

Threads of Peru

Threads of Peru is a not-for-profit social enterprise that connects the world to handmade treasures of the Andes, helping to strengthen ancient craft techniques and empower artisans. We aim to:

Strengthen Cultural Traditions

The tradition of weaving stretches back through 5,000 years of history in Peru, from the coastal cities of Paracas and Nazca to the high Andean peaks of Cusco and Ayacucho. Even today, back-strap weaving is an incredibly important component of identity in the high Andes, as much as traditional alpaca herding and the native Quechua language.

Empower Indigenous Artisans

Threads of Peru works with weavers who are predominantly women. International development studies show that when women receive their own income, the health and well-being of their children improves at a much faster rate than when men have sole control of the family's income.

Connect Cultures

Threads of Peru aspires to be both an educational resource and sales platform for traditional textiles, educating the wider global community on the value and unique beauty of Quechua weaving. Our website, blog, and social media networks are collaboratively maintained by team-members who have all been deeply inspired by the Threads of Peru mission and seek to share that passion with the world.

2015 – A Year in Review

At Threads we're taking time to reflect on the past year and start thinking ahead to this year's goals and upcoming projects.



Lourdes working with the women of Chaullacochoa.

A Growing Family

In 2015, we welcomed two new team members: **Lourdes Hanco Chauca** and **Isabel Van Der Loos**. **Lourdes** hails from Lamay, a small community in the Sacred Valley. She grew up steeped in the local Quechua weaving tradition and is currently completing her Master's degree in Public Management and Business Development. With her combined weaving knowledge and administrative skills, she is a wonderful asset for Threads, not least of which because we are now able to conduct

more of our work in Quechua, the weavers' native language!

Isabel is originally from Holland and a long-time resident of Cusco, and has been helping Threads out part-time since early fall. In a very short time, she's become a master of inventory management and a huge help to the Cusco team.



Members of the Huaran weaving association after a dyes workshop

Threads' extended weaving family also grew! As our orders have increased over the years, we have been able to provide steady work to five communities as well as our Master Weaver family, up from just two in 2011. Last year, we began reaching out to **another three weaving associations** in two communities. One of them, familiar with our work in the region, took pains to contact us, tracking Dana down unexpectedly in the Ollantaytambo town square! If demand for Threads of Peru Quechua Collection products continues to increase, we hope to work full time with these new communities as well, bringing our

weaving family to **nine** groups in **eight** communities, and **149** weavers!

Developing New Skills

Threads has undertaken many development projects over the years, from providing the salary for an **elementary school teacher**, to building homestay rooms and teaching hosting skills to families interested in **community rural tourism**. Our primary focus, however, has always been weaving. Threads of Peru works with Master Weaver Daniel Sonqo to provide one-on-one training to the weavers in two communities to help them improve their weaving and develop new skills; last year, Daniel led four such workshops.

In November we saw the results of years of this training pay off in a **most exciting way**: three weavers took **top prizes** in a special weaving competition hosted by the Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco (CTTC) and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism! The CTTC invited Threads to participate in the local competition, and we facilitated a number of weavers' participation in the event. Two of the winners made a special visit to our office in order to share in their glory. Lucia commented that it was Threads' sustained efforts to improve quality and accuracy that gave her the skills to be able to compete successfully. Our hearts nearly melted to hear those words!



Here, Martina smiles as she holds up her enormous cheque!



In



addition, one of the new groups to begin working with Threads – a group of mostly women in their 20s and 30s – benefited from a workshop by Daniel to learn how to wash textiles – an integral skill that they had never been previously taught! They were really keen students, which was wonderful to watch.

The Huilloc weavers gather round and listen intently to Daniel Sonqo.

Even without direct tutelage from a Master like Daniel, we have noticed so many amazing improvements in the weavers' skills – not only weaving skills, but also organization, leadership, time management and team building – thanks to our commitment to quality and our constant communication, making two trips per month to each community during peak periods and the daily weaver visits we receive to our Cusco office!



Here, two women in Upis compare the quality of two of their group's weaving samples. In June, we discussed what made one sample higher quality than the other, with each woman sharing their thoughts on feel, evenness of the edges, and tightness of the we



Strengthening Community Ties

Although Threads of Peru's primary goal is to provide opportunities for the artisans in these Andean communities to earn income in a way that allows them to maintain their traditional lifestyle as well as reinvigorate the Quechua weaving tradition, our relationship with the communities is not purely a business one and we take the opportunity to give back to the communities.

Since 2010 Threads has been coordinating a monthly donation by Reach Out Children's Fund. Every two months, we take up over 180kg of quinoa, rice, lentils, flour and cooking oil, as well as boxes of powdered milk, tuna, and fruit to the community of Chaullaqocha to provide school lunches for the children.

In July, Rumira Sondormayo celebrated their 17th Anniversary! We were honoured to receive an invitation to the event, where we contributed prizes of rice and sugar for the weaving and spinning competitions that were part of the day's activities. Read more about this event here <http://threadsofperu.org/celebrating-17-years-andean-style/>



Every Christmas, Threads of Peru also teams up with Apus Peru Adventure Travel Specialists to celebrate the traditional Peruvian Christmas *chocolatada* in the communities. In addition to steaming cups of hot chocolate and treats, we give out gifts of clothing and toys to the children, including jackets, sweaters and winter hats. It's always a fun day full of laughter and Christmas spirit!

The Year Ahead

So what's on the horizon for Threads in 2016? We are certainly not slowing down! Now that Lourdes has more than six months under her belt getting to know the weavers, we are planning to increase our community engagement throughout the year.

Building on the research conducted in late 2014 by Monitoring and Evaluation intern Harrison Ackerman, Lourdes has already completed an assessment of each community's strengths and weaknesses, and the next step is to discuss what their priorities are in terms of skill development. We can then begin developing new targeted workshops to implement, ensuring that what we do is effective and meets the weavers' needs and desires as artisans and entrepreneurs!

More information at: threadsofperu.com