL... DURING AN EPIDEMIC?

REALLY? AND WHY DID THEY BURN "MONIGOTES"?


AT FIRST, THEY BURNED CLOTHES AND BRANCHES TO SCARE AWAY A DISEASE CALLED YELLOW FEVER.
THIS TRADITION BEGAN IN COASTAL CITIES AND IN EL ORO PROVINCE, AND OVER TIME WAS CELEBRATED THROUGHOUT ECUADOR, EVEN IN THE HIGHLANDS IN THE CITY OF ATUNTAQUI WHERE THEY HOLD PARADES CALLED "BANDO-BANDO" CELEBRATING CREATIVITY, SATIRE, AND RESPECT.

THE MOST FUN IS WRITING THE RHYMING TESTAMENT NEXT TO THE MONIGOTE, WHICH TELLS THE YEAR'S EVENTS IN A FUNNY WAY.
WOW! SO THEY BURNED BAD THINGS TO START AGAIN!

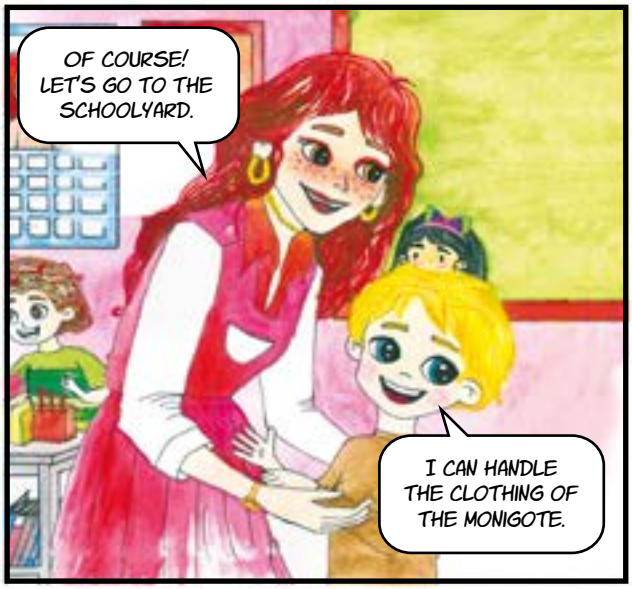
EXACTLY. OVER TIME, "MONIGOTES" BECAME PART OF A PARTY TO LEAVE THE BAD BEHIND... AND LAUGH A LITTLE TOO WHEN WRITING THEIR TESTAMENT.

TEACHER ELENA, CAN WE MAKE OUR OWN "AÑO VIEJO" MONIGOTE?
I'D LOVE TO WRITE A FUNNY TESTAMENT!

OF COURSE KIDS, USE ALL YOUR CREATIVITY.
YES! AND WE CAN ALSO MAKE A SMALL PARADE.
AND WE'LL WRITE A TESTAMENT WITH OUR FUNNIEST MOMENTS FROM THE SCHOOL YEAR.

WE'LL DIVIDE THE WORK: MAKING THE MONIGOTE, THE TESTAMENT, DECORATING, AND MUSIC.

I CAN HELP WRITE THE TESTAMENT IN RHYME.

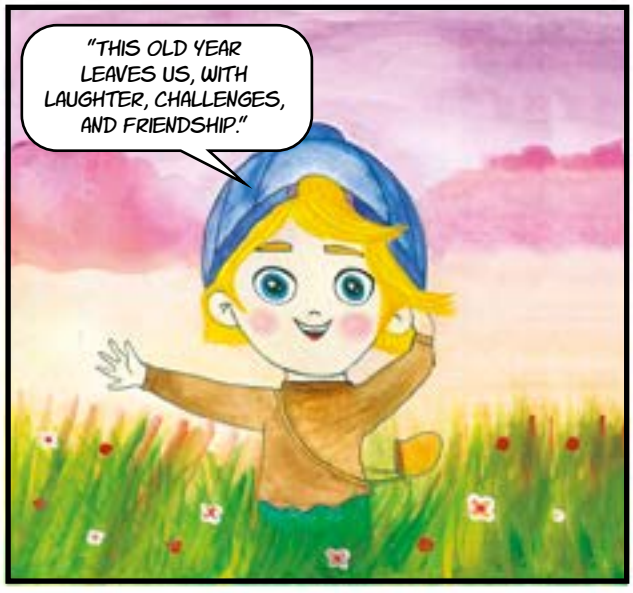

OF COURSE! LET'S GO TO THE SCHOOLYARD.
I CAN HANDLE THE CLOTHING OF THE MONIGOTE.

I HAVE LOTS OF DRAWINGS WITH IDEAS FOR OUR MONIGOTE!

OUR MONIGOTE WILL LOOK GREAT!

I'LL SEW ITS CLOTHES AND PAINT A SIGN WITH THE YEAR WE'RE SAYING GOODBYE TO.

SO THIS YEAR WE ALSO BURN OUR MISTAKES... AND SAY GOODBYE TO DIFFICULT HOMEWORK!
KIDS, REMEMBER THIS REPRESENTS THE FAREWELL TO THE YEAR THAT'S ENDING.


"THIS OLD YEAR LEAVES US, WITH LAUGHTER, CHALLENGES, AND FRIENDSHIP."

"IT TAKES AWAY EXAMS, RAINY AND HOT DAYS, AND MOMENTS OF HAPPINESS."

EXCELLENT! YOU'VE CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE TRADITION. NOW LET'S PLAY COSTUMES FOR THE PARADE AT THE SCHOOL PARTY.

WITH THIS PARADE, WE'LL MAKE THIS NEW YEAR'S FAREWELL UNFORGETTABLE!

MONIGOTE
2025

AND I'LL BE IN CHARGE OF READING THE TESTAMENT!

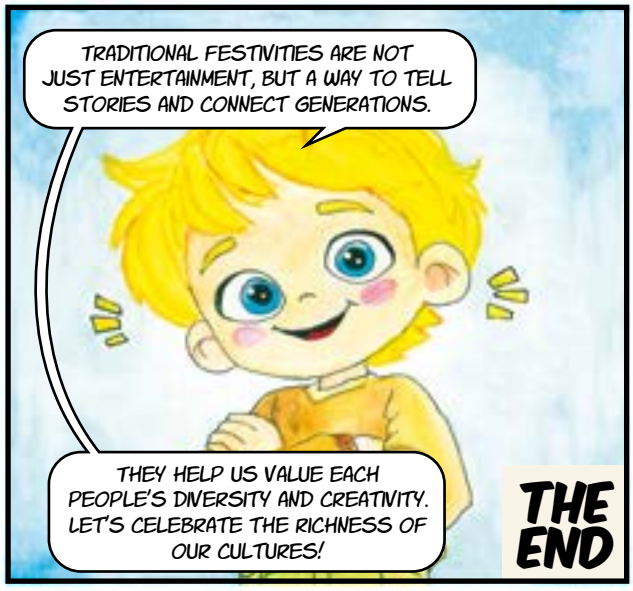
12025!

WHAT A CREATIVE WAY TO REMEMBER WHAT WE'VE LIVED!
"THE OLD YEAR LEAVES US, BUT ITS LAUGHTER WILL REMAIN, WITH EVERY CRAZY STORY THAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL."

DID YOU LIKE THE NEW YEAR'S PARTY AND THE "MONIGOTES"?
I LOVED THE "MONIGOTES"!

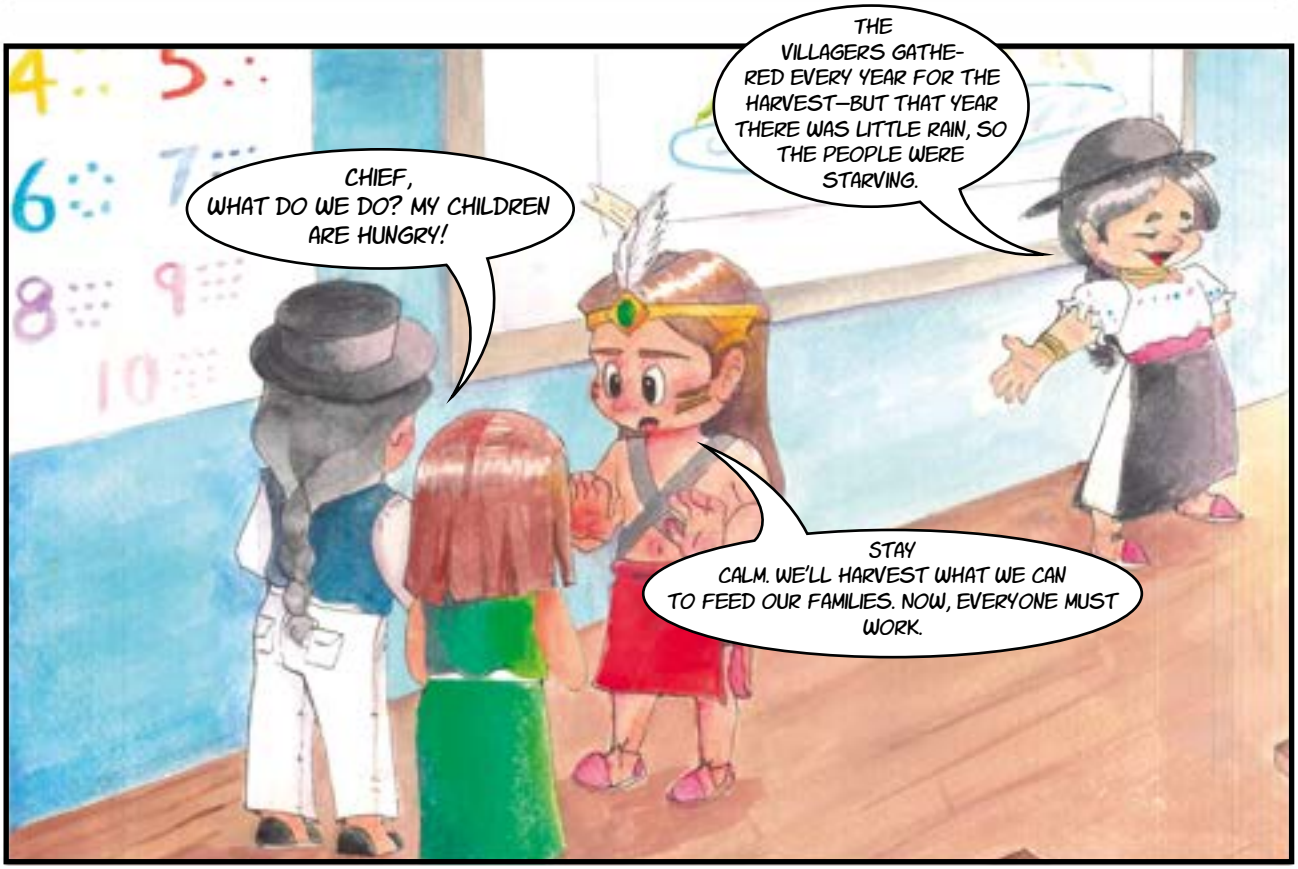
AND EACH CULTURE HAS ITS SPECIAL WAY OF CLOSING CYCLES.
I DIDN'T KNOW "MONIGOTES" WERE A WAY TO EXPRESS HISTORY AND CREATIVITY.

WE DEFINITELY NEED TO KEEP LEARNING MORE TRADITIONS!
"CULTURAL DIVERSITY TEACHES US THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CELEBRATE LIFE AND TIME."


TRADITIONAL FESTIVITIES ARE NOT JUST ENTERTAINMENT, BUT A WAY TO TELL STORIES AND CONNECT GENERATIONS.
THEY HELP US VALUE EACH PEOPLE'S DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY. LET'S CELEBRATE THE RICHNESS OF OUR CULTURES!
THE END

A SIP OF YAMOR

In the classroom, the kids of second grade "A" were performing skits about Ecuadorian festivals. Now it was the turn of Asiri's group, with the theme of "Yamor".



After harvesting, the villagers were exhausted. The chief's daughter, Saraku, a beautiful girl, brought them water to quench their thirst.

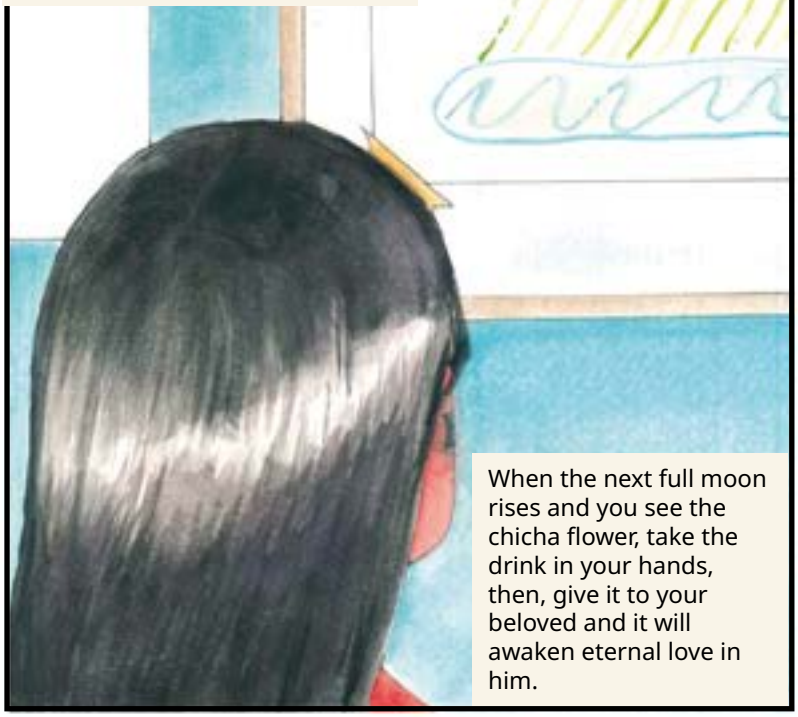
All the boys adored her, but when she approached Ayamurku, the one she liked, he rejected her flirting.

After, she went to her father, who told her to seek advice from Taita Imbabura.

"Taita": considered a protective deity or "father" in Kichwa cosmology.

Taita Imbabura is the great volcano that shelters the province of Imbabura, revered as a sacred guardian of the land.

She obeyed. Taita Imbabura said: 'Pick seven grains from the harvest. Dry them, then boil them with water from the lagoon...

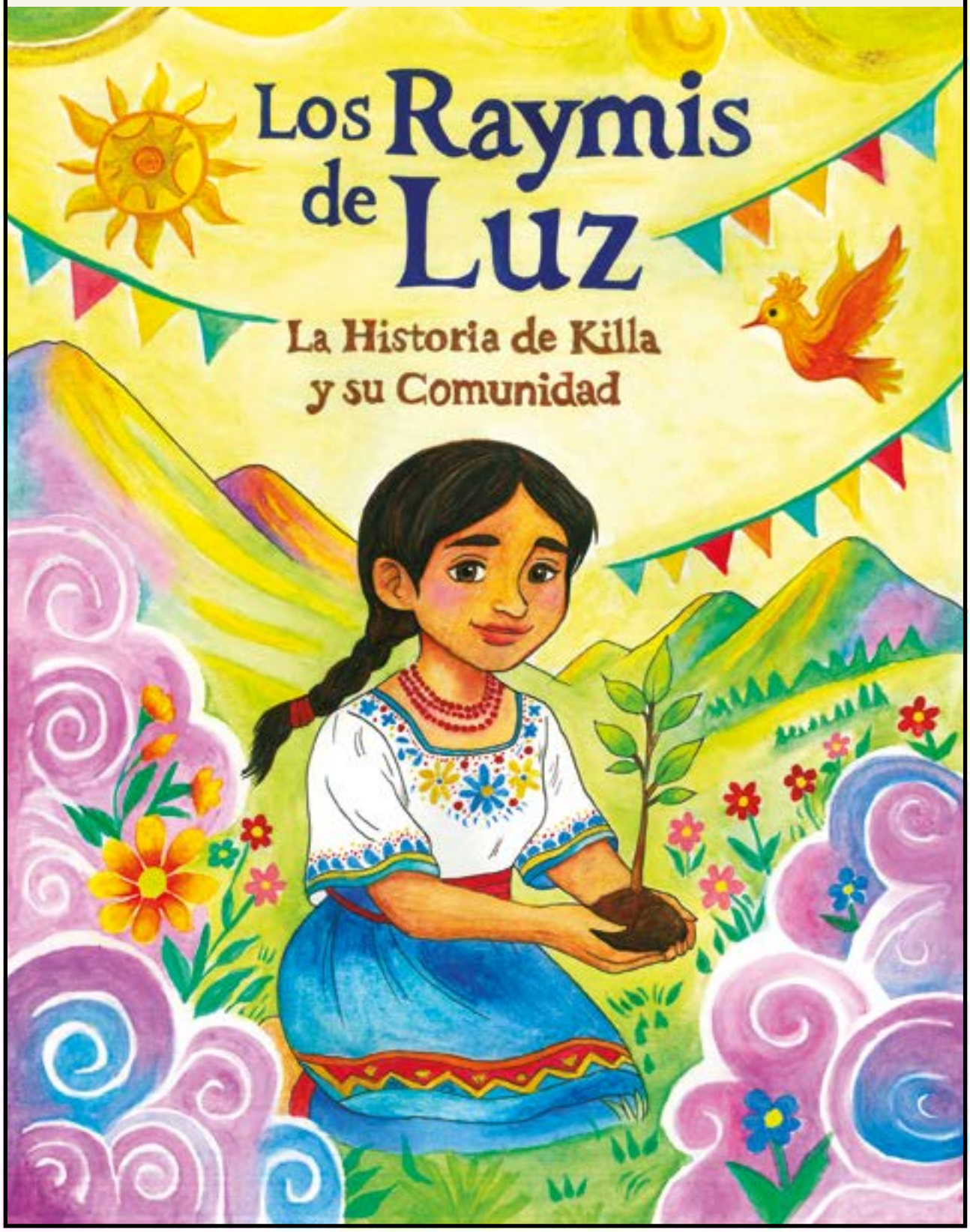


When the next full moon rises and you see the chicha flower, take the drink in your hands, then, give it to your beloved and it will awaken eternal love in him.

Saraku did as told. She handed water to everyone but for Ayamurku, she poured the sacred brew into his hands and lifted it to his lips.

When he drank, he saw Saraku's radiant eyes, the rosemary scent of her hair and love blossomed.

THE RAYMIS OF LIGHT: KILLA'S STORY AND HER COMMUNITY



Killa, a teenage girl from Otavalo, is in her modern bedroom. She listens to pop music while staring out the window. Outside, the sounds of drums, laughter, and voices from the market and town square fill the air as preparations for an Andean celebration are underway.

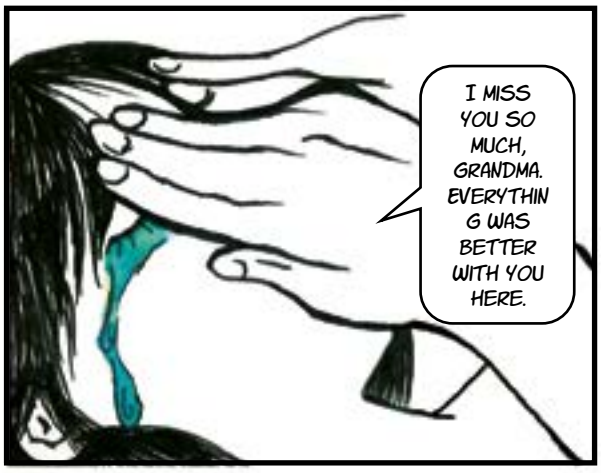
Pachamama: Earth Mother in Andean cosmology, revered as the spirit of nature and life.

In the town square, the community gathers with joy. They decorate with flowers and traditional textiles, preparing offerings with gratitude and happiness.

Three months later. The community gathers again to celebrate *Inti Raymi*, giving thanks to the sun for its light and life. As the songs and dances begin with vigor, Killa stands apart, disconnected from the celebration.

Killa sleeps in her bed. In her dream, her grandmother appears, surrounded by flowers and golden light. She wears an *anaco* and *walkas* made of mullos.

Walkas: golden bead necklaces worn by Otavalo Indigenous women.
Anaco: traditional Andean garment worn by women.



With each step, Killa discovered that the light of her people also lived within her—
like a flame sleeping beneath the earth,
like a seed waiting to be nurtured by loving hands.
By listening to the land and honoring the most sacred legacy,
your voice will never fade.

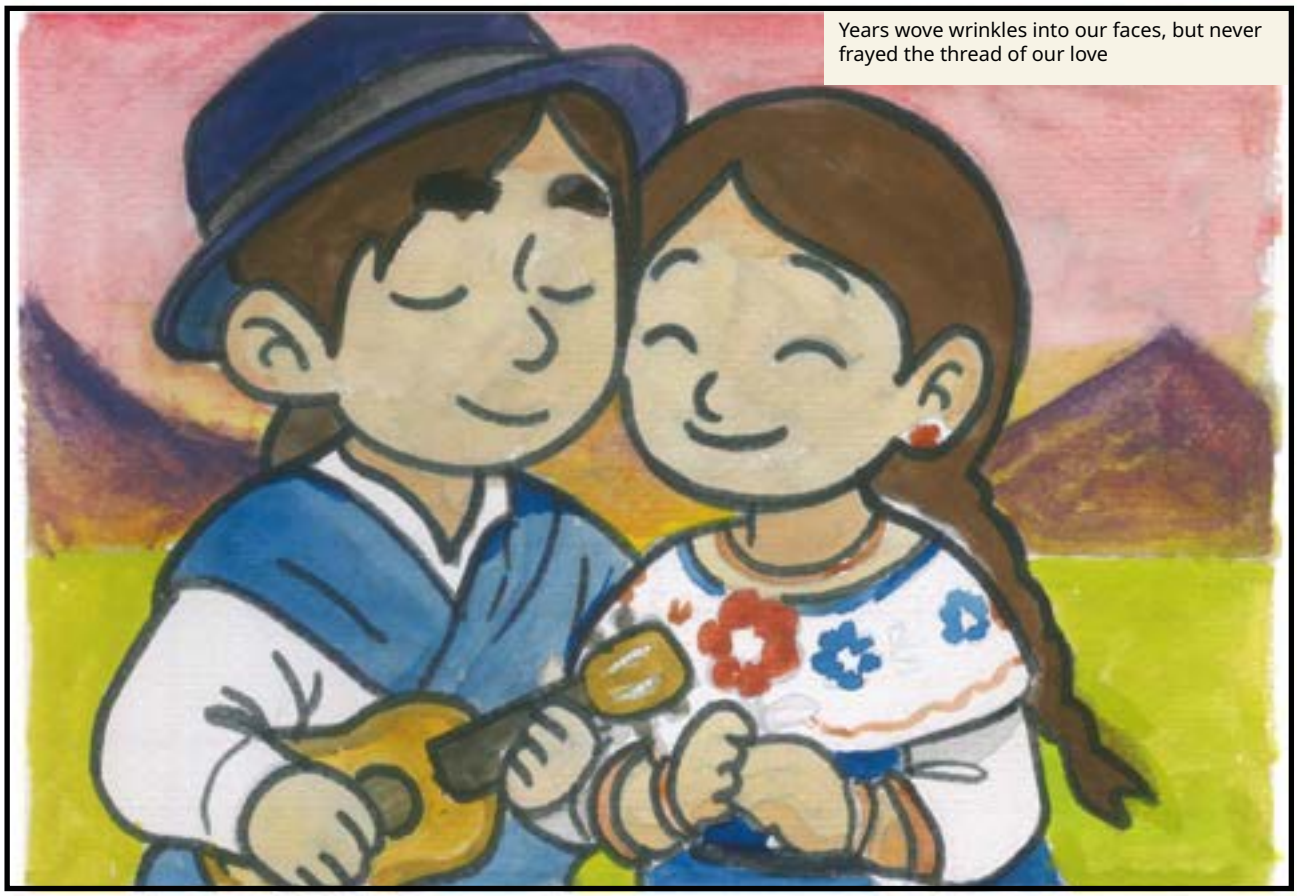
THE END

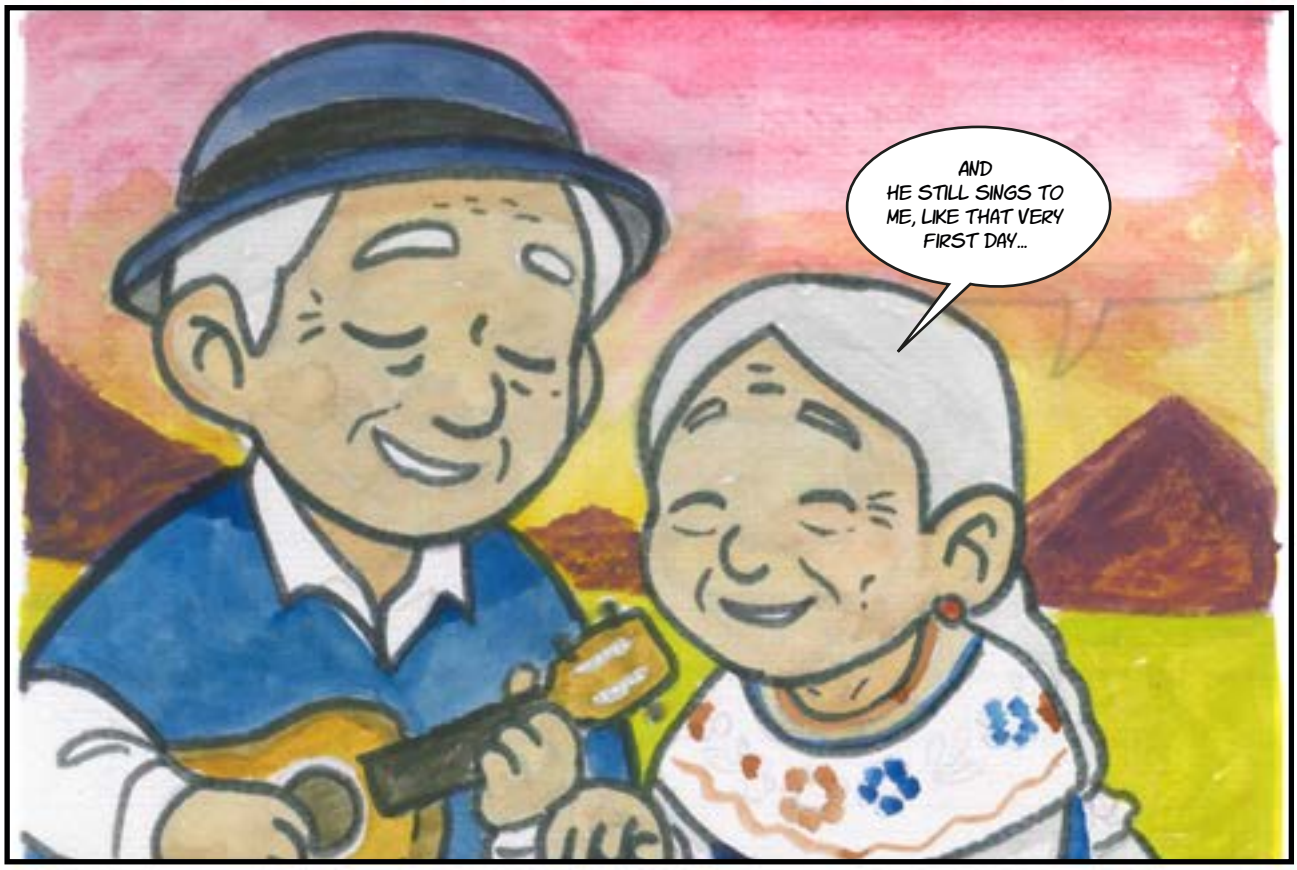
A LOVE THAT WEAVES TIME

Colada morada — a traditional Ecuadorian purple corn and fruit drink prepared for the Day of the Dead.
Wambrita — a term of endearment in Kichwa, like "little dear" or "darling."

Our union was guided by Pachamama. We vowed not just love, but to care for the earth together
"KAWSAYPAK, MUNAYPAK, ALLIKAWSAYPAK." ("FOR LIFE, LOVE, AND LIVING WELL.")

That night, we danced under the moon. We weren't just two, we were a whole community celebrating love
EVERY STEP WITH YOU IS A SONG. I NEVER WANT TO STOP DANCING...


Years wove wrinkles into our faces, but never frayed the thread of our love


AND HE STILL SINGS TO ME, LIKE THAT VERY FIRST DAY...

True love never dies, it blooms in the generations to come
REMEMBER: LOVE IS TENDED, WORKED FOR... AND CELEBRATED WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

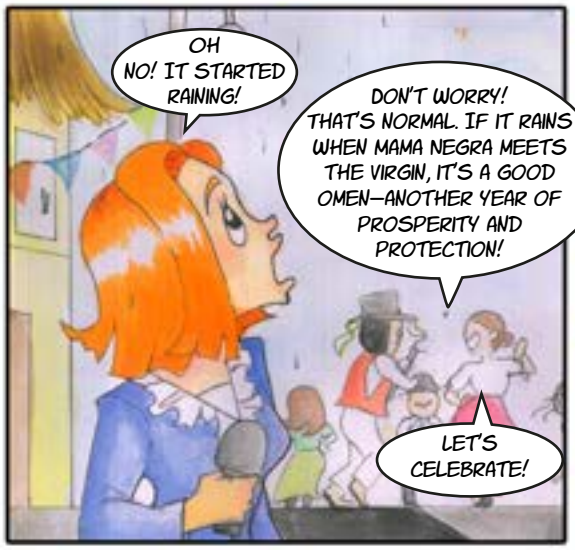
THE END

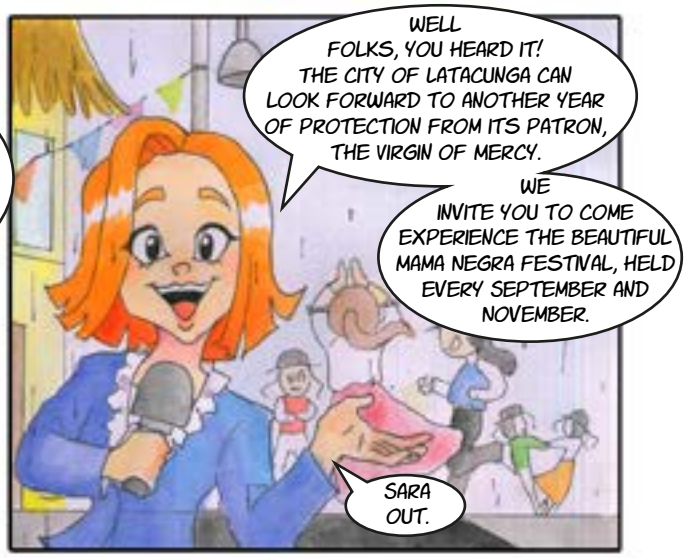
LIVE FROM LATACUNGA

Michita (a loving nickname for the Virgin of Mercy).

Now, the Mama Negra will recite a prayer to the Virgin of Mercy, in gratitude for protecting the people of Latacunga from the Cotopaxi volcano.

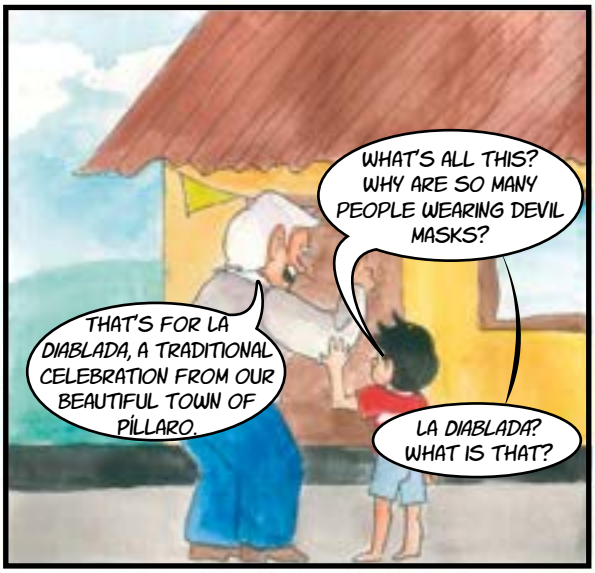
Glorious Our Lady of Mercy,
Mother of God,
Queen of Heaven,
You who heard from above the sorrowful cries of the poor captives, suffering without comfort under harsh oppression.
Teach us to cherish our Christian faith, grant us the grace to love with merciful charity, and make us bringers of peace.

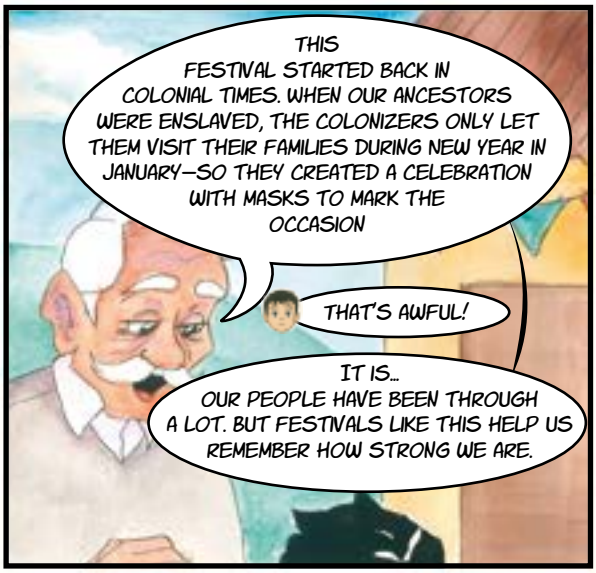


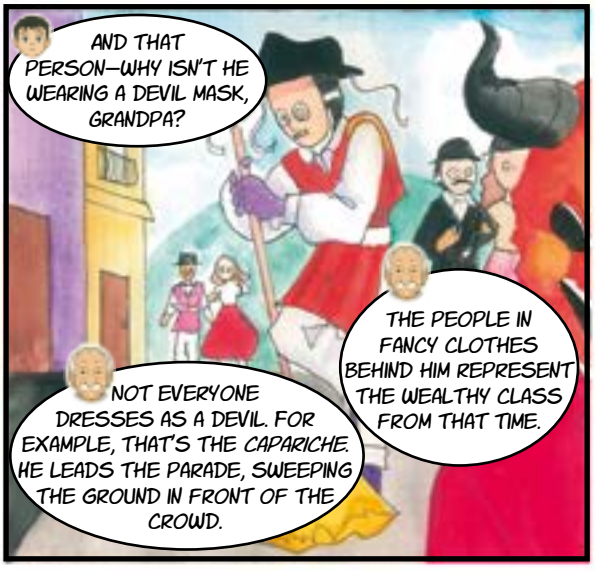


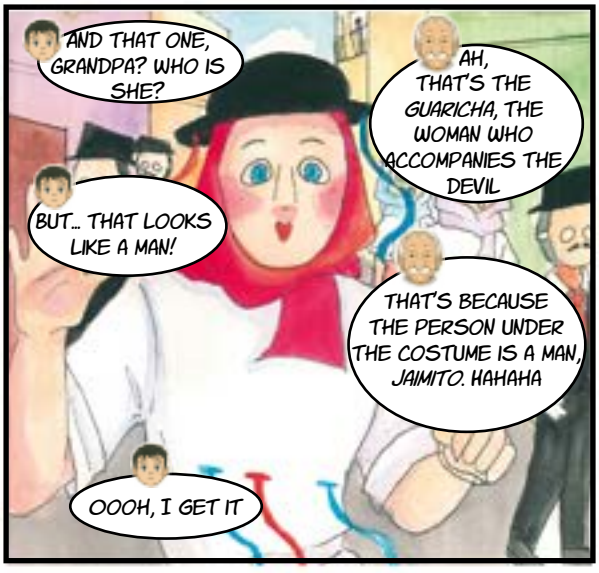
THE END

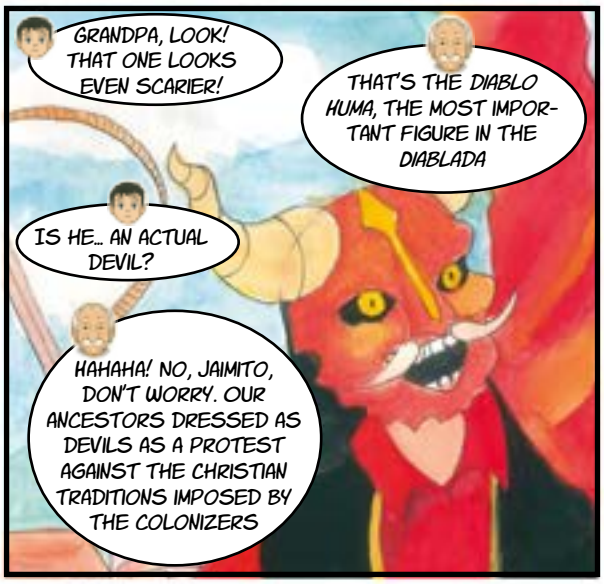
YESTERDAY'S AND TODAY'S DEVILS

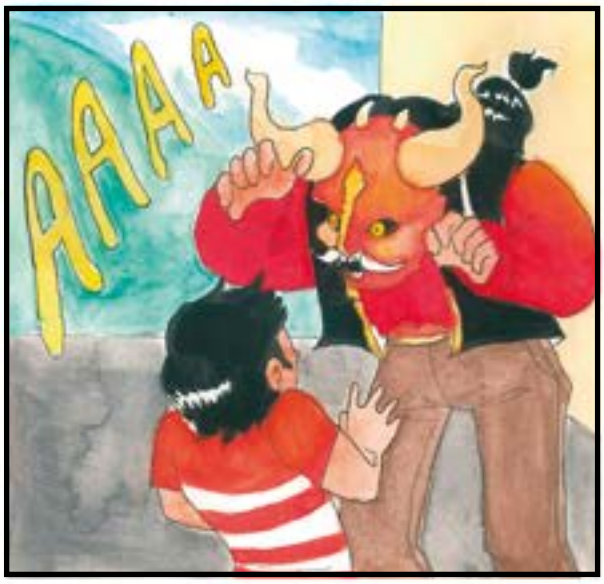









GRANDPA, LOOK! THAT ONE LOOKS EVEN SCARIER!
THAT'S THE DIABLO HUMA, THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGURE IN THE DIABLADA
IS HE... AN ACTUAL DEVIL?
HAHAHA! NO, JAIMITO, DON'T WORRY. OUR ANCESTORS DRESSED AS DEVILS AS A PROTEST AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS IMPOSED BY THE COLONIZERS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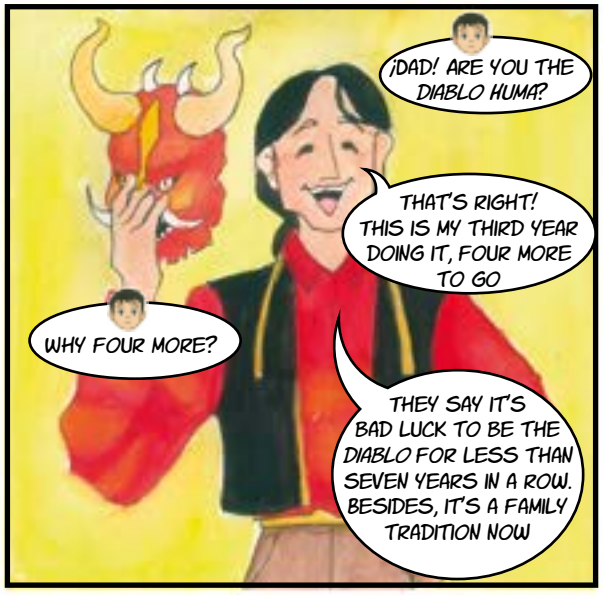
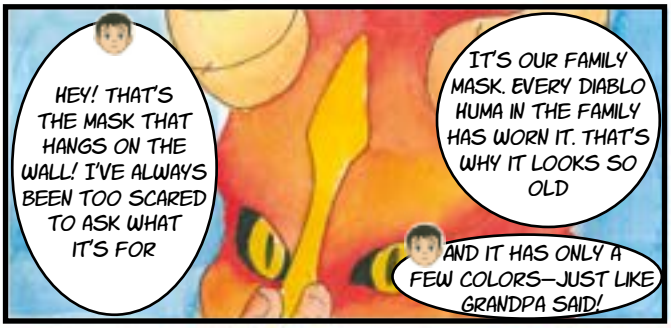
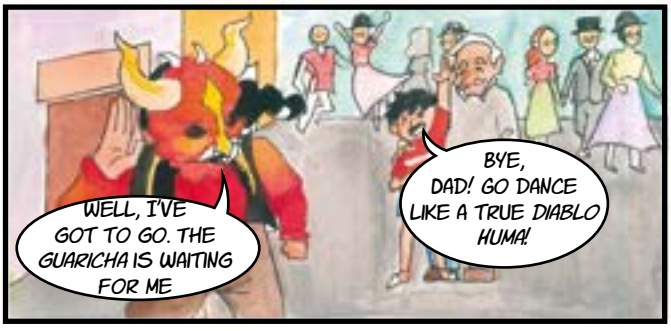
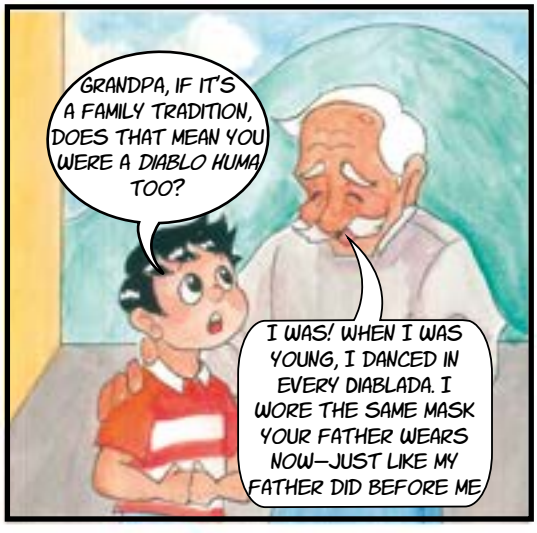

¡DAD! ARE YOU THE DIABLO HUMA?
THAT'S RIGHT! THIS IS MY THIRD YEAR DOING IT, FOUR MORE TO GO
WHY FOUR MORE?
THEY SAY IT'S BAD LUCK TO BE THE DIABLO FOR LESS THAN SEVEN YEARS IN A ROW. BESIDES, IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION NOW

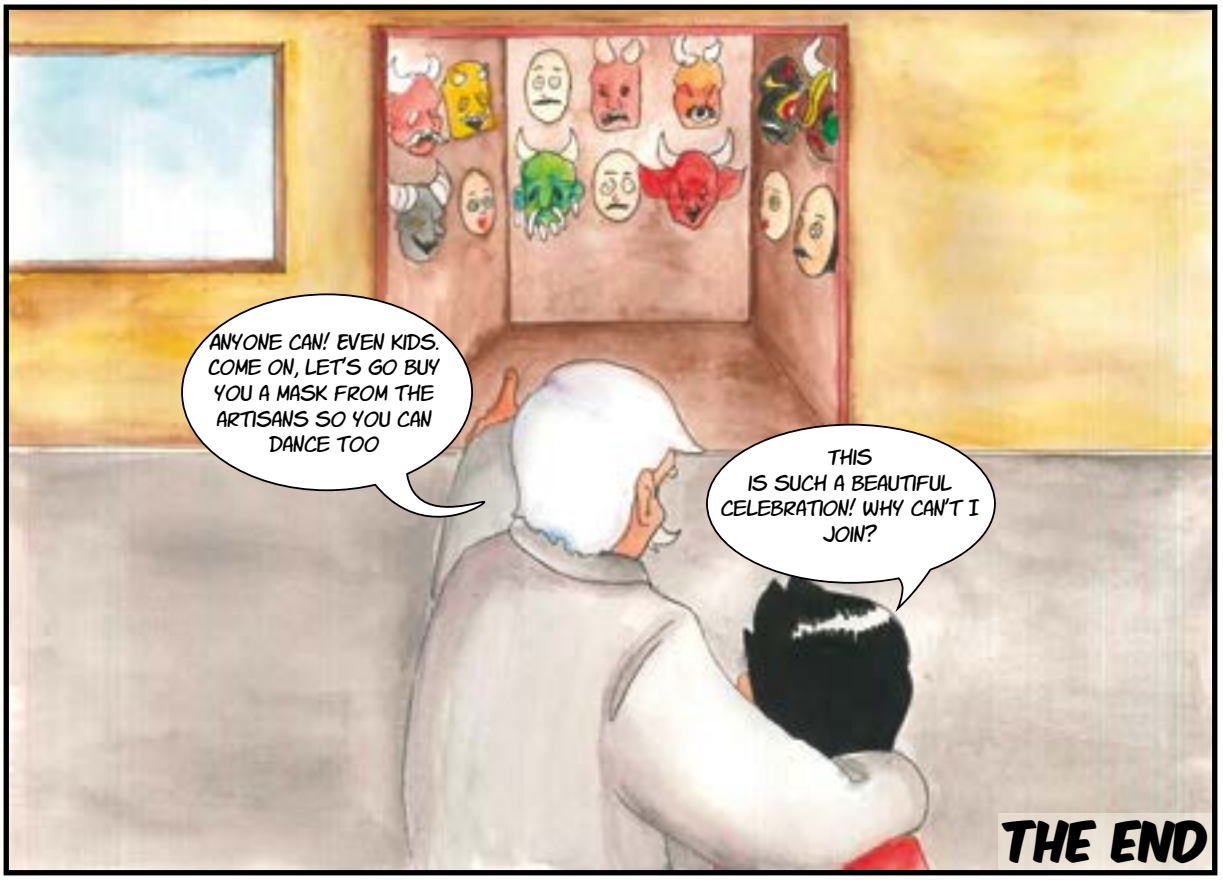

HEY! THAT'S THE MASK THAT HANGS ON THE WALL! I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOO SCARED TO ASK WHAT IT'S FOR
IT'S OUR FAMILY MASK. EVERY DIABLO HUMA IN THE FAMILY HAS WORN IT. THAT'S WHY IT LOOKS SO OLD
AND IT HAS ONLY A FEW COLORS—JUST LIKE GRANDPA SAID!


WELL, I'VE GOT TO GO. THE GUARICHA IS WAITING FOR ME
BYE, DAD! GO DANCE LIKE A TRUE DIABLO HUMA!


GRANDPA, IF IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION, DOES THAT MEAN YOU WERE A DIABLO HUMA TOO?
I WAS! WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I DANCED IN EVERY DIABLADA. I WORE THE SAME MASK YOUR FATHER WEARS NOW—JUST LIKE MY FATHER DID BEFORE ME

THAT'S AWESOME! WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE A DIABLO HUMA TOO!
YOU WILL BE. COME ON, LET'S GO WATCH YOUR FATHER DANCE

HEY GRANDPA, WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE DANCING IN GROUPS AND OTHERS ALONE?
THOSE ARE CALLED PARTIDAS—GROUPS OF DANCERS. EACH ONE HAS ITS OWN LEADER AND STYLE. THEY'RE LIKE FAMILIES WITHIN THE FESTIVAL


ANYONE CAN! EVEN KIDS. COME ON, LET'S GO BUY YOU A MASK FROM THE ARTISANS SO YOU CAN DANCE TOO
THIS IS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATION! WHY CAN'T I JOIN?
THE END

FLAVORS OF THE JUNGLE: CHONTA FESTIVAL

Chicha (traditional fermented drink)
Chonta (heart of palm, used in food and crafts)

WE COULD RECREATE PART OF THE FESTIVAL HERE IN CLASS
AND MAKE A VERSION OF CHICHA DE CHONTA USING LOCAL FRUITS
WE CAN ALSO PLAY MUSIC AND LEARN THE MEANING OF THE DANCE
ARTE
Decoración
Música
Cocina
Investigación
LET'S DIVIDE THE WORK: DECORATION, MUSIC, COOKING, RESEARCH...
I CAN RESEARCH THE MEANING OF UNT WÉA
I'LL MAKE A POSTER ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHING

HERE'S THE ADAPTED RECIPE TO MAKE NON-FERMENTED CHICHA
REMEMBER, WE'RE LEARNING ABOUT AN ANCESTRAL TRADITION
THESE SMELLS AMAZING!

THERE! NOW IT LOOKS LIKE A REAL SHUAR CELEBRATION
HERE ARE THE DRUMS FOR THE DANCE

SUCH A UNIQUE FLAVOR! TELL US ABOUT ITS MEANING
IT'S A DRINK THAT SYMBOLIZES UNITY AND GRATITUDE TOWARD NATURE
CONGRATULATIONS! WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT AN ANCIENT CULTURE THROUGH EXPERIENCE
I LOVED SHARING MY CULTURE WITH YOU ALL
THE END

THE BODY PAINTING FESTIVAL

Achiote: (annatto seeds, used for coloring and flavoring food)

Nantu's grandfather was the wise healer of his community. Holding such an important role, he knew stories passed down through generations.

GRANDPA... CAN YOU TELL ME WHY WE PAINT OURSELVES WITH ACHIOTE?
OH, NANTU... THAT QUESTION FILLS ME WITH JOY. COME, I'LL TELL YOU AN ANCIENT STORY.

ACHIOTE IS A GIFT FROM THE JUNGLE. OUR ANCESTORS USED IT NOT JUST FOR DECORATION, BUT FOR PROTECTION AND TO HONOR THE EARTH.
EVERY SYMBOL HAS MEANING. EVERY LINE IS A WORD WITHOUT VOICE.
IN ANCIENT TIMES, ACHIOTE PAINTINGS SPOKE OF STRENGTH, WISDOM, AND CONNECTION TO THE FOREST SPIRITS.
IT WAS A WAY OF SAYING: 'WE ARE PRESENT', 'WE ARE STILL HERE'.

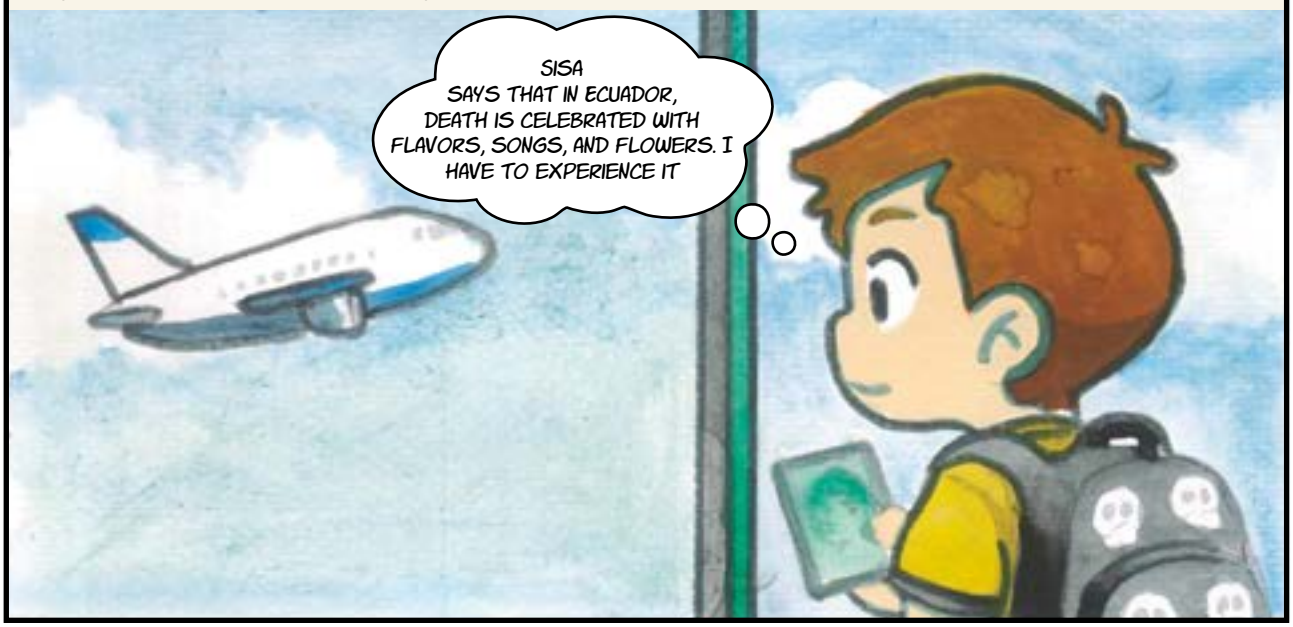
SO... PAINTING OURSELVES ISN'T JUST A TRADITION. IT'S PART OF WHO WE ARE!
I WANT TO BE PART OF THIS... TO UNDERSTAND IT, TO FEEL IT.
NOW I GET IT! EVERY STROKE CONNECTS ME TO MY HISTORY AND MY PEOPLE!
WHEN YOU PAINT YOUR BODY, YOU ALSO PAINT YOUR MEMORY, NANTU.

TODAY, I DIDN'T JUST PAINT MYSELF WITH ACHIOTE... I DISCOVERED A PART OF MYSELF.
AND YOU? DO YOU KNOW THE ROOTS OF YOUR ORIGINS?

THE END

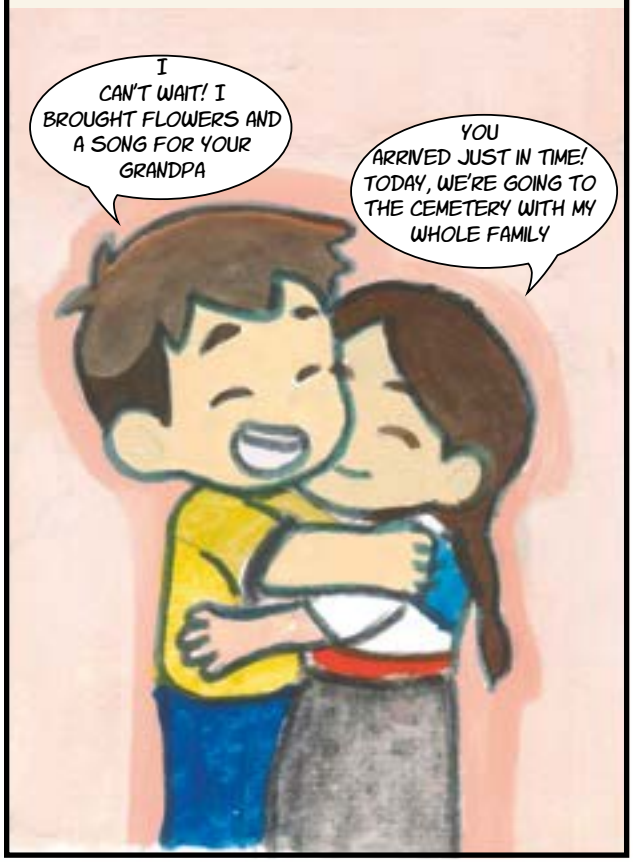
A MEETING BEYOND TIME

Every culture honors death in its own way... but at heart, all seek the same: to remember with love



For Sisa, November 2nd is more than tradition... it's a moment to hug those who have passed away

When cultures meet, something sacred blooms... like a bridge between worlds



In Ecuador, death is honored with music, food, and gratitude… walking together, living and dead, toward memory

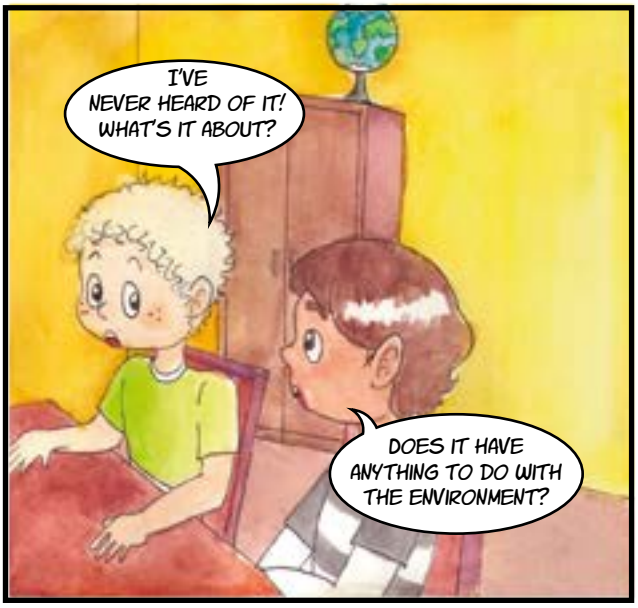
They sing, eat, talk… as if they never left

There are no borders when love and memory are true. Music, too, is a bridge between cultures

In every guagua de pan (bread shaped as a child) and every sip of colada morada (purple corn and fruit drink), the presence of those who've gone comes alive again.

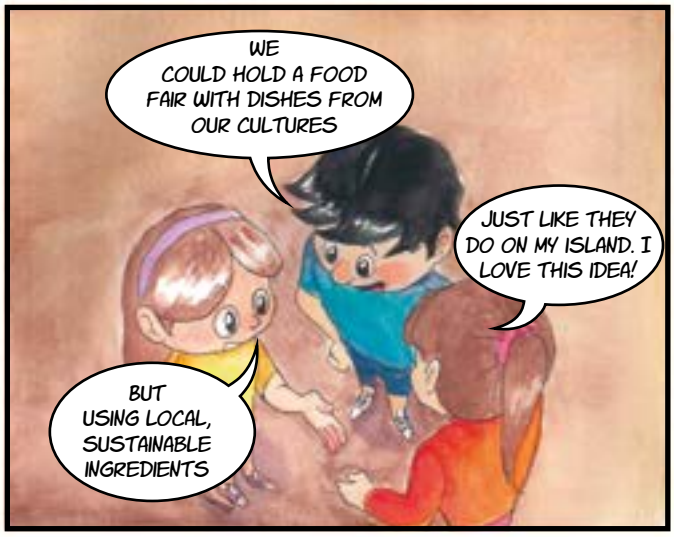
Wherever you go, you'll find cultures that honor life… even in death

FLAVORS THAT UNITE US

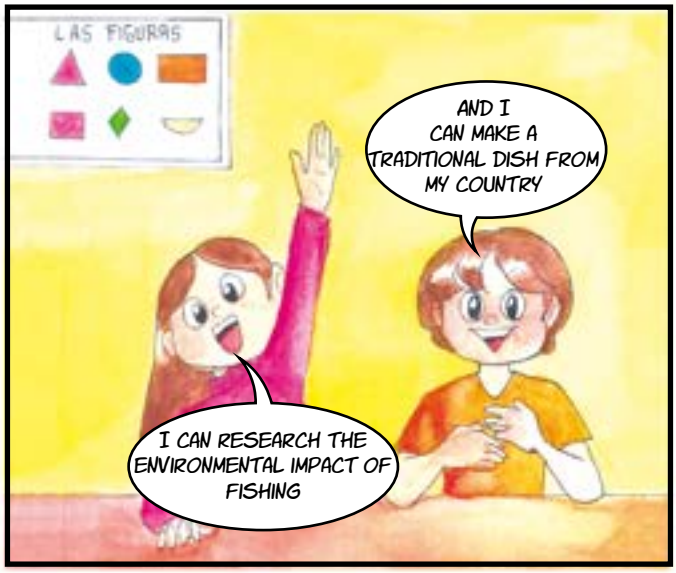


YES, IT'S A DELICIOUS AND ECO-FRIENDLY CELEBRATION! THERE ARE CONTESTS, FAIRS, AND MORE!

Tarea en clase N°13
• Tortuga
• Galápagos
• Langosta
• Iguana
THAT SOUNDS AMAZING. HOW CAN WE PARTICIPATE FROM HERE?


WE COULD HOLD A FOOD FAIR WITH DISHES FROM OUR CULTURES
JUST LIKE THEY DO ON MY ISLAND. I LOVE THIS IDEA!
BUT USING LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE INGREDIENTS

1.- Perejil
2.- langosta
3.- lechuga - sa
WE'LL DIVIDE THE TASKS: DECORATIONS, COOKING, AND SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH...


LAS FIGURAS
AND I CAN MAKE A TRADITIONAL DISH FROM MY COUNTRY
I CAN RESEARCH THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FISHING

HERE'S MY GRANDMA'S RECIPE. LET'S MAKE IT TOGETHER!

THESE SMELLS ARE AMAZING!
REMEMBER, WE'RE PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
GALAPAGOS
DONE! NOW IT REALLY FEELS LIKE A FOOD FAIR
THESE REPRESENT THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE GALÁPAGOS
DELICIOUS! TELL ME ABOUT THE INGREDIENTS

Cultural diversity not only enriches us but also teaches us to value the world we share. Celebrating our differences helps build a more inclusive and sustainable future.

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Chapter 9

Flavors that unite: Ecuadorian gastronomy in the classroom

Flavors that unite: Ecuadorian gastronomy in the classroom

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Introduction

Gastronomy constitutes a form of cultural expression that transcends the preparation of food. Through it, a society's tastes, norms, and historical memory are manifested (Díaz-Granados, 2023). These elements contribute, in turn, to identifying and classifying a country's cultural diversity. Ecuadorian cuisine, for its part, is distinguished by its originality, flavor, and variety qualities that have been revitalized by new generations of chefs and diners alike. These developments have consolidated gastronomy as a key pillar of national cultural identity (Ministerio de Turismo, n.d.). As Bajaña (2025) affirms:

> Gastronomy does not merely delight the palate; it constitutes a site for the transmission of knowledge, cultural exchange, and sensory experience. Research conducted in recent years has demonstrated that understanding models of gastronomic communication and their evolution may significantly enhance culinary practices. Techniques, recipes, and traditions that were passed down without deliberate forms of communication would not have reached modernity; thus, the sector itself would have remained undeveloped. (p. 3)

Bassante (2023), highlights additional factors central to the construction of cultural identity:

> Customs and traditions are closely tied to the development of national identity. These have endured over time, becoming cultural heritage. In particular, traditions give expression to Ecuador's plurinational and pluricultural condition, a phenomenon observable throughout the entire national territory. In our country, such customs are typically ancestral across the three geographical regions. One example from the highlands is the traditional "Pamba mesa", which consists of laying out the workers' ponchos outdoors and placing ***cucayos*** (food) upon them, so that the meal may be shared communally. (p. 27)

The recovery of native ingredients within contemporary gastronomy is essential for preserving biodiversity and safeguarding ancestral culinary traditions. The ecological richness of such ingredients used historically by Indigenous communities is now under threat due to gastronomic globalization, which has led to the marginalization of many of these local resources (Cáceres, 2024). In other words, Ecuadorian cuisine has evolved significantly over the years; this process has, in part, severed the traditional ties to native ingredients and led to the incorporation of elements foreign or unfamiliar to the collective cultural memory.

According to Triviño et al. (2018) "Ecuadorian cuisine exhibits remarkable diversity, with each region offering a rich alimentary heritage, expressed through ingredients that enhance the flavors, aromas, textures, and colors of dishes. Over time, Ecuadorian gastronomy has been influenced by Spanish colonization and by other cultures that have settled in the country" (p. 45). Thus, the objective is to promote both culinary and cultural identity through strategies aimed at recovering and disseminating traditional dishes from Ecuador's cantons (second-level administrative subdivisions of the country, situated between provinces and parishes). To this end, it is necessary to undertake a thorough analysis, design appropriate strategies, and develop a website that highlights and promotes local restaurants (Sánchez, 2023).

As Salazar (2021) notes, "the most remote origin of the Ecuadorian nation lies in the earliest human groups who settled in what is now the

national territory more than twelve thousand years ago. These lands received peoples from the four cardinal points" (p. 15). In this context, the cultural identity of the Ecuadorian people has taken shape through elements that reflect their heritage language, for example, plays a vital role in social relations and in the exchange of rituals and ceremonies specific to each group. This identity also encompasses a system of shared values and beliefs.

As Ulloa (2022) points out, "Indigenous peoples achieved significant advancements, evidencing increasingly complex development; they transitioned from a nomadic existence to permanent settlement" (p. 24). This shift enabled the flourishing of agriculture; these communities learned to domesticate animals, cultivate plants, and implement ecological techniques. As a result, the cultures of the coastal and highland regions developed a barter system to meet their nutritional needs.

Cultural identity constitutes one of the most valuable resources of a nation's peoples. For this reason, the state must invest in preserving its biodiversity, culture, traditions, and gastronomy. The legacy of the ancestors must be revalued. Within this framework, the objective is to engage more deeply with the cultural, agricultural, and gastronomic practices of highland cultures such as Quichua.

Gastronomy, Educational Culture, and Food Sustainability

Gastronomy constitutes an essential component of a region's culture, reflecting its history, geography, traditions, values, and ways of life. Each dish tells a story intricately woven into the cultural identity of a community. Food operates as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural and social values, thus positioning it as a central element in educational cultural tourism. When tourists participate in gastronomic events, they not only taste local food, but also engage in a learning process about the local culture. Owing to its intrinsic relationship with tourism, gastronomy has evolved beyond a basic human necessity to become a foundational pillar of educational cultural tourism and a catalyst for sustainability (Evans, 2023).

Within the context of educational cultural tourism, food functions both as a consumable object and as a gateway to understanding a

society. Tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences that enable them to immerse themselves in the local culture, and gastronomy offers a singular path to such immersion. Participation in cooking workshops, visits to traditional markets, tasting of native products, and the acquisition of knowledge regarding ancestral culinary techniques are activities that greatly enhance the educational experience of visitors (Noguera, 2021).

Experiential learning, the foundational principle of educational cultural tourism, is greatly enriched by gastronomy. In other words, as tourists savor local dishes, they begin to understand the origin of the ingredients, the processes involved in their preparation, and the cultural meanings embedded in each food item (Orduna & Urpí, 2010). For instance, the study of Andean cuisine allows visitors to comprehend the Indigenous peoples' worldview, the cultural and nutritional significance of crops such as quinoa and potato, and the sustainable agricultural practices that have preserved regional biodiversity for centuries.

Gastronomy also serves as a medium for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. In many communities, culinary recipes and techniques are handed down from one generation to the next, forming an invaluable part of the intangible cultural heritage. Educational cultural tourism, by promoting such practices, contributes to their preservation and revalorization (Reyes et al., 2017). Local chefs, farmers, and artisanal producers become custodians of this knowledge, sharing it with visitors and ensuring its continuity. Direct engagement with these actors fosters a deeper understanding of cultural identity and the challenges these communities face.

The production and consumption of food have a substantial environmental impact, and the tourism industry is no exception. The adoption of responsible food practices is essential for mitigating such effects. Sustainability in gastronomy entails the use of locally sourced ingredients, the reduction of food waste, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural methods. In this context, the use of local ingredients is a favorable option, as it supports regional farmers, reduces the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transport, and contributes to biodiversity conservation (Comunicación WebJuice, 2023).

Responsible food practices are fundamental to the development of sustainable tourism. These practices include selecting suppliers who employ sustainable production methods, reducing plastic use, and promoting plant-based diets. Tourists are increasingly interested in gastronomic experiences that respect the environment and promote well-being. Travelers who participate in responsible culinary activities tend to value their experience more deeply and share it with others, potentially increasing interest in the destination. Education on sustainability in gastronomy may inspire tourists to adopt similar practices in their own lives (Repsol, 2023).

Education plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable gastronomy within the framework of educational cultural tourism. Educational initiatives addressing food sustainability can empower both tourists and local communities. Learning about food production, waste management, and nutrition has the potential to transform tourists' perceptions and consumption patterns. Educational programs that integrate gastronomy and sustainability may include workshops on sustainable cooking, visits to organic farms, and discussions on the significance of food biodiversity. These experiences deepen tourists' knowledge and foster a sense of responsibility toward the environment and local culture (Reyes et al., 2017).

The intersection between gastronomy, educational cultural tourism, and sustainability presents a unique opportunity to preserve cultural heritage while promoting a more sustainable future. Gastronomy is fundamental to educational cultural tourism, serving as a bridge between visitors and local culture. Through gastronomic experiences, tourists may acquire insights into a community's history, traditions, and values. Furthermore, sustainability has become an essential aspect of gastronomy, as responsible food practices yield benefits for both the environment and the local economy. Education regarding sustainable gastronomy is vital for fostering a more conscious and responsible form of tourism. By equipping tourists with knowledge about sustainable food practices, it is possible to promote positive changes in how food is consumed and valued.

The impact of globalization on local food practices

Globalization has transformed multiple aspects of daily life, including local food practices. This phenomenon has facilitated the interconnection of markets, cultures, and traditions, leading to a significant exchange of foods and culinary customs. Nevertheless, it has also raised concerns regarding cultural homogenization and the erosion of local gastronomic identity.

Globalization has enabled food products from various parts of the world to become available in local markets, making previously exotic or inaccessible items more widely accessible. This has enriched the diets of many communities by incorporating ingredients and culinary techniques from other cultures (Brodowicz, 2024). Nevertheless, it has also driven the standardization of food practices, particularly through the proliferation of fast-food chains and industrialized products, thereby altering consumption habits. The constant availability of processed foods has contributed to a decline in the consumption of fresh, local produce, negatively affecting both public health and local economies.

Cultural exchange, while potentially enriching through the incorporation of new knowledge and techniques, may simultaneously pose a threat to culinary diversity by favoring homogenization and the loss of local traditions. The adoption of global food practices has led many communities to reduce the preparation of traditional dishes, resulting in an erosion of cultural identity (Mathew, 2023). The influence of international trends is evident in the growing preference for globally recognizable and widely consumed foods, particularly among younger generations, who often favor fast food over inherited recipes and culinary methods. The loss of these traditions may have long-lasting implications for social cohesion and the transmission of knowledge across generations.

Local economies have also been significantly impacted by globalization, particularly in the agricultural sector. Market liberalization has allowed local producers to reach broader audiences. Nonetheless, it has also introduced competition from imported products that are often more affordable due to economies of scale (Equipo JLP, 2024). Local farmers struggle to compete with imported food products, leading to a decline in domestic production and,

consequently, the disappearance of traditional agricultural practices. By privileging goods from large multinational corporations, globalization can discourage local production and undermine traditional agricultural knowledge.

In response to the challenges posed by globalization, interest in sustainable food practices has grown. This has led to a movement aimed at valuing local products and promoting sustainable agriculture. Consumers are increasingly interested in understanding where their food comes from and in supporting local producers. Initiatives that advocate for local, sustainable agriculture may help revitalize traditional food practices. Educational and awareness-raising programs that highlight the importance of consuming local products can promote behavioral change in consumption patterns (Cotecna, 2023). Examples of community resistance to globalization include the promotion of farmers' markets and involvement in urban agriculture, both of which contribute to the strengthening of cultural identity.

Technology has played a crucial role in the globalization of food practices. Digital platforms have facilitated access to information about foods and recipes from around the world. These platforms allow consumers to explore and experiment with diverse cuisines, leading to a fusion of flavors and culinary techniques (Campos & Castillo, 2024). Technology has also enabled local producers to market their goods via digital platforms, opening new opportunities to reach consumers interested in fresh, locally sourced products. Nevertheless, reliance on technology may increase vulnerability to fluctuations in the global market and contribute to the dilution of culinary traditions.

Despite these challenges, the growing emphasis on sustainability and the appreciation of local products presents an opportunity to revitalize traditional food practices. Education and awareness regarding the importance of consuming local products can help preserve cultural identity and strengthen local economies. In this regard, globalization may be viewed as a phenomenon that, although not without its risks, also offers opportunities for innovation and resilience within food systems.

Ritual Cuisine: Food in the Context of Celebration and Ancestral Rituals

Culinary celebration functions as a ritual expression of a foundational pillar in the construction of both social and spiritual identities. Ritual cuisine constitutes a field of inquiry that explores the deep interconnection between food, festivity, and ancestral rites. During festivities and family gatherings, food acquires symbolic meanings, becoming a conduit for the sacred, a tool for social cohesion, and a tangible manifestation of collective worldviews. These elements reveal the prominence of ritual cuisine within society (Valarezo, 2009).

Within the spiritual and cultural framework of Indigenous communities in Ecuador, the relationship between individuals and the natural environment is based not on dominance but on respect, harmony, and reciprocity (Torres et al., 2018). This outlook is embedded in the Andean cosmovision, which establishes an intimate bond between the components of the natural world and daily life. Within this framework, food holds a central role as a source of life, a sacred symbol, and a spiritual link. The foods of the *Pachamama* (the Andean Mother Earth deity) are regarded as vital to both physical health and medicinal use, due to their inherent properties and benefits.

Ecuadorian gastronomy encompasses remarkable variety, shaped by its topography, ecosystems, communities, languages, and traditions. For Indigenous peoples such as the Kichwa, Saraguro, Shuar, and others, food is not merely considered an agricultural product or culinary ingredient, but a living gift from *Pachamama*, to whom homage is paid through rituals, offerings, and celebrations (CODENPE, 2011).

A central axis of this relationship is maize, considered a sacred plant in the Andes (Revista Mundo Diner, 2021). Beyond its agronomic value, maize symbolizes life, fertility, and ancestral continuity. Its presence in dishes such as *chicha de jora* (traditional Andean fermented corn beverage used in ceremonies), humitas (traditional Andean steamed corn cakes), or corn flatbreads reflects the enduring connection between past and present, between protective deities and the community. Each of these foods nourishes the body while honoring

the protective spirits of mountains and hills, invoked to bless the harvests and secure collective well-being.

Traditional festivities constitute authentic spaces of celebration wherein collective history, group spirituality, and communal culture are expressed. Many of these celebrations are rooted in Indigenous, Amazonian, or Afro-Ecuadorian traditions. Food plays an integral role in these events; when prepared and consumed in such contexts, it transcends its nutritional function to become a symbol of gratitude, an expression of harmony with natural cycles, and a remembrance of ancestral presence (Álvarez Herrera, 2015).

According to the Ministerio de Turismo (2020), each festivity maintains a profound connection with the agricultural and spiritual calendar, as well as with the Andean worldview, which recognizes the Earth, the sun, water, and ancestors as sacred, living forces. For example, Pawkar Raymi, the Festival of Blooming, is celebrated in February or March to mark nature's renewal with seasonal foods such as ***mote*** (white corn), ***habas*** (broad beans), ***choclo*** (fresh corn), ***cuy*** (traditional roasted guinea pig), and chicha de ***jora***. All these are communally shared as an offering to ***Pachamama*** to mark the beginning of a new agricultural cycle.

In Ecuador, a multi-ethnic and biodiverse nation, numerous celebrations carry deep cultural and spiritual significance. Among them, Inti Raymi, held in June as the Festival of the Sun, expresses gratitude to ***Inti*** (the sun) for the harvests. This celebration is vital to highland communities, where traditional dishes such as roasted guinea pig, mote, and potatoes in peanut sauce are shared communally, celebrating the harmony between people and the land.

From Ramírez's perspective (2024), the Day of the Dead, observed on November 2nd , represents a profound connection between the physical and spiritual realms. During this ritual, symbolic foods such as ***guaguas*** de pan, sweet bread figures shaped like infants, symbolizing departed loved ones and ancestral memory, and colada morada, a traditional spiced drink made from purple corn, tropical fruits, and aromatic herbs, are offered to decease loved ones.

Carnival, though of colonial and religious origin, has been adopted and reinterpreted by Indigenous and rural communities as a time to

celebrate abundance and express gratitude to the land (Yuquilema, 2025). Dishes such as *fanesca* (a ceremonial soup made with twelve types of grains and legumes, squash, milk, and salted cod), *hornado* (a traditional Ecuadorian dish of slow roasted marinated pork), mote, and various meats and grains are prepared during the festivities, reflecting nature's generosity and the shared aspiration for collective well-being.

Beyond the act of nourishment, the preparation and consumption of food in ritual contexts constitute a symbolic language that reinforces ethnic and communal identity. Each ingredient, culinary technique, and dish prepared during religious ceremonies, rituals, or agricultural festivities carries a historical memory that unites generations. This gastronomic heritage keeps traditions alive and transmits spiritual values, worldviews, and epistemologies that have withstood colonization, modernization, and cultural homogenization (Evans, 2023).

Communal Kitchens and their Role in Social Cohesion

Communal kitchens refer to the practice of individuals of all genders coming together to prepare and share food, thereby symbolizing mutual support and collective unity (Sianes et al., 2024). This practice is carried out during significant events, such as the inauguration of community projects, assemblies, and *mingas* (collective work efforts).

During the difficult days of the national strike in Ecuador, the spontaneous gathering of people to assist those arriving from different parts of the country was particularly notable. A cornerstone of this collective support was the establishment of popular communal kitchens, where volunteers prepared food for the demonstrators. In these spaces, food transcended its basic function, becoming a representation of solidarity, resistance, and care demonstrating that food can serve as a genuine act of generosity and companionship (Reiner et al., 2019). It is worth noting that, whereas Indigenous communities traditionally cultivate the land to supply urban populations, during this mobilization, it was the mestizo population who prepared food for them as a gesture of gratitude. The practice served as a daily reminder of food's capacity to connect people, fostering an atmosphere of peace, unity, and shared joy. These popular communal kitchens not only nourished those present, but

also forged bonds across diverse groups, demonstrating that even in times of adversity, communities can be built through mutual care and solidarity.

Throughout Latin America, popular kitchens have a long-standing history as spaces for social organization and resistance in contexts of crisis and repression. Originating during periods of dictatorship and scarcity in countries such as Chile, these communal kitchens have transcended their role as places for meal-sharing to become symbols of dignity, fellowship, and opposition to social inequality. In recent social mobilizations in Chile and elsewhere, these kitchens have re-emerged as collective instruments for strengthening neighborhood bonds and supporting public protest, often led by women (Veintimilla, 2024). Beyond their nutritional role, they embody a form of political action that challenges unjust regimes and fosters alternatives grounded in cooperation and mutual care. In this way, the communal kitchen has become an essential space for weaving networks of support and preserving dignity amid social instability.

In Ecuador, various community-led projects aim to improve the quality of life of local populations through initiatives that promote health, cultural identity, and social integration. One such project is found in the community of Miraloma, in the parish of Punín, Riobamba, which seeks to strengthen communal kitchens. This initiative is supported by the local council and the administration of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its primary objective is to raise awareness among mothers in the community regarding the importance of including all food groups in their diets, encouraging the collaborative preparation of nutritious meals (Peraza et al., 2019).

Beyond nutrition, the project seeks to recover and preserve the region's characteristic foods, linking dietary practices with ancestral and communal knowledge surrounding traditional culinary customs. Its aim is to promote a balanced diet that contributes to safeguarding local cultural heritage. The project acknowledges that food is a deeply social activity that plays a crucial role in community-building: cooking and sharing food strengthens trust, solidarity, and reciprocity. These actions strive to enhance collective well-being and social unity, restoring values and relationships that have at times been weakened

(Torres, 2020). Ultimately, the initiative offers holistic support to the community by combining social empowerment, cultural recovery, and nutritional education.

Origin Stories of Traditional Ecuadorian Dishes

Ecuador is a megadiverse country, rich in tourist destinations and historical monuments, and it possesses a remarkable culinary tradition in each of its regions. This diversity is reflected in its gastronomy, which emerges from a confluence of Indigenous, colonial, Afro-descendant, and migrant traditions. Prior to colonization, Indigenous peoples used agricultural products such as corn, potatoes, cassava, and peanuts. Following the arrival of the Spanish, ingredients like wheat, pork, and spices were introduced, resulting in new flavor profiles. This cultural fusion gave rise to emblematic dishes such as **locro** (a staple dish that combines native ingredients such as potatoes and fresh cheese in a creamy broth), ***hornado***, and ***ceviche*** (a hallmark of Ecuadorian coastal cuisine, typically prepared with seafood). Each region of the country has developed its own culinary identity, shaped by climatic, geographic, and sociocultural factors. Ecuadorian gastronomy plays a vital role in the transmission of memory and tradition, and its study and dissemination are essential for valuing its diversity and understanding it as a symbol of national identity.

Among the origin stories of Ecuadorian dishes, one of the most representative from the coastal region is encebollado. According to MINTUR (2018), this dish is a hot soup made with albacore tuna, cassava, onions, and coriander. It is commonly served with ***chifles*** (thinly sliced, fried green plantain chips) and, depending on the locality, may include white rice and bread. In the 1970s, the dish emerged in the province of Guayas, particularly in the city of Guayaquil. Originally conceived as a cost-effective alternative to traditional ceviche, encebollado (a popular coastal soup known for its robust flavor) gained popularity throughout the city's urban areas, especially as a remedy for ***chuchaqui*** (hangovers). Today, it is one of Ecuador's most iconic dishes, available nationwide in ***huecas*** (informal street food stalls or local eateries in Ecuador, known for offering food at affordable prices), markets, and restaurants.

In the Andean highlands, one of the most culturally and nutritionally significant foods is ***cuy*** (guinea pig), whose meat is widely recognized

for its health benefits. In the book Cuy: Carne Divina [Guinea pig: Divine Meat], Cortés (2020) explains that the animal was domesticated between 5,000 and 57,000 BC in the Andean highlands. Its most notable characteristic is its nutritious meat, which is low in fat and cholesterol yet rich in vitamins and minerals, including omega-3, iron, and vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, B12, C, D, E, and K, as well as folic acid, pantothenic acid, calcium, and phosphorus. The author refers to *cuy* as "divine meat," claiming it alleviates throat ailments, pulmonary diseases, styes, insomnia, and tuberculosis. Some studies suggest that its consumption may prevent cancer and refer to "Miraculous Remedy", in colloquial terms, as a "Holly Remedy".

In the Amazonian region, one of the most emblematic dishes is *uchumanka*, a spicy soup prepared with ancestral ingredients. Riera and Vélez (2022) state that *uchumanka* is a traditional dish of pre-Hispanic origin, typically made with smoked fish or chicken and ají (red hot chili pepper), and accompanied by hearts of palm, which lends a distinctive flavor. It is served with cassava, plantain, or native cooked potatoes. In Indigenous languages, *uchu* means *ají*, and *manka* denotes a pot or food, which explains the etymology of the name. This ancestral dish is the culinary emblem of the province of Orellana. Historically, it was prepared for special occasions and is currently available in community-based enterprises and traditional restaurants throughout the region.

In the insular region, particularly in the Galápagos Islands, numerous traditional dishes are based on seafood. Among these, lobster stands out. According to MINTUR (2018), lobster is an integral part of Galápagos cuisine, renowned for its flavor, quality, and tender meat, which is rich in vitamins and minerals and low in fat. One popular preparation involves cutting the lobster in half, seasoning it with herbs, and topping it with a seafood sauce composed of shrimp, octopus, and squid. The dish is then baked for 15 to 25 minutes and served with salad and rice. For commercial purposes, captured lobsters must meet minimum size requirements of 26 cm (or 15 cm tail length), though some specimens may reach 45 cm in length and weigh up to 7 kg. Sustainable and regulated consumption of this crustacean is permitted during July and December, according to guidelines issued by the Galápagos National Park Directorate.

Ecuadorian cuisine is a living expression of the country's cultural and geographic diversity. Each region contributes unique dishes that combine Indigenous, colonial, and Afro-descendant traditions. In the coastal region, encebollado is a traditional soup featuring albacore and cassava; in the highlands, *cuy* [guinea pig] is highly valued for its nutritional properties; in the Amazon, *uchumanka* stands out as a spicy ancestral soup with smoked meats; and in the Galápagos, lobster symbolizes the richness of the marine ecosystem. These dishes reflect the history, resources, and identity of their respective communities and are considered fundamental elements of Ecuador's cultural heritage.

The Use of Eatable and Medicinal Plants in Traditional Ecuadorian Cuisine

In Ecuador, over five hundred plant species are recognized for their healing properties, and it is estimated that nearly 70% of the population relies on them for health and wellness. Medicinal plants have long been central to Indigenous cultures of the Amazon rainforest, and their importance continues to grow among broader sectors of the Ecuadorian population.

In Andean cultures, it is believed that all living beings humans, animals, and plants possess a vital spirit. Plants have played a crucial role in human life, serving as sources of nourishment, as remedies for ailments, and as integral elements in rituals and ceremonies of profound spiritual meaning. In Ecuador, nature revered as *Pachamama* is deeply respected, based on the conviction that all elements of the environment are interconnected. Prior to the advent of modern medicine, Indigenous peoples relied exclusively on the natural resources of their surroundings. Through careful observation and intergenerational experience, they developed sophisticated knowledge regarding the therapeutic applications of numerous plant species. This knowledge was safeguarded and transmitted by shamans or traditional healers, who were revered for their expertise and for maintaining equilibrium with the Earth (Potts, 2025).

Since ancient times, human societies have turned to plants for healing purposes. The ability to observe and discern natural patterns enabled

many cultures to identify the therapeutic properties of specific plants. In early societies, the absence of scientific explanations for these properties often led to their attribution to divine or magical forces. In contexts where access to formal medical services remains limited, traditional medicine and phytotherapy continue to constitute the primary means of healthcare.

In many global regions with limited access to modern health services, traditional medicine and phytotherapy remain essential for healthcare provision. This ancestral knowledge has not only endured but has gained renewed relevance in urban and industrialized settings, where interest in medicinal plants has surged. This growing interest is largely linked to the widespread perception that natural remedies are inherently beneficial to human health. However, this idealized view can be problematic: the unsupervised use of herbal preparations may lead to adverse effects, toxic overdoses, or harmful interactions with other medications, as warned by Kongkaew et al. (2024).

Numerous ethnobotanical studies have highlighted that the use of medicinal plants in Ecuador is an ancestral practice rooted in the traditional knowledge of local communities. These plant species represent both a natural therapeutic resource and a cultural heritage passed down across generations. Table 8 describes several well-known plants and their medicinal properties:

Table 8

Ancestral medicinal plants used in Ecuador

Common Name	Primary Use	Medicinal Properties
Sangre de drago (Dragon's Blood resin)	Wound healing	Red resin promotes tissue regeneration and acts as an antimicrobial agent
Uña de gato (Cat's Claw)	Relief from arthritis	Anti -inflammatory effects and immune system support
Valeriana (Valerian)	Sleep disorders	Reduces anxiety and induces restful sleep
Matico (Piper aduncum)	Respiratory and digestive issues	Internal anti-inflammatory and healing properties
Wasai (Euterpe precatoria)	Kidney health	Detoxifying and nephroprotective properties

Lapacho (Handroanthus impetiginosus)	Infections and oncology support	Antimicrobial and antioxidant characteristics
Moringa (Moringa oleifera)	General nutrition	Rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants
Achiote (Bixa orellana)	Digestive health and prevention of birth defects	Contains carotenoids and cellular protective compounds
Ishpingo (Ocotea quixos)	Digestive and antifungal use	Combats fungi and supports digestion
Curaré (Chondrodendron tomentosum)	Neuromuscular treatment	Used in controlled doses as a muscle relaxant

Source: *Adapted from Armijos et al.* (2022).

Medicinal infusions and herbal remedies remain central to traditional practices in Ecuador. For example, guayusa tea, popular in the Amazon, provides energy without overstimulation and offers antioxidant benefits. Coca leaves (traditionally chewed or used as an infusion for medicinal purposes), more widely used in other Andean countries, are consumed to relieve altitude sickness and digestive discomfort. In the highlands, horchata, a drink composed of multiple herbs, is believed to have anti-inflammatory and even anti-cancer properties. Anise tea is valued for its digestive and antibacterial benefits, and lemon verbena tea is used for digestive relief and calming effects. These infusions reflect deeply rooted ancestral knowledge and continue to play a vital role in the healthcare of many Ecuadorian communities (Potts, 2025).

The use of herbs and natural substances has proven valuable in treating various ailments and has inspired the development of advanced therapeutic methods such as phytotherapy. In cases where traditional remedies are insufficient, some communities also turn to energy-based healing practices as complementary approaches. In regions like Cañar, such millenary customs remain vibrant, sustained by the natural abundance of local ecosystems. Healers and residents have protected and utilized this medicinal knowledge for generations as a means of caring for community health.

This ancestral wisdom is at risk of being lost due to a lack of documentation, limited general knowledge, and challenges such as plant misuse, climate change, and habitat destruction, all of which

threaten the survival of these species. For this reason, current research seeks to locate, record, and identify medicinal plants in their natural environments and domestic gardens. This includes analyzing soil conditions, characterizing vegetation, and recognizing both the therapeutic properties and cultural significance of each species. Such documentation is essential for protecting, reproducing, and promoting the responsible use of medicinal plants in the region (Aguaiza Quizhpilema & Simbaina-Solano, 2021).

Because in many rural areas the most accessible form of healthcare is the use of medicinal herbs, it is crucial to promote their cultivation either regionally or directly within their natural habitats. In this context, the present research aims to reveal the abundance of natural resources used for treating health issues in rural zones, emphasizing their therapeutic potential and validating the practice of ancestral medicine as a legitimate healthcare alternative.

In the province of Los Ríos, research has focused on identifying plant species used as traditional remedies and assessing the impact of their use on the health of local populations. These findings have contributed to understanding the real health conditions experienced by rural populations, most of whom rely on traditional healing practices for managing their illnesses (Gallegos, 2017).

Conclusions

Gastronomy serves as a medium for fostering intercultural dialogue, as it brings together multiple dimensions of intangible heritage: ancestral knowledge, community practices, intergenerational ties, and local identities. Incorporating traditional cuisine into the classroom enables the educational experience to be meaningfully linked to students' sociocultural contexts, encouraging significant learning and the recognition of others from a perspective that is sensitive, tangible, and grounded in everyday life.

Teaching that centers on Ecuador's gastronomic diversity encourages respect for the various cultures present within the national territory. The exploration of regional recipes, ingredients, and culinary customs makes visible the country's ethnic richness while actively countering prejudice and stereotypes. Such educational practices also contribute

to the revaluation of the contributions made by Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, Montubio, and Mestizo communities, promoting a discourse of equity and belonging within the school setting.

Pedagogical activities centered on cuisine must go beyond the demonstrative or recreational. When integrated into research processes, interdisciplinary projects, or collaborative learning experiences, they have the potential to strengthen cognitive, effective, and communicative competences. Furthermore, the use of cooking in the classroom fosters social skills such as cooperation, active listening, respect for diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution, positioning it as a comprehensive educational tool.

For gastronomy to acquire genuine pedagogical value in school contexts, it must be structurally integrated into the intercultural curriculum. This entails the use of participatory methodologies that involve families, local knowledge keepers, and tradition bearers, as well as the creation of spaces for intergenerational dialogue. When the classroom becomes a cultural laboratory in which knowledge is cooked and identities are tasted, education becomes a more human, critical, and diversity-oriented process.

Comics

Flavors that unite: Ecuadorian gastronomy in the classroom

The magic encebollado	520
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Llapingachos, cooking in silence	559
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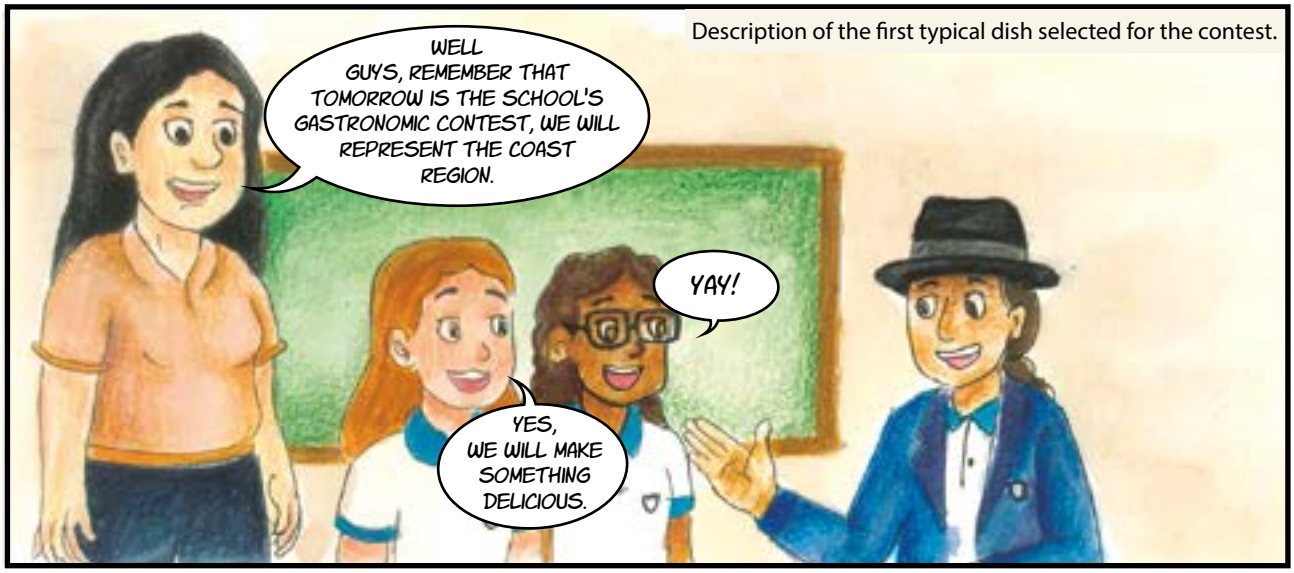
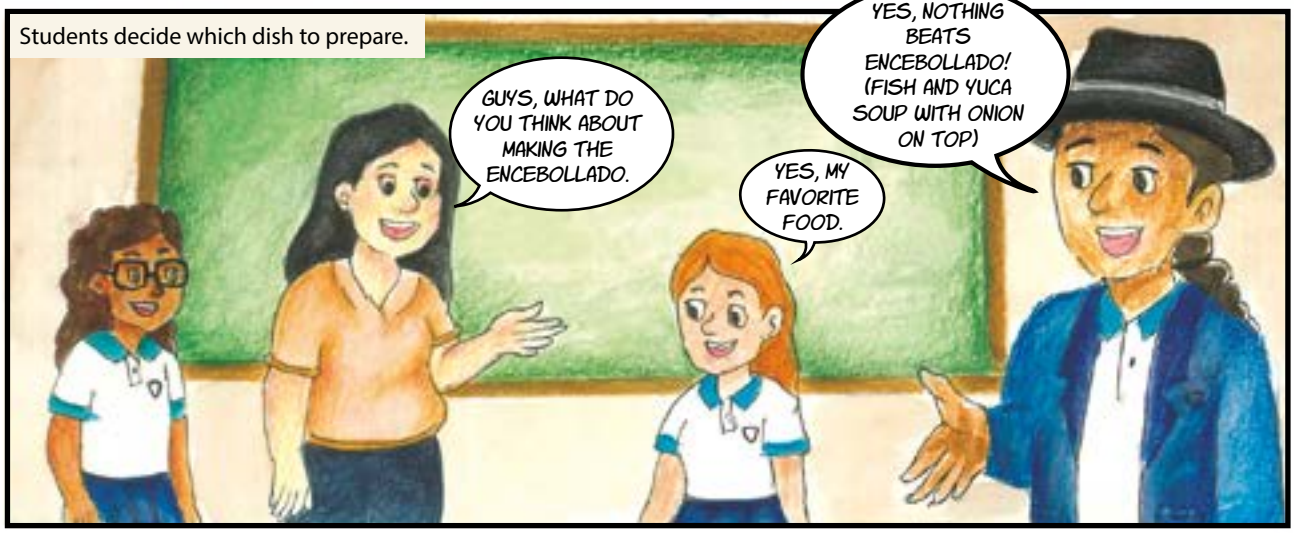
THE MAGIC ENCEBOLLADO



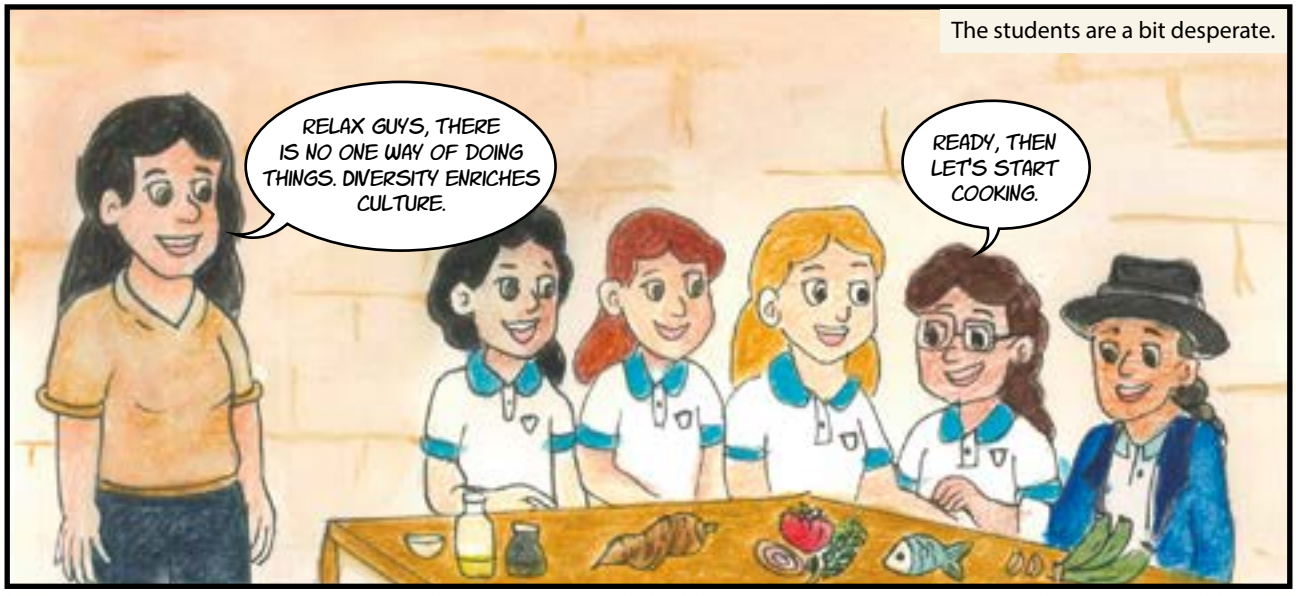
Description of the first typical dish selected for the contest.



Students decide which dish to prepare.

Buying the ingredients at the market in collaboration with parents.

Day of the contest, cooking at school.
CONDIMENTOS
I HEARD THAT IN MANABÍ THEY EAT FRIED MADURO.
¡WOW!
I FOUND THAT IN EMERALDAS THEY EAT WITH AVOCADO.
I FOUND OUT THAT IN GUAYAQUIL THEY EAT THE ENCEBOLLADO WITH BREAD AND PLANTAIN CHIPS.


The students are a bit desperate.
RELAX GUYS, THERE IS NO ONE WAY OF DOING THINGS. DIVERSITY ENRICHES CULTURE.
READY, THEN LET'S START COOKING.

Contribution of ingredients.
I BROUGHT ALBACORE.
I BROUGHT A SPECIAL CHILI BELL PEPPER SAUCE.
GUYS, PLEASE BRING YOUR INPUT TO THE TABLE. THERE ARE BETTER RESULTS IF WE WORK TOGETHER.
I BROUGHT CHIFLE AND CANGUIL. (PLANTAIN CHIPS AND POPCORN)

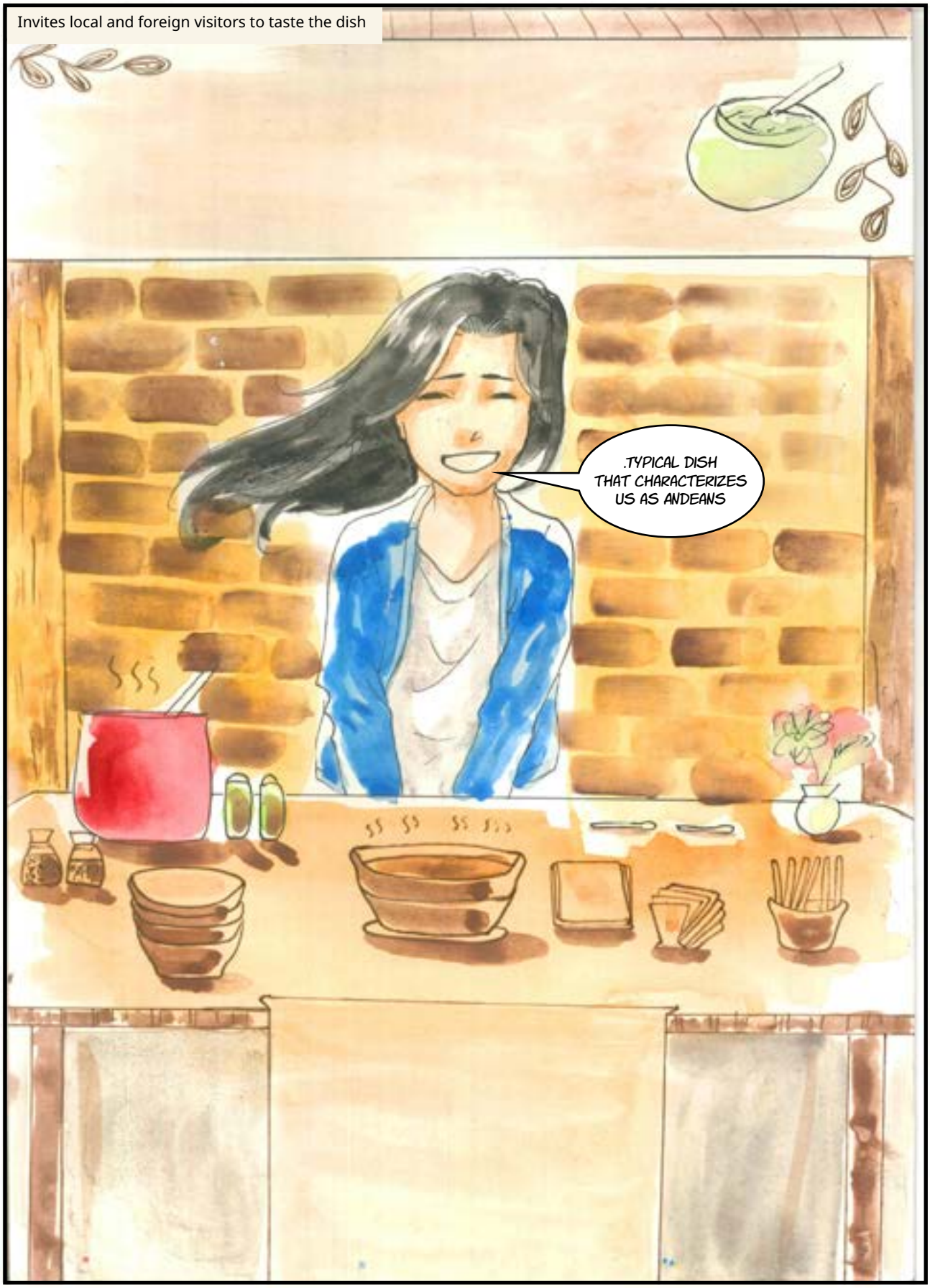
After the jury qualifies all the typical dishes prepared, they decide that the Costa region is the winner with the preparation of the encebollado.

SWEET ZAMBO

Green squash similar to pumpkin

The mother begins to cook with the most commonly used ingredients: *zambo*, cinnamon, anise, milk, and brown sugar

Invites local and foreign visitors to taste the dish



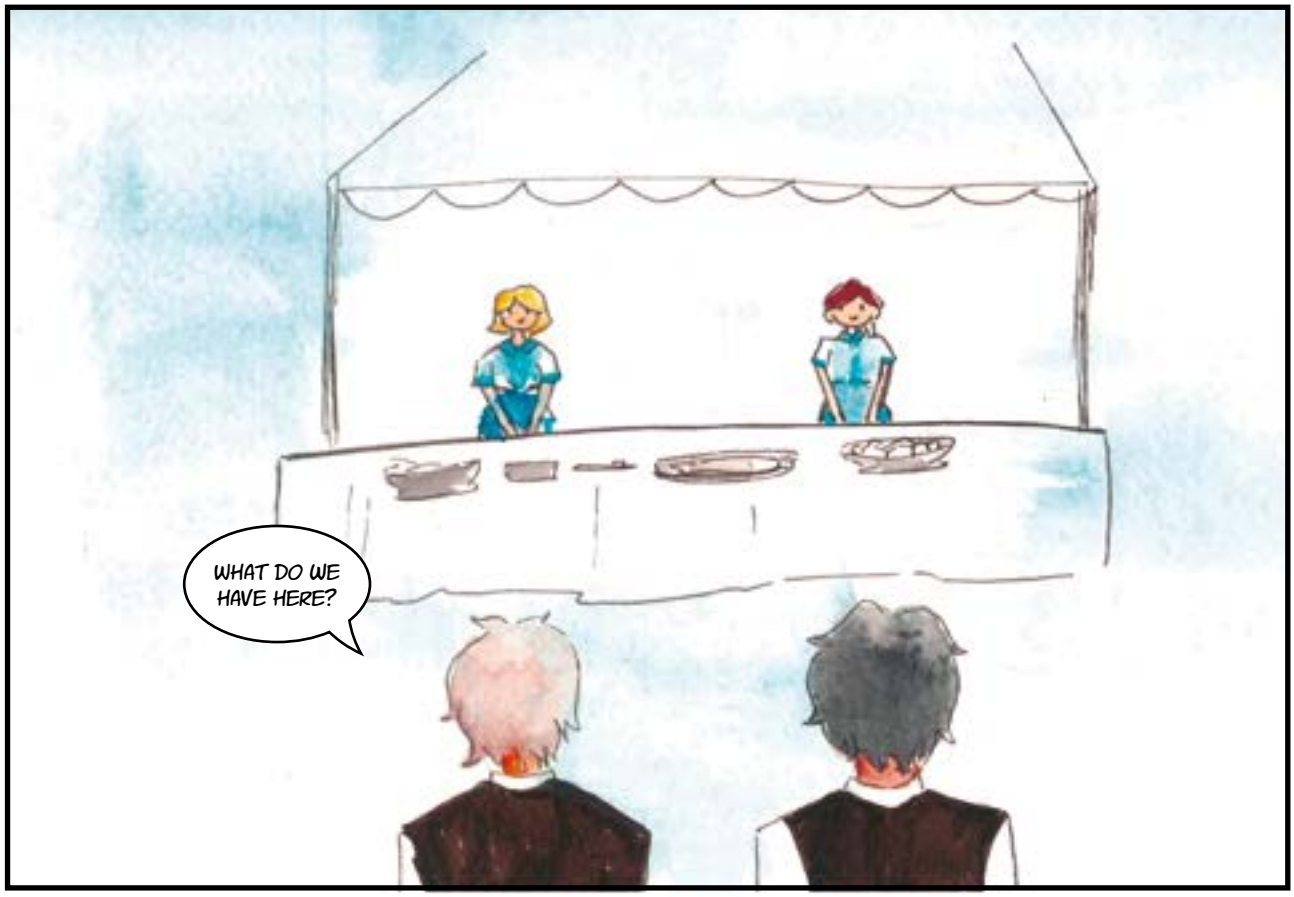
GOOD MORNING. CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME WHY YOU CHOSE TO PREPARE THE ZAMBO DE DULCE, PLEASE
ZAMBO IS VERY NUTRITIOUS, ITS MAIN INGREDIENT COMES FROM OUR LAND. IT UNITES US WITH OUR ROOTS. YOU CAN TASTE FROM THE SAMPLE CUPS
IT REMINDS ME OF KABAK TATLISI
WOW, IT TASTES AMAZING

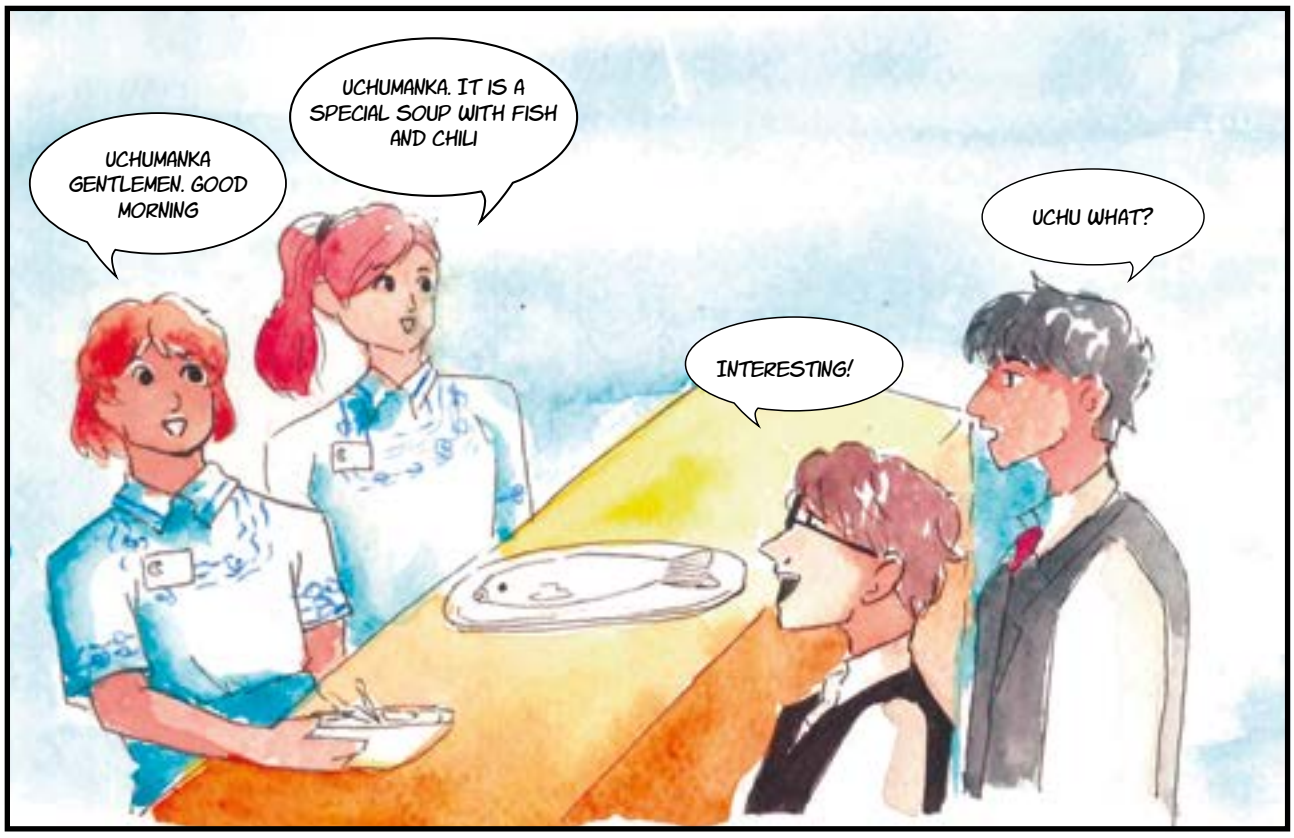
OUR ANCESTORS USED TO PREPARE IT ON THE WOOD STOVE
WHAT IS KABAK TATLISI?
KABAK TATLISI IS A PUMPKIN-BASED DESSERT
WOW, ITS FLAVOR IS UNIQUE. OUR ANDEAN LAND GIVES US DELICIOUS NUTRITIOUS PRODUCTS
FCONGRATULATIONS, MISS. FOR RESCUING AND PRESERVING ANDEAN FLAVORS
THANK YOU VERY MUCH. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GIVE VALUE TO THE THINGS THAT CHARACTERIZE US. IT WAS GRATIFYING TO SHARE WITH FOREIGN PEOPLE
THE END

UCHUMANKA: THE FLAVOR OF THE JUNGLE

The first-year high school class has decided to prepare Uchumanka, a traditional dish from the Amazon region. The dish will be presented at the school's gastronomic fair.

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU HAVE
GO THIS WAY


WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?


UCHUMANKA
GENTLEMEN. GOOD MORNING
UCHUMANKA. IT IS A SPECIAL SOUP WITH FISH AND CHILI
UCHU WHAT?
INTERESTING!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW THE DISH IS PREPARED, WE WILL BE HAPPY TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU
YES, OF COURSE, I WOULD LOVE TO

THE COOKING TIME IS 40 TO 90 MINUTES
AND IT WOULD BE READY?
WE COOK THE FISH WITH WATER AND THEN ADD CASSAVA, CHILI AND CILANTRO.
IT TAKES A LITTLE WHILE

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHY DOES IT TAKE SO LONG IF THERE ARE VERY FEW INGREDIENTS?
EVERY STEP IS IMPORTANT FOR THE FLAVOR TO BE SPECIAL
THIS DISH GOES VERY WELL WITH CHICHA

COME ON, TRY IT
MMM. PERFECT!
I WILL TAKE THIS DISH INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE FINAL DECISION

IT'S VERY GOOD
IT'S A PLEASURE TO KNOW THAT YOU LIKED IT

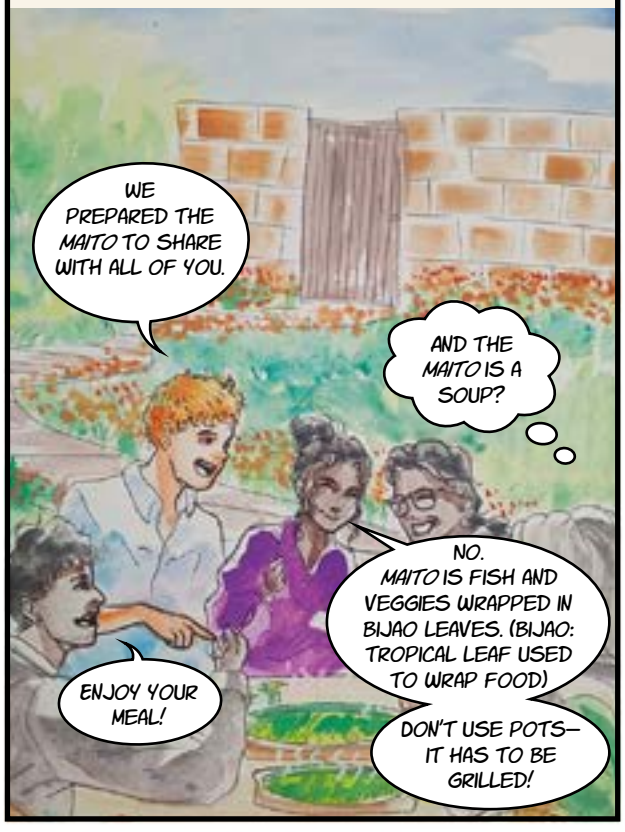
BESIDES, THIS DISH IS HIGH IN PROTEINS, VITAMINS AND MINERALS
I THINK IT'S GREAT
THE END

MAITO: GRATITUDE IN EVERY BITE

Decision to prepare a typical Amazonian dish to say thank you.

Preparing the *maito* in mom's wood stove.

Tasting of the food prepared by the youth.



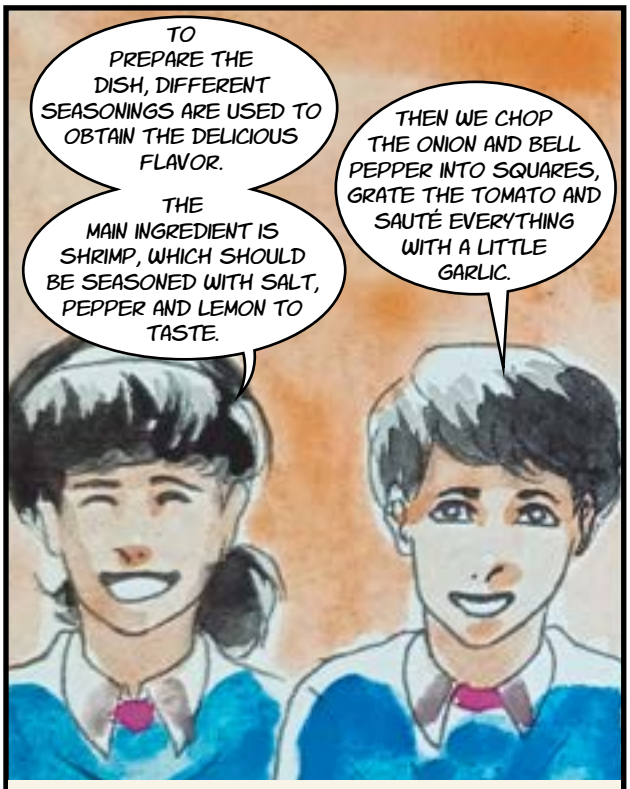
Serving the respective dishes for those present.

They congratulate the young graduates.

They thank them for attending and invite them to a cooking competition program.

SHRIMP ENCOCADO, DELIGHTS THAT CROSS BORDERS

The day of the television program arrives.



They explain the preparation of the encocado.

Rules and parameters.

They start cooking.

The time for participation is over.

All participants approach.

They start tasting each prepared dish. Then they go to a room to make the final decision and assign the winners.

They informed that the winning team is the one that prepared the shrimp encocado because they loved the creativity and preparation, as well as the good description they gave.

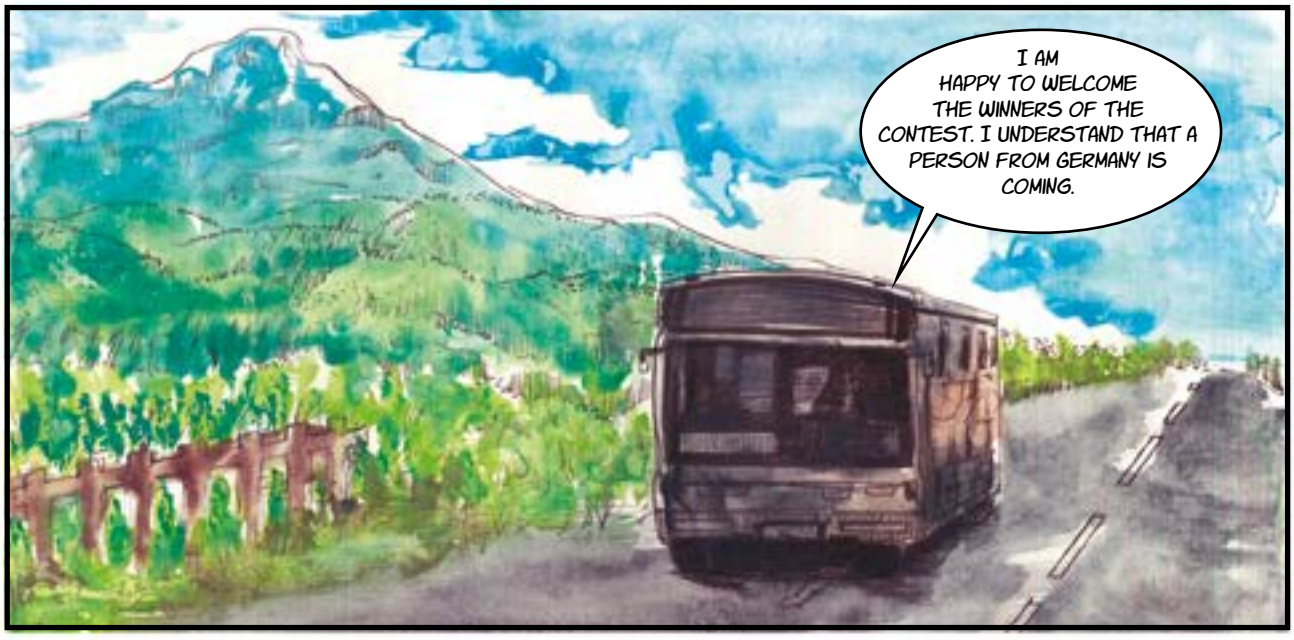
They jump with happiness and applaud very excited to have won and thank the jury.

Acknowledgement and presentation of the award.

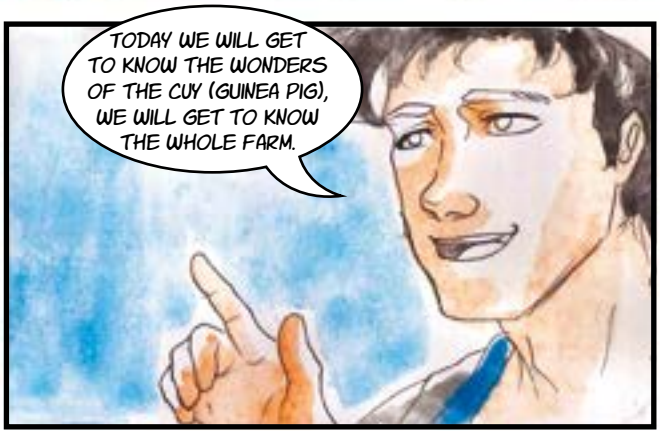
Congratulations to the winners.

GUINEA PIG DOCTOR: THE HEALER OF DISEASES

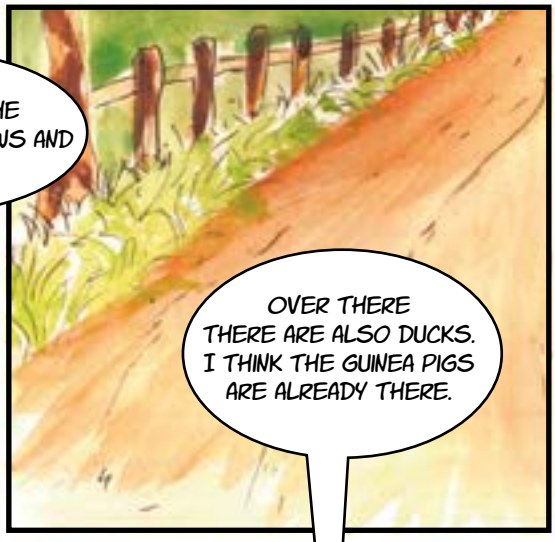
Two weeks later, the guide awaits the winners.



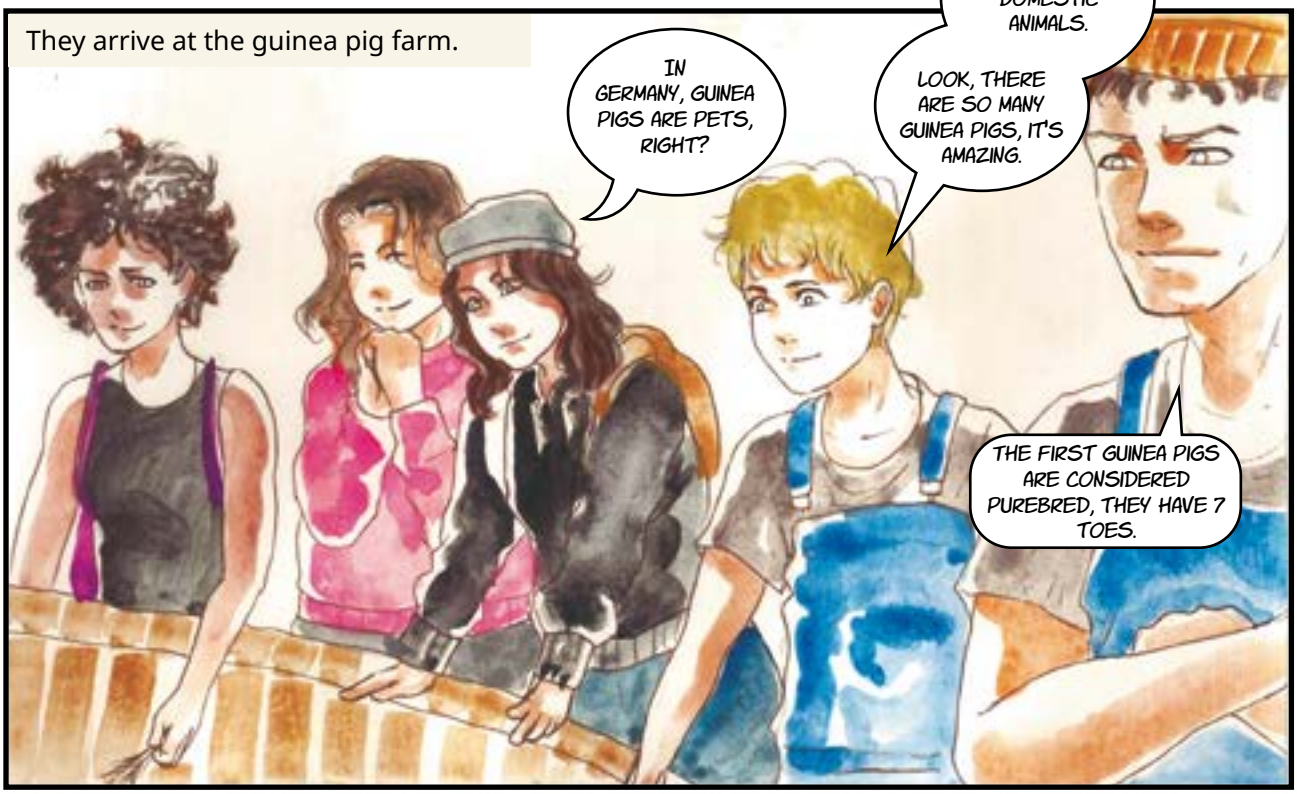
The young people and the escort arrive.



They visit all the facilities and go to the guinea pig farm.



They arrive at the guinea pig farm.



HERE ARE ALL THE BENEFITS OF GUINEA PIG MEAT.
See the informative bulletin board.
WOW! I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS.
ITS BENEFITS LIVE UP TO ITS NAME "DOCTOR CUY".

THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY. I HOPE YOU HAVE LEARNED ALL ABOUT THE GUINEA PIG.
I LOVED LEARNING MORE ABOUT GUINEA PIGS. WE DIDN'T KNOW WE COULD EAT THEM, NOW I WILL.
They finish the tour.
I'M GLAD YOU ENJOYED COMING HERE.
FROM TODAY I WILL EAT A LOT OF GUINEA PIG MEAT, THANK YOU SIR.
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SOMETHING AMAZING WITH GUINEA PIG MEAT, THANKS!
They say goodbye and leave.
END

CHONTACURO: A MOUTHFUL OF COURAGE

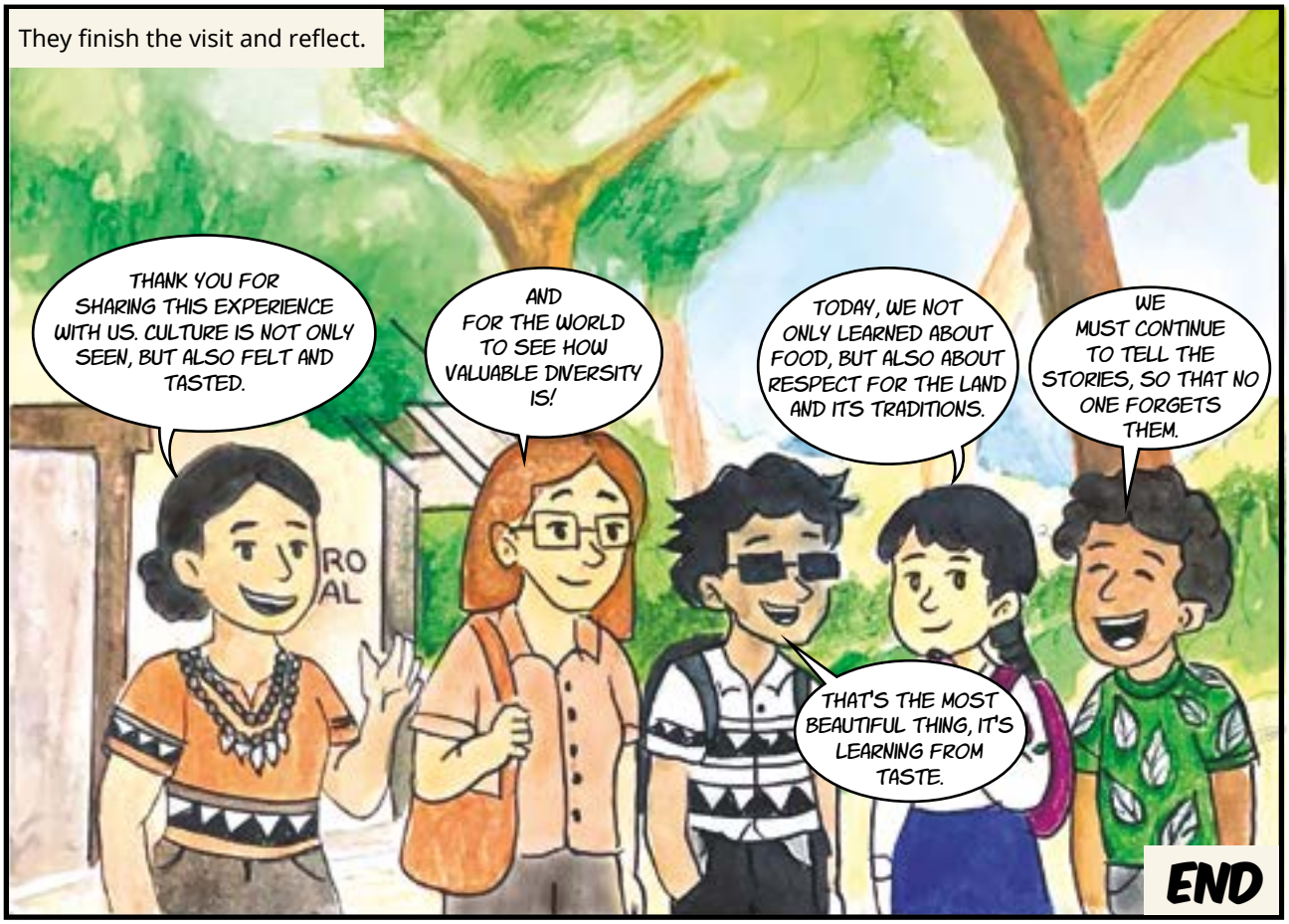
They walk to the demonstration area.
HOW INTERESTING!
IN MY COMMUNITY, THEY ARE COLLECTED WITH RESPECT. NATURE ALWAYS GIVES US WHAT WE NEED.
IT IS PURE PROTEIN.
AND WHEN SOMEONE IS SICK, THEY GIVE THEM CHONTACURO BECAUSE IT HAS A LOT OF GOOD FAT.

They observe the traditional preparation.
WE ARE GOING TO ROAST THEM ON STICKS AND OVER THE FIRE.
EVERY BITE TELLS A STORY, ONE THAT TODAY WILL ALSO BE YOURS.
IT SMELLS DIFFERENT... BUT IT LOOKS CRUNCHY.
I AM FOND OF IT, BECAUSE IT REMINDS ME OF FAMILY REUNIONS.

Visit the information bulletin board.

Time to try *chontacuro*.

They finish the visit and reflect.



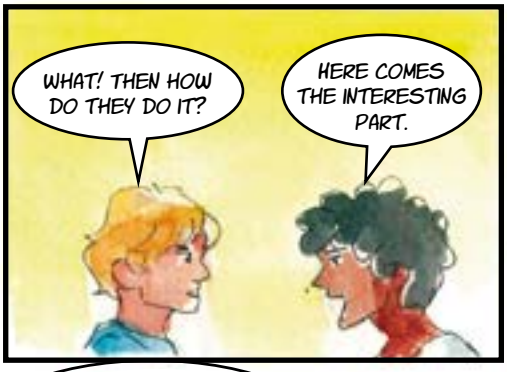
TRADITION IN EVERY SIP: CASSAVA CHICHA

(chicha: traditional fermented drink)

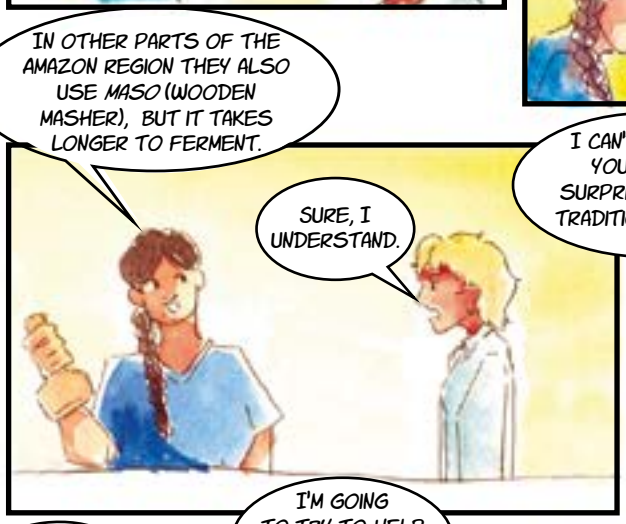
I WANT TO KNOW HOW IT'S PREPARED.
FIRST YOU HARVEST, PEEL AND WASH THE CASSAVA, THEN YOU COOK IT.

ANDRÉS! BUT THERE'S NOTHING INTERESTING ABOUT THIS.
BELIEVE ME, THERE IS, WAIT.

THEN YOU BLEND IT?
NO, THERE ARE NO BLENDERS HERE.


WHAT! THEN HOW DO THEY DO IT?
HERE COMES THE INTERESTING PART.

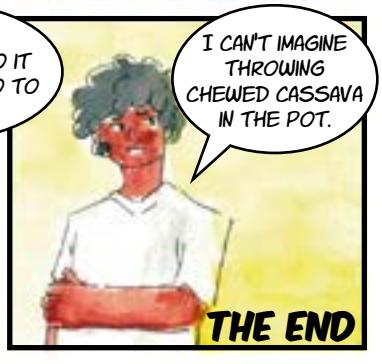
AMAZING! AND AS A GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE, THIS WILL HELP YOU TO FERMENT IT, WON'T IT?
YES, EXACTLY, WE STOPPED DOING IT WHEN WE WERE IN THE PANDEMIC, BUT WE TOOK IT UP AGAIN BECAUSE OF TRADITION.


IN OTHER PARTS OF THE AMAZON REGION THEY ALSO USE *MASO* (WOODEN MASHER), BUT IT TAKES LONGER TO FERMENT.
SURE, I UNDERSTAND.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT SURPRISED, IT'S A TRADITIONAL DRINK!
COUSIN, I'M FROM CHILE AND IN A COMMUNITY I WENT TO THEY ALSO MADE CHICHA, BUT FROM FRUIT. WHAT REALLY SURPRISES ME IS THAT HERE THEY MAKE IT WITH CASSAVE.

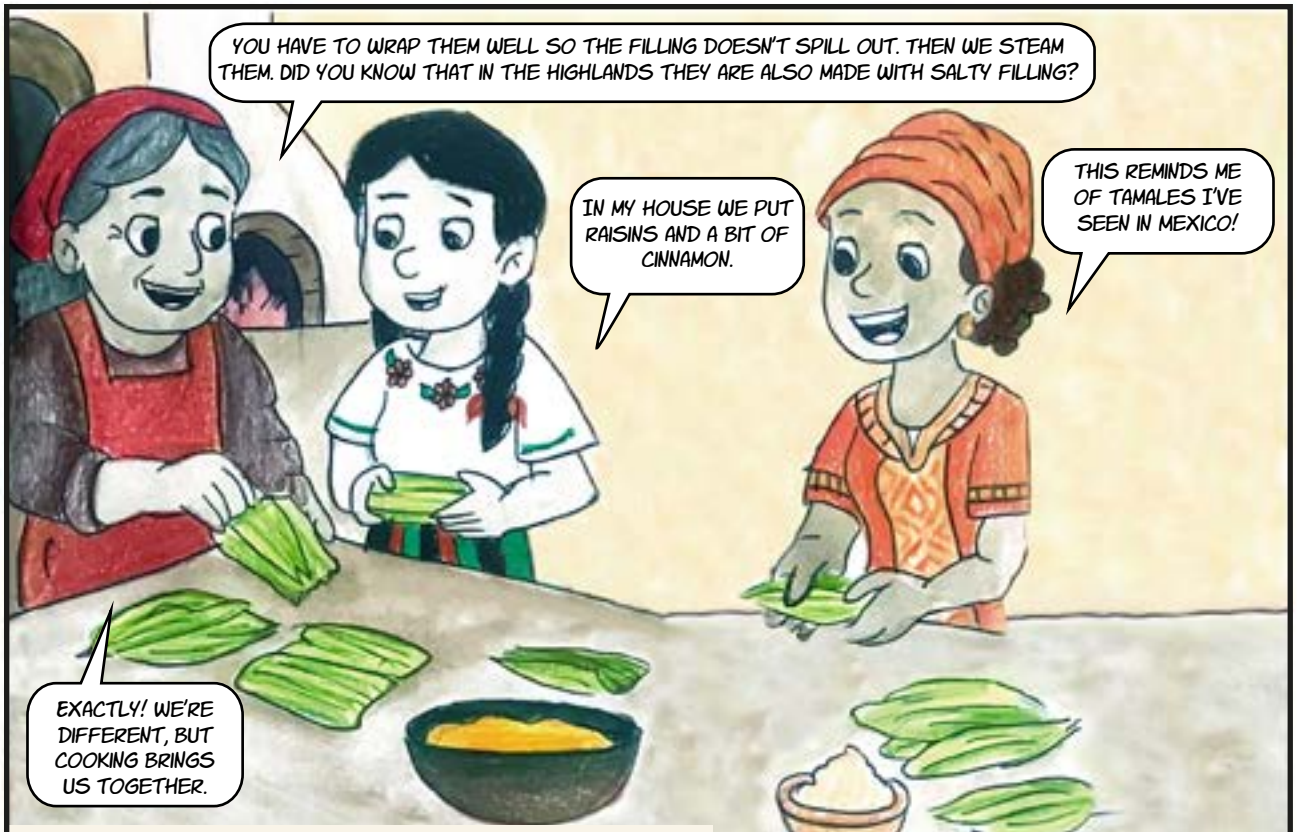
THAT SOUNDS VERY DISGUSTING.
I'M GOING TO TRY TO HELP SINCE I MADE A COMMITMENT.
BUT THAT'S WHAT MAKES CHICHA TASTE SO GOOD.

I ACTUALLY PREFER TO DO IT WITH THE MASO TO HELP.


I CAN'T IMAGINE THROWING CHEWED CASSAVA IN THE POT.
THE END

BETWEEN LEAVES AND FLAVORS: *HUMITAS*

They begin to prepare the corn dough.



Wrapped in leaves, the flavors prepare for the fire.

Visit the culinary knowledge billboard.

Time to eat together.

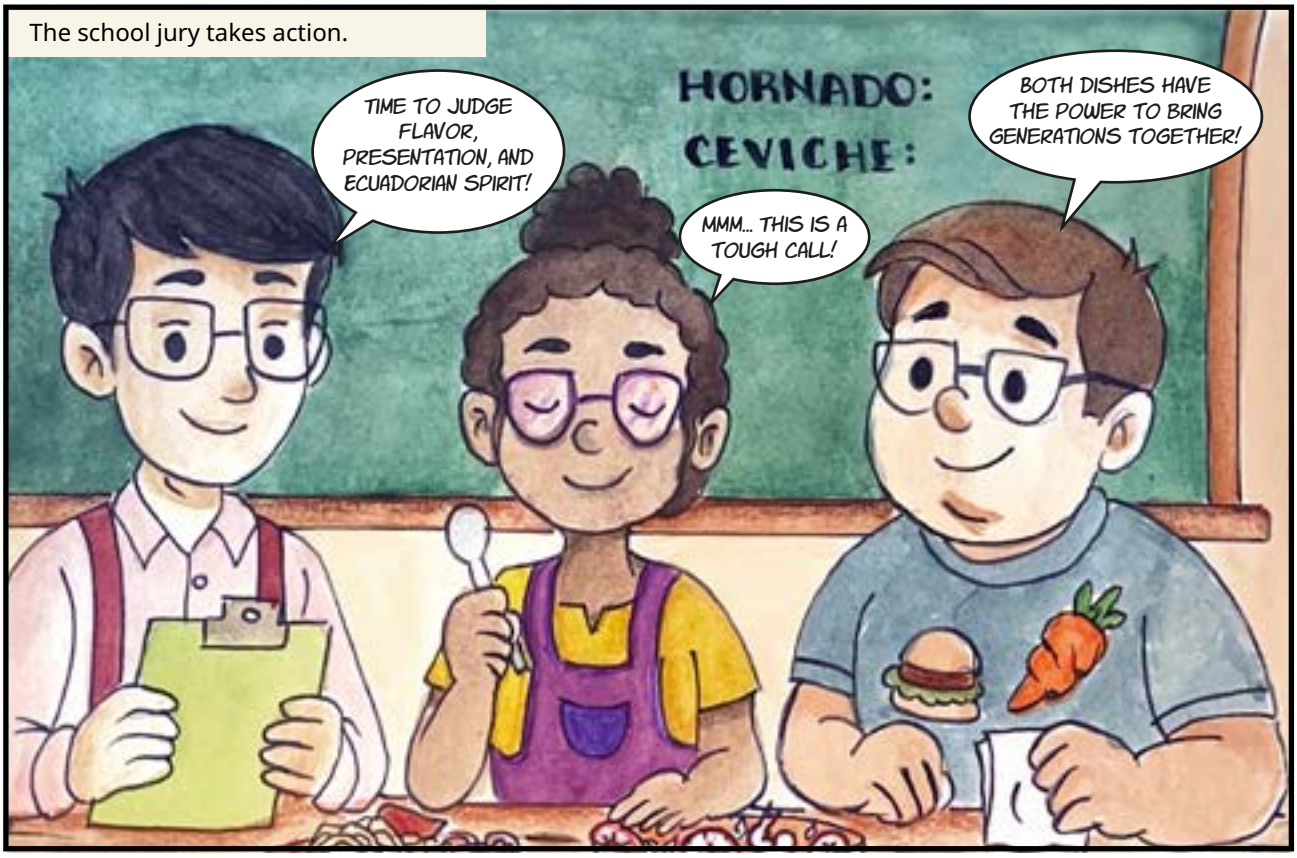
Final reflection as evening falls.

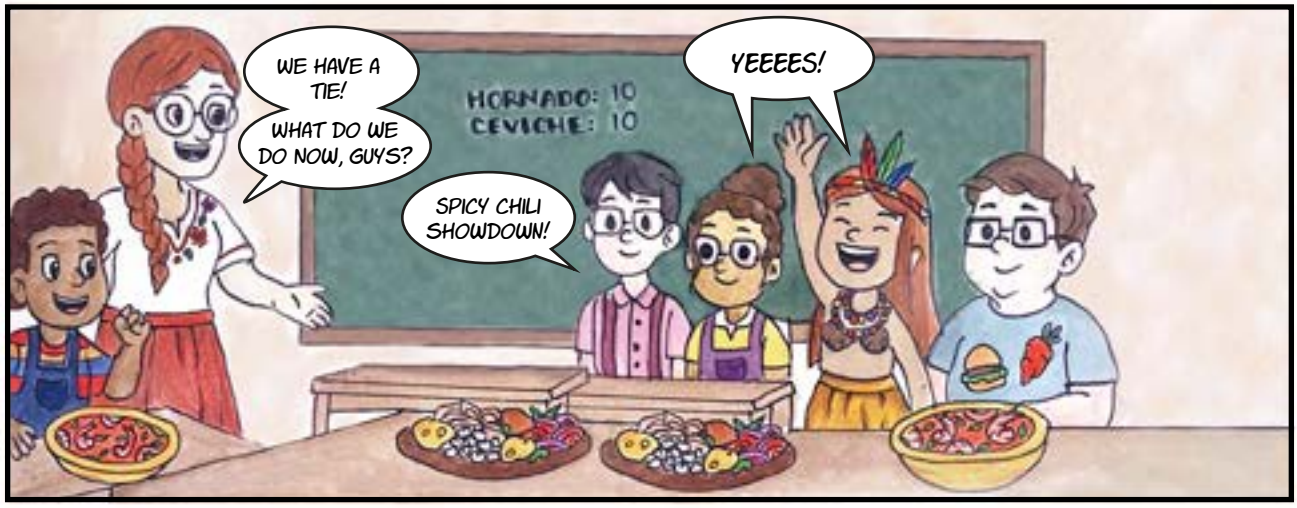
HORNADO: THE STAR DISH

Hornado (roasted pork)

The Coast presents its marine delight.

The school jury takes action.



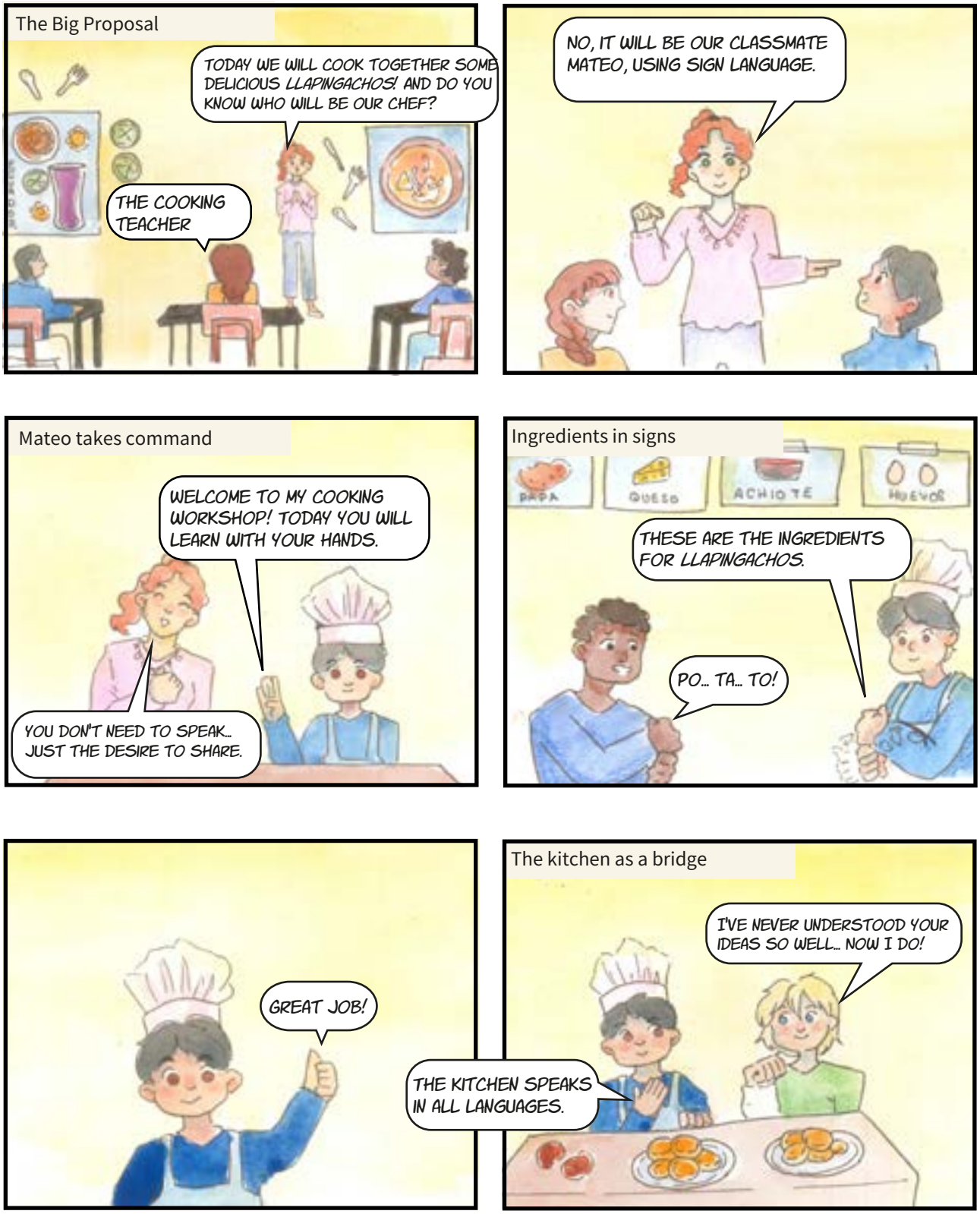


Hornado with history and heart.

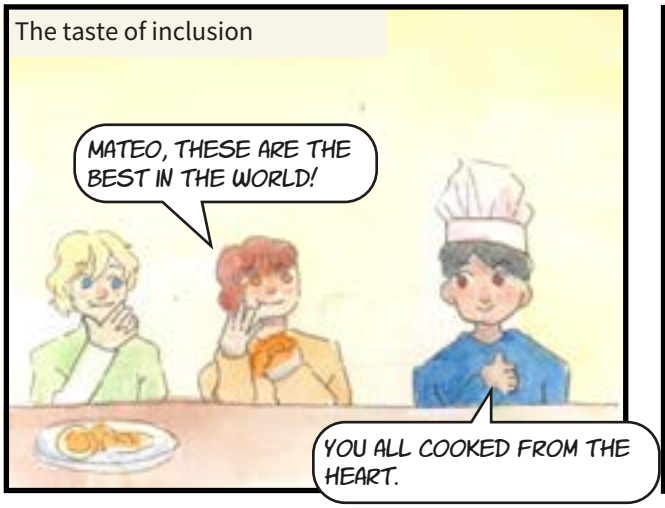
And the winner is... the memory of the people!

LLAPINGACHOS, COOKING IN SILENCE

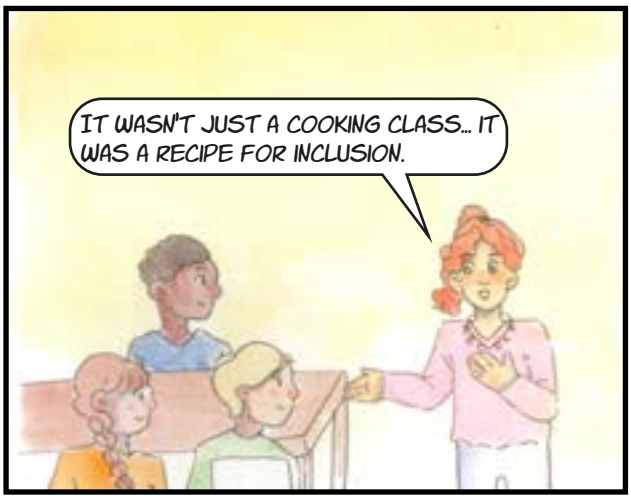
Llapingachos (stuffed potato patties)



The taste of inclusion



Sign language routines



Mateo, teacher and guide

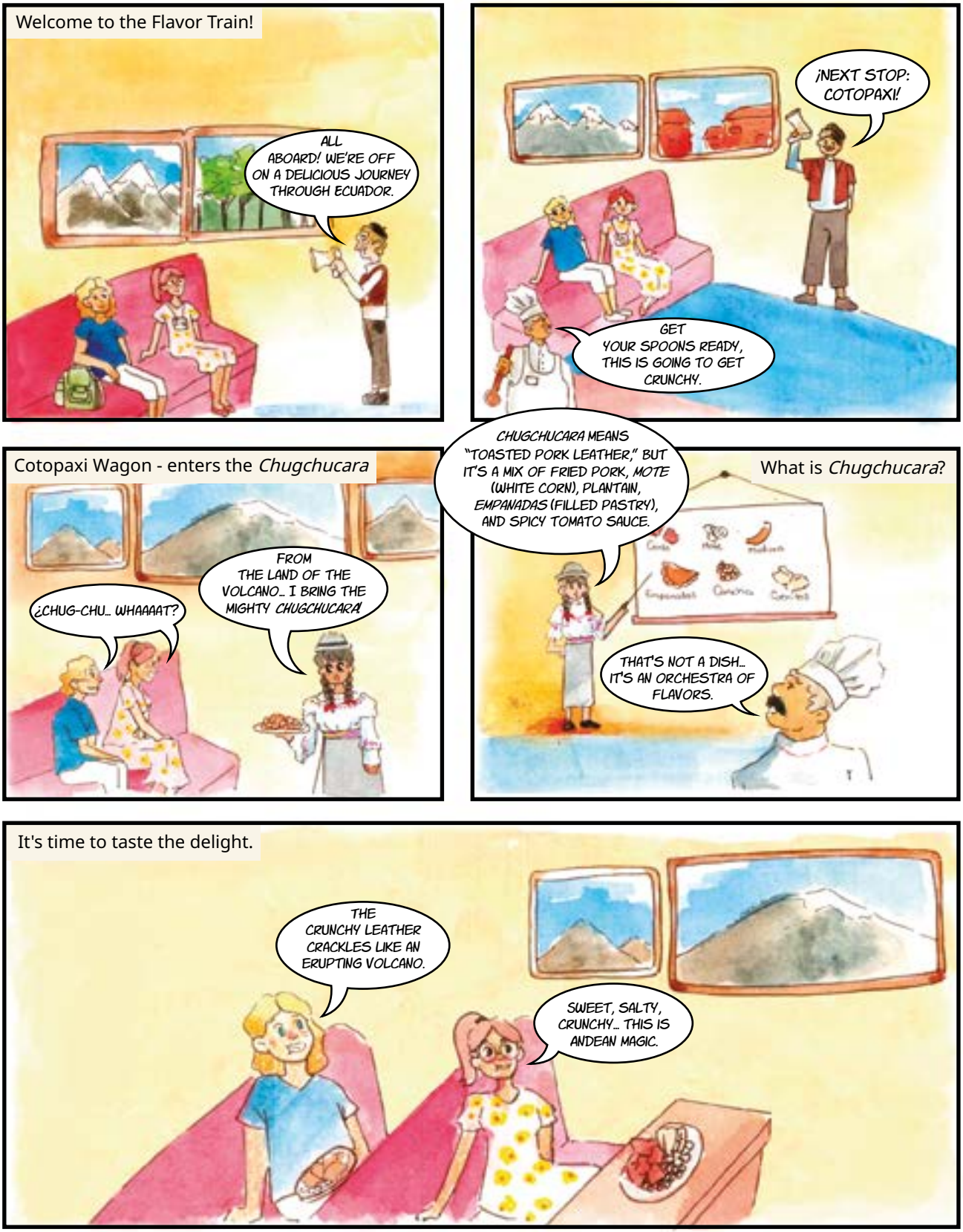
"The Silent Challenge" The class creates a game: cooking in turns without speaking, only using pictograms and signs.

COOKING IN SILENCE... TO LISTEN WITH THE SOUL.
THANK YOU FOR COOKING WITH ME.

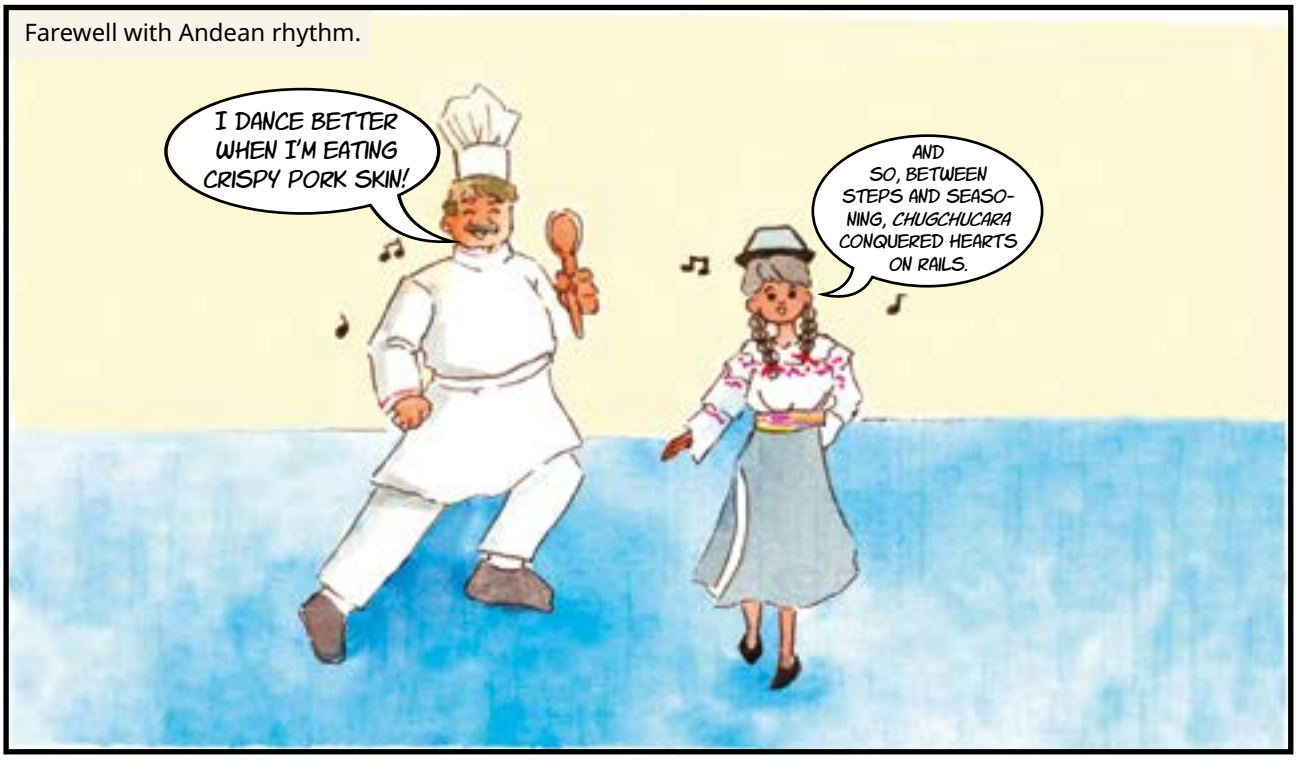
THE END

CHUGCHUCARA ON RAILS

Chugchucara (fried pork dish)



Farewell with Andean rhythm.



Next stop.

THE END

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Glossary of terms

Glossary of Terms

To facilitate the comprehension of the fundamental concepts underpinning this volume, a glossary has been compiled that brings together the principal categories and notions employed throughout the chapters and comic narratives. This resource is intended to serve as a quick reference guide, providing clear and precise definitions that enable readers to engage with the specialized vocabulary related to inclusive education, cultural diversity, and the pedagogical use of comics.

The inclusion of each term responds to the need for a shared conceptual framework, reducing ambiguities and ensuring that students, educators, researchers, and the broader readership have access to a tool that clarifies meanings within academic and educational contexts. Far from constituting a mere list of definitions, this glossary invites readers to explore the concepts in depth, to recognize their multiple dimensions, and to appreciate their significance within the fields of interculturality and inclusion.

Thus, the glossary emerges as an essential complement to the volume, bridging technical terminology with a pedagogically accessible perspective while fostering readers' appropriation and critical engagement with the terms.

It is important to note that the definitions provided have been drawn primarily from the **Royal Spanish Academy (RAE),** a leading authority on the Spanish language, thereby ensuring conceptual accuracy and alignment with academic standards. In addition, certain terms of **Kichwa** origin have been incorporated, following the glossary published by the **Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2013).**

Term	Definition
Accessibility	The quality or condition of being accessible.
Achiote (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Small tree with reddish flowers that produces an oval, fleshy fruit whose pulp is edible (Bab.la, n.d.). Substance traditionally used by the Tsáchila people to dye clothing or paint their bodies, reflecting ancestral connections. Also employed in traditional medicine to treat stomach ailments.
Aguarico river	Amazonian river in Ecuador, formerly known as the River of the Cofán people.
Ají (chili pepper)	Essential spicy ingredient in Amazonian cuisine.
Ají sauce (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Traditional Ecuadorian spicy sauce made with chili peppers, tree tomatoes, onions, cilantro, among other ingredients.
Albacore	A type of tuna used in traditional dishes from Ecuador's coastal region, such as encebollado.
Alli	Kichwa expression meaning "Good".
Alli chishi	Kichwa expression meaning "Good afternoon".
Alli puncha	Kichwa expression meaning "Good morning".
Alli tuta	Kichwa expression meaning "Good night".
Alli yuyaimi kan	Kichwa expression meaning "It's a great idea".
Alpargata (espadrilles)	According to the Royal Spanish Academy (2024), an alpargata is "a type of canvas footwear with a sole made of esparto grass or hemp, fastened either by simple fitting or by means of ribbons."

Anaco (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	According to the Royal Spanish Academy (2024), an anaco is a "rectangular cloth that Andean indigenous women wear around their waist like a tunic or skirt." It is the traditional clothing of Otavalo women.
Ancestors	"Inheritance, traits that continue to be seen in descendants" (Royal Spanish Academy, 2024)
Ancestral knowledge	Knowledge transmitted intergenerationally by indigenous communities, related to nature, health, and community life.
Anxiety	A state of agitation, restlessness, or mental unease. 2. Medically, a condition of anguish that prevents tranquility in patients.
Ari	Yes (Kichwa).
Arrarray (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Interjection used in Ecuador to express the sensation of heat or burning.
Assistive technology	Tools and resources used to facilitate learning for individuals with special needs. [Note: No direct equivalent in the DLE; adapted as per UNESCO guidelines.]
Autism	A developmental disorder affecting communication and social interaction.
Awareness-raising	The action and effect of raising awareness or sensitizing.
Ayahuasca (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A liana from the Amazon Forest whose leaves are used to prepare a hallucinogenic brew employed by shamans for healing purposes.
Ayllu	A social and economic organization based on community and reciprocity. Considered a traditional model of community life.
Bargain	According to the Royal Spanish Acad-

	emy (2024), haggling is “said by the buyer and the seller: to debate the price of something for sale.”
Bass drums	A large drum played with a mallet.
Bilingualism	Habitual use of two languages in the same region or by the same person.
Blessing for the journey	Expression of good wishes and protection for those embarking on a new path.
Bomba (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Afro-descendant musical genre from the Chota Valley, in the Imbabura and Carchi border region of Ecuador.
Brown sugar	Sugar obtained from the crystallization of unrefined cane juice, or refined sugar with added molasses extract, ranging from light yellow to dark brown.
Carnival	The three days preceding Lent. Popular festivals involving costumes, parades, dances, and lively festivities.
Ceviche	A traditional dish from several Latin American countries, consisting of raw fish or seafood cut into small pieces and marinated in lime juice or sour orange juice, mixed with chopped onions, salt, and chili pepper.
Chakana	A symbolic cross representing connection between worlds. Used as an intercultural symbol in education.
Chicha (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Alcoholic beverage made from the fermentation of corn in sweetened water, used in some Latin American countries.
Chicha de jora (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Traditional fermented drink made from corn, consumed in celebrations and rituals.

Chiva (term retained in Spanishdue to its cultural specificity)	Colorful bus used in community festivities, especially in rural areas of Ecuador.
Chonta	A palm tree whose hard and dark streaked wood is used to make canes and ornamental objects.
Chunkana	A traditional Kichwa game in which players throw large beans to knock other players' beans out of a circle.
Cinnamon	1. Bark of the cinnamon tree, removed from its epidermis, yellowish red in color, with a very aromatic smell and pleasant taste. 2. Colloquial: Something very fine or exquisite. 3. Colloquial: Strength or Vigor. 4. Ecuador: A hot alcoholic drink (canelazo).
Citizenship	Quality and right of being a citizen; promoted as plural and critical citizenship through school experiences that value diversity and intercultural dialogue.
Coca plant	A shrub from the Erythroxylaceae family, native to tropical America, whose leaves are used traditionally.
Coconut candy (Cocadas)	Emerald candy made with coconut and sugar.
Coexistence	The action of living together with others; proposed as a fundamental educational goal based on mutual respect among cultures within the school environment.
Collaboration	Action and effect of collaborating.
Comic	A series or sequence of panels telling a story.
Community kitchen	A space and practice of preparing food collectively to strengthen social bonds.
Culinary arts	The art of preparing food.

Cultural awareness-raising	An educational process essential for promoting respect and appreciation of diversity.
Cultural clash	Clash of customs and mindsets between people or groups.
Cultural diversity	The coexistence of different customs, languages, and traditions.
Cultural identity	"The set of characteristics inherent to an individual or a community that distinguish them from others." (Royal Spanish Academy, 2024).
Cultural relevance	An educational principle essential for creating situated educational materials and strategies.
Curricular adaptations	Adaptation: the act and outcome of adapting. Understood as a tool to address the diversity of learning needs in inclusive educational settings.
Dance	Noun. The act of dancing.
Decolonization	The action and effect of decolonizing.
Dialogue circles	An organized group conversation where participants sit in a circle, use a speaking object, and a facilitator guides participation and respectful listening.
Didactics	The branch of pedagogy that studies teaching techniques and methods.
Disability	Condition of someone who cannot fully perform a physical, mental, or sensory function.
Diversity	Quality of being diverse
Dyslexia	A specific learning disorder that makes reading and writing difficult, unrelated to intelligence.

Educational comic	A series or sequence of vignettes that tells a story.
Emotional education	Education aimed at promoting psychological well-being in rural school settings.
Empathy	The capacity to identify with someone and share their feelings.
Empowerment	Used to refer to the strengthening of identity and education among marginalized or indigenous students.
Encebollado [term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity]	A traditional dish from Ecuador's coastal region, made with fish, cassava, and a generous portion of onions pickled in lime juice. It is traditionally consumed as breakfast or lunch.
Epistemology	Theory of the foundations and methods of scientific knowledge.
Equality	The quality of being equal.
Equity	Quality that consists of giving each person what they deserve based on their merits or conditions.
Exchange student	A person who studies in another country for a while
Excursion	An outing undertaken for fun, recreation, or educational purposes.
Fanesca (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A ceremonial soup made with twelve types of grains and legumes, squash, milk, and salted cod. This dish embodies syncretic traditions that blend Andean agricultural cycles with Catholic symbolism.
Festivity	A celebration, especially religious and regularly established.

Folk healer	A person who practices empirical or ritual healing without being a licensed medical professional.
Formative assessment	It is considered a fundamental element to verify the achievements of students with respect to the goal proposed during teaching-learning.
Fritada (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	In Ecuador, a fried dish made of bite-sized pieces of pork.
Gastronomy	The body of knowledge and activities related to ingredients, recipes, culinary techniques, and their historical evolution.
Graphic narrative	Defines the visual and textual resource through which pedagogical content is articulated via comics.
Guava sweet (Dulce de guayaba)	Dessert made with guava, popular in rural areas.
Guayusa [(erm retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	An Ecuadorian plant whose leaves are used to prepare an infusion.
Heritage	The set of assets owned, acquired by any title.
Heritage education	Relevant in chapters addressing the transmission of cultural knowledge through art, festivities, or cooking.
Hornado (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Pork roasted slowly in an oven.
Humita (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A traditional dish made from a paste of fresh maize or ground corn kernels, mixed with a sautéed preparation usually containing onion, tomato, and ground red chili pepper (ají colorado). It is typically served wrapped in maize husks, in empanadas, or as a baked casserole.

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)	Acronym for Information and Communication Technologies; considered key tools for preserving indigenous languages and implementing digital educational materials.
Identity	The set of characteristics unique to an individual or a community that distinguish them from others.
Imanallatak kanki	How are you? (Kichwa).
Imantag	A rural community in Imbabura Province, Ecuador, with a strong indigenous cultural heritage.
Imashina kay takina ñawpa ñukanchik runakunapa	Listen to this song; it comes from our ancestors (Kichwa).
Inca [(erm retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A person originating from the Inca Empire, prior to the Spanish conquest.
Inclusion	The action and effect of including.
Indigenous	Originating from the country or region in question.
Intercultural competencies	They are soft skills that allow for understanding and fluidity when interacting with other identities.
Intercultural dialogue	It is a process of exchange and communication between people of different cultures.
Intercultural education	Central axis of the book; refers to the pedagogical and public policy framework for respectful cultural interaction.
Interculturality	Designates the respectful and equitable interaction between cultures within the educational sphere, promoted as part of Ecuadorian educational policy.

Interdisciplinarity	Defines the logical framework of construction from multiple fields (education, art, psychology, design).
Interpreter	A person who orally translates what another person says in a different language.
Inti raymi	Ancestral festival to honor the sun. Inti means “sun” and Raymi means “festival”. Celebrated in June as an expression of gratitude for light and life.
Kapak raymi	Ancestral festival marking the winter solstice and the beginning of a new agricultural cycle.
Kawsay purak kashun	Let’s go to win (Kichwa).
Kayambis	Indigenous nation located mainly in the Cayambe region, Pichincha Province, Ecuador.
Kayta katipai yanapachun	Please queue here for assistance (Kichwa).
Kichwa	An indigenous language widely spoken in the Ecuadorian Andes and Amazon. A key element in bilingual intercultural education.
Killa	Term meaning “moon”. Also used as a female name with spiritual connotations.
Kunaq	Male Kichwa name meaning “the generous one”.
Literacy	Action and effect of teaching literacy.
Locro (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A traditional stew made with meat, potatoes, maize, and other ingredients, consumed in various South American countries.
Lullaby	A deep and monotonous song to lull children to sleep.

Mama, taita y rikuni pukllana	Kichwa words meaning “mum”, “dad”, and “I’m going to play”, respectively.
Marimba (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Afro-Ecuadorian cultural tradition involving traditional instruments and songs rooted in African heritage.
Medicinal plants	Plants used for their therapeutic properties, traditionally employed in healing practices.
Mestizo (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Said of a person: Born of parents from different racial backgrounds, especially of a white father and an indigenous mother, or an indigenous father and a white mother.
Minga (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A collective community practice used as an example of collaborative pedagogy and intercultural participation.
Montubio	Coastal peasant.
Mother tongue	Refers to the first language learned by a person, especially in the context of revitalizing Kichwa and its teaching within intercultural school settings.
Multilingualism	The habitual use of several languages in the same region or by the same person; analyzed in relation to the teaching of Kichwa, Shuar, and Spanish in bilingual schools.
Ñañito	Affectionate Kichwa term meaning “little brother” or “younger sibling”.
Narrative	A story or set of events that are narrated.
Ñuka irkimi kani	I feel sick. (Kichwa)
Pitak yanapanka?	Who can help me? (Kichwa)
Ñuka mana yachanichu castellanu	I don’t understand Spanish (Kichwa).

Ñukanchik	Kichwa term meaning “we” or “our people”. Appears in reflections on identity and belonging.
Ñusta	Term meaning “virgin princess”, historically used in Inca nobility.
Pachamama	Quechua term compound of Pacha (“earth”) and Mama (“mother”); means “Mother Earth”.
Pambamesa	A communal meal in which food is shared and laid out on a cloth spread on the ground, typically held during collective work gatherings (mingas), festivities, or community assemblies. The term comes from Kichwa and is widely used in Ecuador.
Participation	The act of taking part or engaging in an activity.
Pawkar raymi	Festival of flowering. Pawkar means “flower” and Raymi means “festival”. Celebrates the start of the agricultural cycle in gratitude for the earth’s fertility.
Pickle or marinade	A brine or mixture of substances used to preserve and flavor foods.
Pitak ñukaman yanapanka?	Kichwa expression meaning “Who can help me?”.
Plaza de Ponchos	Famous artisan market located in the city of Otavalo, where you can find textiles, jewelry, and handicrafts of great cultural value.
Plaza de Ponchos (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Famous artisan market located in the city of Otavalo, where you can find textiles, jewelry, and handicrafts of great cultural value.
Plural citizenship	It is the recognition of the coexistence of multiple identities, cultures, and forms of participation within the same society, where each person is recognized as a citizen with rights and duties, respecting diversity and

	promoting the inclusion of all groups.
Plurinational	Comprising several nations.
Plurinationality	“Comprising multiple nations” (Royal Spanish Academy, 2024).
Poncho (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	According to the Royal Spanish Academy (2024), a poncho is a “garment consisting of a blanket, square or rectangular, made of sheep wool, alpaca, vicuña, or other fabric, which has an opening in the center to pass the head through, and hangs from the shoulders generally to below the waist.”
Proclamation	“Promulgation or publication of something orally in public places”
Qhari	Male Kichwa term meaning “man”.
Representation	Image, figure, or idea by which the presence of something is apprehended.
Resilience	The capacity of a living being to adapt in the face of a disruptive agent or adverse condition or situation.
Roots	They are the historical, spiritual and symbolic elements that constitute the basis of a culture, transmitted from generation to generation.
Runa	In Kichwa, means “person” or “human being”. Refers to dignity and identity in cultural contexts.
Runa shimi	Literally “the people’s language”; refers to the Kichwa language. Used in discussions on indigenous languages.
Sanjuanito (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Traditional dance of the indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Sierra.

Self-assessment	The action and effect of evaluating oneself; used as a pedagogical strategy that fosters students' critical reflection on their own learning.
Shaman (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	A person who, according to certain beliefs and religions, practices healing or enchantment through trance and spells.
Shuar	An Indigenous nationality and language originating from the Amazon region of Ecuador and northern Peru, whose people have traditionally engaged in agriculture, fishing, and hunting, while preserving a distinctive worldview closely tied to education and cultural identity (CONAIE, 2014a).
Shuk punlla rirkani	Kichwa phrase meaning "One day I left".
Shunkumanta yupaychani mashikuna	Expression meaning "From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much, friends".
Sign language	A system of communication using visual gestures and signs, proposed as an educational inclusion resource for students with hearing disabilities.
Social experiment	Test or activity designed to observe behaviors in society.
Social justice	Moral principle that leads to giving each individual what corresponds or belongs to them.
Social networks	Social structure composed of people, organizations or other entities connected to each other through ties or relationships
Sports court	Space designated for practicing certain sports or hosting events.
Stereotype	A commonly accepted image or idea held by a group or society, considered unchangeable.
Story / narrative	Narration; story.

Sumak	Kichwa term meaning “beautiful”, “excellent”.
Sumak kawsay	An alternative model focused on collective wellbeing, social equity, and harmony with nature (Buen Vivir).
Sumak warmi	Expression meaning “good woman”, used to highlight positive and respected female qualities.
Surprise farewell	A meeting organized without prior notice to honor a person who has passed away.
Sustainability	Quality of being sustainable, especially in economic and ecological contexts.
Suyana	Kichwa term meaning “hope,” related to faith and trust in a better future.
Teaching resources	“A means of any kind that, if necessary, serves to achieve what is intended.”
Territory	A portion of the earth’s surface belonging to a nation, region, province, or similar political or geographical entity.
Tingo Tango [term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity]	A traditional game that involves passing an object from hand to hand while repeating the word tingo. At some point, tango is said, stopping the object’s movement.
Toast	The act of offering a drink in honor of someone or something.
Tsáchila (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Indigenous people of Ecuador who are identified by their Tsafiki language, their ancestral customs, and the use of achiote in their hair.
Tsáchila dance	Dance of the Tsáchila people, characterized by energetic turns and steps.
Tunda	Afro-Ecuadorian mythological being that deceives children to kidnap them

Tushuy	Kichwa term meaning “dance.” Associated with cultural practices expressed in school festivities.
Two left feet	It is an idiom that means lack of coordination and imbalance.
Uchumanka	Sacred serpent of the Tsáchila culture, protector of balance in the jungle.
Wakra	Kichwa word meaning “strong rope” or “noose,” used in everyday Andean activities.
Wallkas	Traditional necklaces of gold or colored beads, a symbol of wealth and status among indigenous peoples.
Warmikuna	A Kichwa word meaning “women.” It is mentioned in the context of gender and participation in community education.
Wawa de pan (term retained in Spanish due to its cultural specificity)	Artisan bread shaped like figures, usually babies, made for celebrations (Gutiérrez, 2020).
Worldview	A way of seeing and interpreting the world; refers to indigenous worldviews expressed in language and cultural practices.
Yachay	Kichwa term meaning “wisdom” or “knowledge.” Associated with the educational value of ancestral knowledge.
Yaku	Kichwa term meaning “water,” considered a sacred and vital element in the Andean worldview.
Yupaychani yachachik mashi	Kichwa phrase that translates as “Thank you, teacher, for helping me.”
Yuri yanapawashkamanta	Female name in the Kichwa language that means “she who woke up to life.”

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use

The authors declare the use of artificial intelligence tools for editorial support purposes: Consensus, for the identification of scientific literature; ChatGPT (OpenAI), for style suggestions and assistance with translation into English; and Grammarly, for grammatical correction. The final English language review was carried out by a specialist in this field. Intellectual responsibility, substantive content, and conclusions rest solely with the authors. This acknowledgement is made in accordance with the ethical principles of transparency in scientific publishing.

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PEDAGÓGICA

Twenty-first century education is undergoing constant transformation, driven by the challenges of a globalized and technologically advanced society. Traditional pedagogical approaches are gradually giving way to innovative methodologies that foster inclusion, diversity, and responsiveness to digital contexts.

This collection is dedicated to exploring, analyzing, and proposing educational strategies that respond to the current needs of teachers and students. The Pedagogical Collection offers studies, essays, and experiences that address key issues such as intercultural inclusion, the integration of technologies in learning, and the transformation of educational environments. The author, researchers, and professionals in the field of education contribute critical reflections and practical tools to strengthen pedagogical competencies and foster a commitment to quality education.

Thus, this collection becomes an essential resource for teacher educators, practitioners, and researchers committed to innovating teaching practices and addressing the challenges of contemporary education.

PUBLISHED VOLUMES

1

Basantes-Andrade, A., Orye, A., & Naranjo-Toro, M. (2024). ***Enseñanza culturalmente receptiva: Un enfoque pedagógico para promover la inclusión y la diversidad cultural.*** Universidad Técnica del Norte. https://repositorio.utn.edu.ec/handle/123456789/16732

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5

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FORTHCOMING

Melo-López, V-A., Basantes-Andrade, A., & Gudiño-Mejía C-B. (2025): ***Gamificación en educación inclusiva.*** Universidad Técnica del Norte.

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