

Please help with a donation to the educational scholarship program for the children of the Belize rural villages of Indian Church (Lamanai) and San Carlos. If you know someone who would be interested in supporting this scholarship program, please share this message.

Since 2003 the scholarship program has helped send many of the village children to high school. For those of you who have visited the Maya site of Lamanai, you already know that the village is remote, rural, and fairly poor; and the cost of a high school education in Belize is high (about \$2,000USD per year: see details below). We ask that parents of students contribute to their children's educational expenses; however, the scholarship program provides additional assistance by lending textbooks and additional financial assistance to the students when needed, and as the scholarship funds allow. Each year the Canadian Organization, **S.H.A.R.E.** has continued to provide several tuition scholarships, but additional funds are still needed.



We are very proud to say that the first groups of scholarship students did very well. They all have high school diplomas, and some went on to earn associates degrees, and bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees, and one is now a PhD candidate! Who knew the possibilities back in 2001 when we first met with parents to explore ways to help students?!

BACKGROUND: The village of Indian Church is named for the ruins of two 16th Century Spanish churches at the Maya site of Lamanai, formerly called Indian Church before the Maya name for the ancient city, Lama'an/ayin, was found in Spanish documents. The village population is approximately 250 people. It is an outlying rural community situated on the edge of a lagoon and adjacent to the Lamanai Archaeological & Nature Reserve. Lamanai is an ancient Maya site that is now visited by large numbers of tourists. From 1974 - 1986 the Royal Ontario Museum ran a large excavation project at Lamanai, headed by archaeologist David Pendergast. The Lamanai Archaeological Project (LAP) began in the summer of 1996, headed by archaeologist Dr. Liz Graham. Since that time LAP has run field schools and other investigations. In 2001-2004 the government of Belize executed the Tourism Development Project (TDP) at Lamanai to excavate and consolidate selected structures and add new facilities to service the increasing tourism at the site.

The village does not have electricity. Water is pumped (using a solar system for power) from a well into the village water tower. The village can only be accessed by bus 2 days per week (M & F), or by the New River (very expensive) from Orange Walk, the closest city, which is an over an hour away. Many villagers now have cell phones, but reception can be erratic. Many people came to this village as refugees from Guatemala in the mid-1980s—they were mostly milpa (corn) farmers at that time. Some villagers now work for the archaeology projects, the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, local Mennonite agriculture & lumber mills, the Indian Church Artisans' Center and the local restaurants in the village. Several villagers are teachers for the Indian Church and San Carlos village primary schools. Most of the available work is seasonal, part-time or day-labor at substandard wages (around \$10-15US/per day is typical, with the upper reaches being about \$25US per day). There is an inferior-quality primary school in the village and many residents of Indian Church have only completed primary school, if they have been formally educated at all. On average the older adults in the village have a 1st to 3rd grade education and about half are illiterate. Although English is the official language of Belize, many of the adult residents of the village only speak Spanish. English is taught in the primary school, but rarely spoken in the village, so the children's English language skills are basic. Economically speaking, the village is poor, although it has improved some over the past decade. The nearby village of San Carlos shares a similar history.

For more on the area, check the following web sites: www.karenpierce.com; www.beyondtouring.com; www.lamanai.com; www.lamanai.org.uk

Our fundraising goals for the 2018/19 and 2019/2020 academic years:

- **Textbooks** need to be purchased, as they are always changing—they are reused until the books are discontinued
- **Library reading/education program funds**—very important for the primary school students and for high school students when they are in the village on weekends during the school year
- **Funds for students whose families need additional assistance with school tuition, fees, uniforms, transportation, room & board, and other expenses.**

Please donate to the Indian Church Scholarship Fund! Education will open doors for these children and help to make the world a better place. 100% of your donation goes directly for the students. Thank-you for your support.

Cheers!

Karen Pierce

In the USA make your check out to:

Karen Pierce
PO BOX 3241
Evergreen, CO 80437-3241 USA
Phone: 303 674-2104; Website: www.karenpierce.com

Or send funds via Paypal to karen@karenpierce.com

In Canada make your check out to: S.H.A.R.E. Scholarship Fund, and indicate it is for **Indian Church scholarships.**

Mail your check to:

S.H.A.R.E. Agricultural Foundation
c/o Marg Frayne
R. R. # 3 Fergus, Ontario CANADA N1M 2W4
Website: www.shareagfoundation.org.

THE BELIZE GOVERNMENT PAYS FOR ONLY A PORTION OF THE EXPENSES OF A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION. FOR THE CHILDREN OF RURAL VILLAGES IN BELIZE, THERE IS THE ADDITIONAL EXPENSE OF BOARDING WHILE THE STUDENTS ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL

IT COSTS APPROXIMATELY \$1,500.00US to \$2,000.00US PER YEAR (DEPENDING ON THE SCHOOL AND SELECTED HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS) TO SEND A CHILD TO A BELIZE HIGH SCHOOL (Bz\$2=US\$1). PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO HELP WITH SOME OF THE EXPENSES.

Registration and School fees: ranges from \$365Bz to \$700Bz

Books: ranges from \$175Bz to \$600Bz per year

School supplies: approximately \$200Bz

Uniforms, shoes and PE clothes: approximately \$200-\$300Bz

Computer and Internet Use and printing: approximately \$1,250Bz

Bus Fare: approximately \$800Bz/year

School lunches: approximately \$1,000Bz/year

Room and Board @ approximately \$125.00Bz per month x 10 months = \$1,250.00Bz (This is for Monday-Friday with breakfast and dinner--some students pay up to \$200Bz/month)

BELIZE SCHOOL SYSTEM:

Free public school in Belize only goes through primary school, Standard 6 (equal to our 6th grade), or about age 12-14. If one chooses to continue their education beyond that, they must pay to attend high school (or *college*, as they often call it in Belize). It is a 4-year program and the closest high school to Indian Church Village is Belize High School of Agriculture in Trinidad, a 1½ hour ride from Indian Church Village. There are 4 other high schools in Orange Walk (approximately a 2-hour bus ride)—Bishop Martin High School, New Hope High School, Muffles High School and Technical High School.

It would be such a shame if these kids from Indian Church Village did not have the opportunity to go to high school. Although the cost of tuition/fees, books and uniforms is not cheap, one of the biggest expenses is paying for room & board and for bus transportation. All of the students have to find lodging with a family in Orange Walk, Trinidad, or another village near their school, as they cannot get to and from the schools daily from Indian Church Village since the bus only goes to Indian Church Village on Monday and Friday. The schools do not have dormitories.

A Canadian organization called S.H.A.R.E. (www.shareagfoundation.org) provides an average of ten tuition scholarships at \$300US/per year/per student for students in Indian Church and neighboring San Carlos villages. However, these scholarships will only cover the cost of school fees, which are paid directly to the school by an accounting firm in Belize. The students will still have to pay for some of their books/book rental, uniforms, PE clothes, shoes, incidental school fees, room & board and bus transportation. Most of these children's families cannot afford to pay tuition/fees, let alone the additional expenses involved with their child's education. The scholarship program pays the balance of school fees, pays for textbooks, and in some cases, provides a monthly "allowance" for needy students to help with these additional expenses.

In 2004 we set up a program to re-use the school textbooks. All books are inventoried, labeled, and kept by the ICV librarian, Sonia Arevalo, who coordinates their re-distribution to the students each year. We currently have over 150 school books in "Inventory", but every year the schools change some of the books, so new books are always needed.

Laura Howard initiated the library project for Indian Church and San Carlos villages, where each village now has a library. They are used frequently by both primary and high school students, as well as adults who live in these villages. More information can be found on Laura's website: www.beyondtouring.com.

**Educating the children of Indian Church Village beyond the primary school level remains a big challenge!
Your contribution to the Indian Church Scholarship Fund is welcomed!**