

# Bringing the Andes to Michigan...



l to r: Nicholas Brant, Martín Castillo Collado, Katie Houghton, Lena Cintrón, Janet Brant

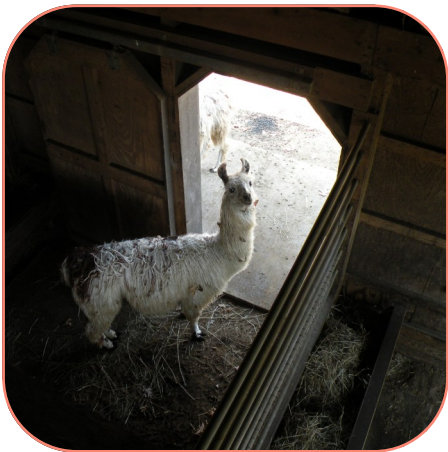
**Martín Castillo Collado**, Quechua language instructor, introduced his students to a unique aspect of Andean culture—and invited them on a field trip to the Star Llama Company in Dundee, Michigan.

Llamas inhabit the Andean highlands, and for centuries have been valued for their warm wool and as a means of transporting goods. Today, they also pull carriages through the streets as a popular tourist attraction.



Martín, a native of Cusco, said that llamas are gentle, trainable creatures that often follow their owners around much like a dog. “We celebrate their companionship and significance at an annual llama festival and adorn them with jewelry and colorful costumes,” he said.

Even llamas are stereotyped, Martín quipped. They are often thought of as temperamental animals that spit. It is also thought by some that the llama cannot live in the flatlands, and there is a myth that their teeth will grow long and distorted if they eat anything other than the ichu grass of the highlands. And yet, they are living well in Michigan, eating hay supplemented by minerals. “Animals, like people, can adjust,” he said.



Martín will return to Ann Arbor and teach the LACS Quechua courses in the 2011/2012 academic year. He plans to include another field trip to the llama farm. “I plan to add a more rigorous teaching component to the trip, and perhaps emulate a typical Peruvian llama festival,” he said.

## Quechua Names

Martín’s Quechua name is **Willkamaru** (which means sacred snake, or knowledge that comes from underneath the earth). Martín created a class tradition to give each student a Quechua name. Nicholas Brant, pictured left, was named **Illapa** (lightening). He is wearing a hat typical of those worn by men in the Peruvian region.



“The llamas were adorable. We went for a walk with them. My llama did not walk, it ran. We fed the llamas treats and their noses tickled my hands. There were seven families of llamas, some from Perú, Chile, and Bolivia, 75 llamas in total.”

**Lena Cintrón**  
Quechua Name: **Urpi** (Andean Dove)

**In Quechua:** Sumaq llamakuna kanku. Llamakunawan purinchik. Llamay mana purinchu, pitarqan. Llamakuna mikunata mikunku. Achka llamakuna Perú, Bolivia, Chile mama llaqtakunamanta. Qanchis ayllukuna kanku. Qanchischunka pisqayuq llamakuna kasqaku.



“The field trip was a creative way to bring a piece of the Andes to our students,” said **Lenny Ureña**, Assistant Director of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (pictured above).



## About Quechua

Quechua, the language of the Inkas, is the most extensively spoken indigenous language in the Americas, and is spoken by millions of people throughout the Andes. It has a written literature that goes back to the sixteenth century.

The Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) established the Quechua Language program in 1997. It is one of the world’s only full-year, three level programs.

Three course levels are offered during the academic year at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and as an intensive summer course in Cusco, Peru.

### Courses:

*Beginning Quechua*  
(LACS 471/472)

*Intermediate Quechua*  
(LACS 473/474)  
Please Note: 474 meets the LS&A language requirement

*Advanced Quechua*  
(LACS 475/476)

**Fellowships:** Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships are offered on a competitive basis to study Quechua.

Special thanks to the Star Llama Company for their warm hospitality and taking time to give us an educational tour of their farm. Their expertise contributed to our knowledge of the Andean culture.

Photos by Lenny Ureña  
Article by Cheryl Israel