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Welcome

OUR MANDATE

Casa - Pueblito strives to educate Canadians on issues of international social justice and provide avenues for Canadians to work in solidarity with Nicaraguans. Casa - Pueblito facilitates opportunities for groups of Canadians, especially Canadian youth, to visit and learn about the realities of life in Nicaragua. To do this, Casa - Pueblito builds partnerships with Nicaraguan communities and supports their community development efforts.

Casa - Pueblito runs a center in Managua, Nicaragua that provides a basic dormitory, resource library, and group meeting space for visiting school groups. Casa - Pueblito’s programming is overseen by a Canadian Country Director whose work with local communities and leaders of Canadian groups makes the exposure experience possible.

Casa - Pueblito receives no government funding. We rely on our fundraising activities in Canada and on donations from individuals, foundations, community groups, unions and religious organizations.

WHAT IS CASA - PUEBLITO?

Casa Canadiense- Pueblito Canada (here forth known as Casa - Pueblito) is the amalgamation of two Canadian charities that support community development initiatives in Latin America and Canada. It is an organization and educational center with staff in Managua, Nicaragua and staff, a governing board and countless volunteers based in Toronto, Canada.

Pueblito Canada

Pueblito was started in 1974 when a group of passionate Canadians teamed up to contribute to a better life for children in Latin America. Led by Peter Taçon, the group founded a children’s village in Costa Rica, which served as an alternative model to government orphanages and offered street children the chance to grow up in a family environment. This first project was called Pueblito, the Spanish word for ‘little village’, and this became the name of the organization as it continued to grow. The Costa Rican government officially took over full responsibility of the village in 1989 and it still exists today. Pueblito spent the next 25 years supporting vibrant community initiatives in Latin America and gained experience in providing a wide variety of development projects for children. In 2014, Pueblito celebrated its 40th anniversary and embarked on an exciting new path with Casa Canadiense.
Casa Canadiense

Casa Canadiense was founded in 1992 by a group of Canadian educators who were inspired by their contact with the Nicaraguan people during the 1980s Sandinista Revolution. The founders purchased a house in Managua, Nicaragua in 1992 from the Scarborough Foreign Mission and from there their work began. Since its founding, Casa Canadiense has worked with communities and local organizations on projects ranging from building schools and wells, to providing dental care and undertaking collective art projects. Over the years, Casa Canadiense has advocated for Canadians to understand social justice and poverty issues, and to support social movements for justice in an ever-globalizing world. Today, united with Pueblito Canada, it continues to work towards a more just and equal world with the Nicaraguan people.

THE NEWLY AMALGAMATED CASA - PUEBLITO

Pueblito and Casa Canadiense have worked together on a variety of projects since the 1990s. From 2007-2010, Casa Canadiense and Pueblito have executed a Preschool Lunch Program, shared a staff person, and shared an office. We have considered ourselves sister organizations, sharing expertise and resources, and have supported each other's programming since 2006. In November 2014, after one year of discussion, negotiation and preparation, we officially amalgamated into one organization, Casa - Pueblito. This union has been an overwhelmingly positive decision for both organizations. Our projects reflect the shared values of Casa Canadiense and Pueblito Canada, and we look forward to improving educational opportunities for children and youth in Latin America as well as within Canada.

Casa - Pueblito continues to implement the work of the former Casa Canadiense in educating Canadians on global issues through the microcosm of Nicaragua. Delegations, mainly of high school or post-secondary students, take a trip to Nicaragua in order to experience life in one of our Nicaraguan partner communities. Through a Global Education delegation, students will better understand the hardships and joys of life in Nicaragua, the obstacles the country faces, and the people that are its future. Additionally, they explore topics such as wealth, poverty and inequality in a global and cross-cultural context.

Casa - Pueblito also supports grassroots community development projects that are devised and overseen by local community leaders and cooperatives. These projects most often have an educational focus. They can range from small infrastructure initiatives and professional development projects to seed banks for agricultural cooperatives. Thousands of Canadians are also involved in these efforts through various fundraising activities in Canada.

Our house in Nicaragua's capital city (Managua) is located in Residencial El Dorado, blocks away from the infamous Huembes market. The house is run by four staff, three Nicaraguan and one Canadian. It also serves as a reception spot for Canadian delegations, a community development center, and as a reference point in Managua for Nicaraguans and foreigners who dream of a better world.
HISTORY OF OUR OFFICES AT THE ‘CASA’ HOUSE IN NICARAGUA

The ‘spark’ of ‘Casa Canadiense’ emerged during Nicaragua’s Sandinista revolution in the 1980s. During this time, many Canadians were engaged in solidarity and support work, through organizations such as Canadian Action for Nicaragua and Tools for Peace. Some of Casa - Pueblito’s present supporters were solidarity activists during the revolution and their support for Nicaragua continues to this day.

Over the past 24 years, the “Casa” has hosted hundreds of groups interested in sharing with Nicaraguan communities, as well as film crews, dentists, musicians, journalists, individual volunteers and researchers. After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Casa played a key role in informing Canadians about actual conditions in the country and in fundraising and reconstruction efforts. In addition, Casa has financed many grassroots community development projects, primarily in the field of education.

PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy approaches grassroots community development work from a solidarity-based perspective rather than a charity-based one. This is because charity generally implies an inequitable relationship between a ‘giver’ and a ‘receiver’. The language around charity often includes terms such as give, help, save, fix and poor. These words add to the perceived roles of ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’, therefore furthering the gap between the people on either end of this relationship.

Solidarity, on the other hand, implies an equal relationship. While the groups that come to Nicaragua are indeed supporting the communities they visit via financial or material donations, there is recognition that there is equal value in the experience that the group is living through its time with families and communities. We choose to promote solidarity between Canadians and Nicaraguans, which implies a long-term commitment from Canadians to the people of Nicaragua and to the global community in general.

Casa - Pueblito is non-denominational and non-partisan.

For more information on Casa - Pueblito’s philosophy, please see Casa - Pueblito’s Values Statement (page 48).

THE CASA - PUEBLITO PROJECT FUND

Funds raised by delegations directly support the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. Annually, our fund holds roughly CAD $73 000 that is responsibly distributed between community development projects that are proposed, created and led by our community partners in Nicaragua. Each year, our community partners formulate and submit project proposals to Casa - Pueblito, and the projects selected for the year are funded by the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. Since our
organization places emphasis on solidarity, we ensure that these communities are the leaders in the project's formulation and management.

Our Global Education program is vital to the maintenance of the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. The funds that go to support our community partners are collected from the various Global Education delegations that pass through our doors each year. In order to take part in a Global Education delegation, groups are asked to contribute a CAD $ 6430 donation to our Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. The total amount of money contributed to the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund by our delegations is then divided equally amongst our community partners to fund their various development projects.

Through the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund, delegations are able to support multiple community projects with a broad range of focuses such as youth programs, construction projects, agricultural projects, and music and arts classes. Furthermore, the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund allows Casa - Pueblito to continuously work with our community partners and foster long-term relationships and bonds of solidarity.

Generally, delegations that visit Casa - Pueblito are matched with a partner community of ours whose project is being supported by the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. The delegation will stay with this community partner in Nicaragua, and volunteer with the project while getting to know the community.

We recognize that there are some cases in which groups that support (or donate to) your delegation may have their own charitable giving mandate that focusses on specific issues, such as food security, environmental sustainability, gender equity etc. In these situations, in order to support delegations that are acquiring funding from these support groups, we are more than happy to facilitate funding proposals that speak to those specific needs. It is crucial to work with the Casa - Pueblito team in these cases so that we are able to remain compliant with CRA best practices.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Board of Directors
The Board of Directors is based out of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Toronto Staff
Our Casa - Pueblito Toronto office consists of three part-time team members focused on building awareness and engaging supporters for our Community Development Projects in Nicaragua and our other initiatives. The Administrative and Donor Relations Assistant is the initial point of contact for inquiries, and maintains financial and contact records. The Communications and Events Coordinator supports the deployment of our awareness and engagement activities. The Director, Strategic Growth and Community Engagement works with staff and board members across the organization to develop plans and implement activities that strengthen our organization and build ongoing support. In addition, Casa -
Pueblito is a long-time client of our Bookkeeper in Toronto with valued, deep historical knowledge of our organization.

**Managua-Based Staff**

The Casa - Pueblito team has six staff members in Nicaragua: a full-time Country Director responsible for project coordination and oversight, coordination of Global Education delegations, and management of the Managua Casa; a part-time Project Assistant that works on project management, monitoring, and evaluation; a part-time Accountant that manages our financials and office administration; a part-time Housekeeper who is responsible for maintenance of the house; and two part-time security guards.

*Outside our Casa in Managua, Nicaragua. PWB.*
Why organize a trip to Nicaragua?

Nicaragua is among the poorest countries in the Americas. It is also sometimes recognized as the home of Latin America’s second socialist revolution- the Sandinista Revolution (1979-1990). Nicaragua’s history, economy, geography, ecology and more make it an effective microcosm through which the challenges and joys of people who live very differently from Canadians can be explored. With proper facilitation, youth and adults alike can deepen their understanding of global realities and thus become better global citizens.

There are many reasons to organize a trip to Nicaragua. These can include:

**EDUCATION:**

- View first-hand the impact of neo-liberal policies in impoverished countries.
- Meet with organizations and community leaders to understand Nicaraguan history and its current reality as a microcosm for geopolitics, globalization, and international human relations.
- Compare personal experiences with notions of ‘Third World’ poverty held from afar.

**SOLIDARITY:**

- Promote social justice and a sense of global awareness and responsibility.
- Work side-by-side with Nicaraguans from organized communities and contribute to sustainable community projects that will improve living conditions for local inhabitants.
- Build mindful relationships with community members by staying with host families.
- Build bridges between youth from very different contexts in today’s globalized world.
We challenge you and your group to embody solidarity and social justice in your learning experience. We ask you not to do charity work or to give something to the Nicaraguan people, but to visit in order to raise awareness about the often-hidden responsibilities we carry as inhabitants of the developed world.

![Local landscape of the village of Jiñocuao, taken after a visit to community leaders. PWB.](image-url)
How can Casa - Pueblito help you?

Since its inception, Casa - Pueblito has promoted and facilitated visits to Nicaragua for both Canadian groups and individuals. Most groups that Casa - Pueblito has facilitated have been school study or volunteer work delegations. It is important to clarify, however, that our efforts to promote and facilitate such visits in no way implies responsibility, either financial or legal, for these visits. This may be obvious in the case of individual visitors, but may not be so obvious in the case of groups.

Canadian delegation organizers should understand from the beginning that the legal and financial responsibility for their group’s visit rests solely with the Canadian group, School Board, or other agency involved- and not with Casa - Pueblito in Canada or Nicaragua.

LODGING

In Managua, the Casa - Pueblito has the capacity to lodge eleven persons on site and can locate up to fourteen more in nearby homes. For individual guests, lodging at the Casa costs $10 USD/night.
MEETING SPACES & LIBRARY

Groups staying at the Casa - Pueblito also have access to its outdoor and indoor meeting spaces and to a valuable documentation centre of print and visual media materials about Nicaragua.

GROUP FACILITATORS

Casa - Pueblito partners a delegation with a Group Facilitator. These facilitators are usually young, bilingual, and experienced with social justice organizations and education. Group facilitators (GF) arrange a suitable itinerary for the delegation and draw up an accurate group expenses budget. The GF takes care of logistical issues before and during your arrival in Nicaragua, such as organizing the group’s volunteer work, booking educational workshops and conferences, securing accommodations and meals during excursions or in the community, and many other tasks. Casa - Pueblito hires Group Facilitators on a yearly basis and matches these facilitators with visiting groups at the beginning of the school year. During the trip itself, the Group Facilitator accompanies the group in order to handle logistics and act as a translator.

Group Facilitators are hired and paid by Casa - Pueblito. While the Group Facilitators and the group leader(s) will be in direct communication, the Country Director will be kept up-to-date about the group by the Group Facilitator. The Country Director will assist the Group Facilitator in any logical tasks needed for the delegation. The Country Director may also assist in drawing up itineraries and budgets for group expenses or assure transportation and activities are booked and confirmed, although these are the primary responsibilities of the Group Facilitator. The Country Director will respond to the delegation leader’s inquiries on these subjects.

The following are comments from previous delegates about our group facilitators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He was so kind and easy-going. He helped out so much and I learned a lot.</th>
<th>So helpful with the language barrier, was there whenever we needed her. Always happy + positive</th>
<th>Always outgoing and positive, if unable to provide help or information, he would always find out. Super fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 2018 delegate</td>
<td>- 2018 delegate</td>
<td>- 2018 delegate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKSHOPS IN MANAGUA

Delegations will receive an introductory orientation about Nicaragua and Casa - Pueblito’s programming at the beginning of the trip. Educational workshops, guest speakers, group reflections, end of trip debriefings and post-trip action planning will be organized and facilitated by the Group Facilitator and the Country Director. Before arriving in the community, the Casa -
Pueblito team will brief the delegation on the community partner that they will be visiting and on what to expect in the host community. Furthermore, you will have the opportunity to meet with local organizations and knowledgeable individuals for in-depth discussions on current issues. The following is a list of some of the workshops and experiences that we offer:

**Workshops offered in Managua:**

- Alternative tour of Managua
- Roberto Huembes Popular Market exercise: visit the market and buy enough food to feed a family of six with the amount a typical family makes in a day. Activity is followed by a discussion on food security and the cost of living in Central America
- Misa Campesina (Campesino Mass) at Batahola Norte Cultural Center, a liberation theology church
- Visit Esperanza en Acción, an organization that supports fair trade artisans
- Visit Podcasts for Peace, an organization supported by Casa - Pueblito that serves residents of Acahualinca, a neighbourhood just outside of La Chureca dump site in Managua
- An overview of Nicaraguan history taught by a guest lecturer
- Meet with ANAIRC sugar cane workers who are protesting against the Pellas family (one of the richest families in Central America) for poor working conditions that have resulted in chronic kidney failure in former and current sugar cane workers
- Watch documentaries and films on Nicaragua such as “My Village, My Lobster”, “Managua”, “The World is Watching”, “The World Stopped Watching”, “La Yuma”, “El Hombre Nuevo”, “Dreaming Nicaragua”, and many more
- Final Reflections, Wrap-Up, and Re-entry into Canadian society workshop
- Action Planning for public engagement activities in Canada
This isn’t an exhaustive list. We are more than happy to design specific workshops for groups. Guest speakers are paid US$50 for a typical 2-3-hour workshop.

**CONNECTION WITH A COUNTERPART**

We connect your delegation with a counterpart where your group will stay for several days to learn about their work in the community. Casa - Pueblito will facilitate communication between the Canadian group and the local grassroots organization, and will act as an intermediary in the transfer of project funds. These funds are directed to our Casa - Pueblito Project Fund and are then transferred to the community. We will follow up on accounting for project funds with the chosen organization and will facilitate post-visit communication. For a complete breakdown of trip finances, see page 27.

Casa - Pueblito will visit the work project site that the Canadian group will be matched with before the arrival of the group in order to create an itinerary for the visiting group, a realistic delegation budget, and ensure safe working and living conditions. The Country Director will make at least one visit to the work site during the delegation’s stay in order to resolve any problems or questions that may arise, and also help the group assess their experiences. Casa - Pueblito will also follow up with the community counterpart to evaluate the delegation’s time in the community.

**A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THREE OF OUR 2018 COUNTERPARTS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community leaders of Jiñocuao/ Jiñocuao</th>
<th>Hogares Luceros del Amanecer/ Camoapa</th>
<th>Christine King Cooperative/ Estelí</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rural community of Jiñocuao has been our partner since 2012 when we worked together to build four classrooms for a new High School in the community. In 2017 we built 56 latrines and in 2018 we will build latrines for 44 families. These are provided to the most vulnerable families who, for lack of economic resources, have gone without sanitary service for years.</td>
<td>Hogar Luceros del Amanecer, founded in 2004, is our new community partner that provides students from low-income families with nutrition, social workers, tutoring, dance, music, computer coding and English classes. Together in 2018 we will improve the infrastructure and expand classes, bring students to important cultural sites in Nicaragua, and build skills in digital media, radio and television programming with workshops led by professional journalists.</td>
<td>In 2018 we are working with the Christine King Cooperative- a valued partner that provides programs for children and women from low socioeconomic backgrounds- to expand their programming to enroll another 30 low-income students into classes, provide classroom materials for the mature high school diploma program, and purchase necessary medical equipment for the women’s health clinic to provide better access to adequate reproductive healthcare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What to expect on your solidarity trip

TRIP DURATION

Most delegations from Canadian secondary school institutions visit on a 10-day to 2-week trip. Two-week trips have generally been more fulfilling for participants. University-level groups often come for three weeks to a month.

HOST FAMILIES

In the host community, students and teachers alike stay with host families. Host families have been carefully chosen by the local partner organization in coordination with Casa - Pueblito. Group participants will be hosted at minimum in pairs and will share two to three meals a day with their host family. While participants will most likely share a room, this room will provide them with basic privacy.

Host families are paid a fair price by the group for room and board at a rate pre-arranged by Casa - Pueblito. While the host families may be financially vulnerable, we ask that no participant give their family extra money or respond to a request for money from the family. Many times, donations or monetary gifts create tensions in the communities we visit. Please, we ask that no participants give their family extra money in order to avoid creating tensions within the community.

CLIMATE AND DRESS

While Nicaragua generally has a hot climate (30 degrees Celsius or more), long pants and closed toed shoes are the cultural norm, and there are certain areas and times of years where you and your students will need to cover up in the evenings due to lower temperatures (15 to 20 degrees Celsius) and/or mosquitos. The group may also need rain gear, including rubber boots. Please see page 23 for a more in-depth discussion of clothing.
BASIC ITINERARY

The first two and last two days are usually spent in Managua, where Casa - Pueblito's house is located. Time is mostly dedicated to learning about Nicaraguan social issues such as its history, environmental issues, climate change, labour rights, gender justice and more. The itinerary also includes a group orientation at the beginning of the trip and a final reflection at the end.

In between their time in Managua, the group travels to a host community where their work project is undertaken. The group spends the majority of their total time in Nicaragua in this host community. Host communities are often outside of Managua, either in a smaller city or in a rural setting. However, there are host community options in the capital city, if the group prefers. Generally, mornings are spent on the work site and afternoons are used for educational workshops, local outings to sites of interest, and activities with the host community.

If the group would like, a trip to the beach or to one of many volcanoes and nature reserves in the region can be scheduled for the end of the trip. Below is a sample itinerary from one of our previous delegations.
COMMUNITY WORK

When delegations come to visit Nicaragua and raise funds for the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund, participants will be able to volunteer with one of Casa - Pueblito’s community partners. For an infrastructure-building project, the group will likely be invited to take part in one phase of a construction process. Your group will not be there long enough to see the process completed but you will be able to assist with one part of it. Generally, in these situations Canadians risk slowing the construction process down, however, this work is intended to bring Canadians and Nicaraguans together in solidarity.

For a non-building project, such as the seed bank workshop series, the group’s days in the community could be spent planting or harvesting in the fields or working alongside teachers at a preschool.

In both cases, a typical day would be composed of some work, an educational workshop or fieldtrip, and a debriefing at the end of the day.

Casa - Pueblito provides monitoring and follow-up so that you can hear stories and see pictures of your project upon completion. (For a summary of select past community projects see page 14)

FOOD

You will be well fed with mainly local fare. Look forward to rice, beans, plantain, tortillas, tomatoes, cabbage, avocado and a variety of tropical fruits. Beef and chicken are also very common. There are some vegetarian options, which would usually consist of rice, beans, and vegetables. Common drinks are coffee, soft drinks and great fresh fruit juices.

TIME AND DELAYS

Generally speaking, time delays are more acceptable in Central America than they are in North America. With an effort by both the group and the host community, you will be able to make the most of your time in Nicaragua. The host community will expect you to comply with your itinerary, so please be punctual and advise your hosts of any changes where possible. At the same time, be flexible as there may be some minor, unavoidable delays or changes to the itinerary. We suggest that group members bring along cards, books, or a guitar just in case delays occur.

AN OPEN MIND

In your host community and on the work project, you will witness things being done differently and decisions being made that don’t necessarily make sense to you as a Canadian. All these occurrences will be perfectly logical from the Nicaraguan point of view. Remember that you are here to learn and that North American solutions may not always be the best solution. It is important to be respectful of leaders and workers from the community.
Responses we received from our 2018 delegations:

Absolutely breathtaking and heartbreaking at the same time. Such an amazing, powerful group of women and the strongest people I know. Everyone was so welcoming, kind, and fun, and I will never forget how loving they all are.

- Delegate on their stay with their host family

I’m not going to lie, before the trip I was so guilty of water waste. My showers usually last half an hour to 45 minutes. However, after this trip, seeing how my decisions affect actual people, and how those people shower with one bucket of water, I am going to change my ways and use less water.

- Delegate on how the trip affected their global perspective

I really liked how we actually got to live with families, because I know a lot of trips just stay in hotels, etc. It was nice how they let us contribute so much to their work projects even though we were not as fast or experienced as them.

- Delegate on their experience with community placement

Ramon was AMAZING! Funny, kind, compassionate! So helpful and I’m so glad he was here.

- Delegate on their Group Facilitator

Very funny, kind, enjoyable to be around, loves her job and the people

- Delegate on the Country Director
Before you go I: Personal Reflection

GETTING STARTED ON THIS EXPERIENCE

While each group leader has his or her ideas about what they want students to get out of this experience, it is always seen primarily as a learning experience. Following are some ideas of issues that you can have your students learn about and debate during the months leading up to the trip:

1. Start working on the group’s Spanish skills
2. Learn about Nicaraguan history, geography, culture, economy, the Sandinistas, Sandino, Carlos Fonseca, Daniel Ortega etc.
3. Learn about the concepts of social justice, global inequality, anti-oppression, solidarity, liberation theology, fair trade and responsible tourism
4. Deconstruct the idea of poverty and wealth. What is poverty? Is poverty simply about money and material possessions? What is wealth? What does poverty look like in Canada? How is this different or similar to poverty in countries such as Nicaragua? What do we think poverty in the “Third World” looks like? How has poverty been marketed to “pull on our heart strings”? Is this image true to reality? Is this marketing of poverty ethical?
5. What is “development”? What is the difference between development, charity and international relief work? How do you define what Canadian groups like your own do? How do different Canadian NGOs tackle development issues? Is all development helpful? What are the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals?
6. Discuss cross-cultural issues: cultural differences, cross-cultural communication, and tools for cross-cultural exchange
7. Discuss some safety issues such as what to do in the case of an earthquake and personal safety (always be accompanied by one other person, do not go out of your home at night, don’t have anything too expensive on your person.)
Before you go III: Things to keep in mind

CONVERSATION

One of the most important aspects of this trip is cross-cultural exchange through conversation with the locals. Good discussion topics include:

- Nicaragua
- Canadian experiences in the country
- Asking about their families
- Asking about them

Nicaraguans are known as particularly friendly people, however, when first meeting someone, avoid talking about politics as it is a sensitive and divisive subject. Humor is naturally something many cultures appreciate, and Nicaragua is not an exception.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Conversational
The amount of personal space that Nicaraguans prefer to keep is significantly less than what Canadians are used to; therefore, people may stand quite close to you when they are speaking. Eye contact is not as important in Nicaragua, so do not be offended if people do not look directly at you during conversation. In terms of speech, Nicaraguans can occasionally go on tangents when speaking, especially when expressing disagreement.

Physical
Nicaraguans generally have very pronounced body language and some gestures may cause confusion. For instance, people point with their mouths to indicate a person or object. Rubbing two index fingers together indicates that you want to pay for something. Canadians occasionally find that the aforementioned gestures have sexual connotations, but this is not the case at all.

Formal
When first addressing someone, it is best to speak to them in a formal manner and use the polite form of the word ‘you’(usted). It usually does not take that long to get comfortable with the other person and interact with them in a more familiar fashion. Nicaraguans generally call one another by their first names. To show respect, put the word ‘Don’ or ‘Doña’ in front of the person’s first name. For example, Don Francisco or Doña Isabel.
**Linguistic**

Do not assume that Nicaraguans are racist because of the way they express themselves and their sense of humour. For example, in Spanish the word ‘Negro’ refers to the colour black and is different from that same term in English. Characterization of a person based upon their bodily features is common in Latin America. Thus, in Nicaragua, someone who has slightly almond-shaped eyes may be called ‘Chinese’, and someone who appears Arab may be given the nickname ‘Turk’, as the first Arabs to visit Nicaragua sold Turkish carpets.

**In People’s Homes**

When entering someone’s home, say ‘con permiso’ to politely ask them for permission. If offered a seat, feel free to accept or refuse, neither response is considered impolite.

At dinner time, you will frequently be served at the table while the host family sits apart from you around the kitchen. This is often the case because there are not enough chairs or surfaces for everyone. Families create space for the guest to eat as a polite practice of hospitality. Don’t be afraid to find your way to where the family is to be more around them.

**FOOD SAFETY IN NICARAGUA**

For travellers that are in the country for a short time, it is recommended that they take some basic food safety precautions. We recommend that you don’t drink tap water and instead always drink filtered or purified water. We also recommend that you stay away from raw fruits and vegetables sold in markets and at traffic lights. We also caution against street food; eat it at your own risk!

The absolute best way to prevent the spread of illness is to prevent the spread of germs, so ensure that you wash your hands and stay hygienic.

We would also strongly encourage keeping hydrated, as Nicaragua’s sun can get very hot and it is easy to become dehydrated without realizing.

**RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES**

Please be aware that friendships between males and females may be mistakenly viewed as romantic relationships, which may cause discomfort amongst the delegation. Additionally, this perception may misrepresent the dynamics of the delegation and our organization in the community. Please keep this in mind as you interact with other young people in your host community and remember that this might affect how Nicaraguans perceive your friendships with other people in your group.

If you are romantically approached by someone who is making you feel uncomfortable, remember to respect your personal boundaries. You have every right to firmly say that you are not interested and physically leave the situation. You can also ask your peers, leaders or facilitators for assistance.
YOUR LEGACY IN THE COMMUNITY

It is important to remember that everything you do while in Nicaragua will reflect on you, your school and on Casa - Pueblito.

As you are getting ready to leave Nicaragua you may be asked by locals to leave behind personal items as souvenirs of our stay in your host community. This is what locals call ‘recuerdos’. You may be asked for personal items that the community members have seen you carry or wear on a regular basis, such as bracelets. You may want to leave things to the people you have made friends with. However, be aware that the whole community will soon know who received these items and who did not. Therefore, please try to be as discreet and as fair as possible.

You may also be asked for money. Please don’t give community members money and please notify your group leaders of these requests.

SUITABLE CLOTHING

In Nicaragua, semi-formal dress attire is highly regarded. Men ordinarily wear short-sleeved shirts, slacks and shoes. Similarly, women wear comfortable but formal clothes. When dressing, clothes should always be neat and clean. Shorts and flip-flops are considered informal in the pacific of Nicaragua and among the poor sectors of society.

Additional information:

- Even though the climate is hot, men and women do not typically wear shorts outside their homes.
- Men almost always wear closed toed shoes in public. Women sometimes wear fancier sandals. Flip-flops are considered very informal.
- It is not appropriate for men to take their shirts off in public.
- Furthermore, Nicaraguan women tend to dress conservatively, especially in the more rural areas. While some Nicaraguans may dress in clothes that expose parts of the body, it is highly recommended that foreign visitors not dress in this way, considering the nature of this trip.

We would ask all group participants to please select their travel wardrobe with care. Please choose pants and capris over shorts, walking shoes for daily wear over flip-flops and long skirts and dresses. Please also avoid shorts, skirts or dresses that do not reach the knees. Additionally, we ask you to be mindful of covering your chest and midriff.
# Recommended Packing List

## Clothing
- Underwear
- Socks
- Light pajamas
- Skirts and dresses (knee length or longer)
- Slightly formal wear
- Sandals (for at home)
- Sweaters or a light fleece
- Work pants and a work shirt
- Hiking shoes/work boots

## Gear
- Swimsuit
- Light sleeping bag
- Water bottle
- Work gloves
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Flashlight and batteries
- Light rain gear
- Flip flops for showering
- Mosquito net

## Toiletries
- Personal hygiene items
- Hairbrush
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Face cloth and towel
- Deodorant
- Soap/shampoo in bags
- Toilet paper/hand-wipes

## Other
- Camera
- Journal and pen
- Musical instrument
- Personal comfort object
- Stuff to keep you entertained during free-time
- Spanish-English resources

## What Not To Bring

Please do not bring any expensive jewelry, precious keepsakes, iPods, MP3s, laptops, hairdryers, hair straighteners/curlers, excessively packaged items, or any other item that is important to you and that you do not wish to lose.
GIFT GIVING

Gift-giving becomes a rather complex activity when we are giving cross-culturally. Assumptions can be made about people’s living standards and in turn can encourage us to give as much as we have in material wealth - which in Canada we have in abundance. However, gift-giving in the spirit of charity can often be hurtful and damage the long-lasting relationships you build during your visit. The following are some questions you can ask yourself and your group when you are considering what kinds of donations to bring with you:

- Has the request for this donation come from the community or is it something that I have seen and think they must need?
- How could this gift be perceived? (i.e. if I’m giving someone soap or toothpaste, will they interpret it as me thinking they are unclean or unhygienic?)
- Have I talked over my ideas with the Managua staff to see if there is a need for this kind of donation in the community we are going to visit?
- In what ways do our gifts show that we care about our host community?

When considering what it means to give gifts in the spirit of hospitality, you might find some of the following to be good items to share as a gesture of thanks towards your host family:
- Book of photos of Canada
- CD of Canadian music
- Bottle of maple syrup
- Maple leaf pin
- T-shirt with Canadian emblem

Also, it’s a great idea to bring personal photos of your friends and family to share with your local hosts if you feel comfortable. Photos are a great way to communicate beyond language barriers and family is something that Nicaraguans highly value.

Casa - Pueblito generally discourages gift-giving that goes over and above what is given in ‘the spirit of hospitality’. If you hope to bring down a large donation of any one particular thing, please consult first with the Casa - Pueblito staff to ensure that there is a need for it in the communities we work with.

Each group participant will want to bring some personal spending money, mostly for buying gifts from Nicaragua to take home. We do ask that you limit the amount of spending money that you bring, as this is an educational trip and therefore it is important to focus more on cultural exchange and interaction than souvenirs or gifts. Personal spending money should be brought in USD (Canadian dollars are not accepted in Nicaragua). We recommend no more than $150 USD per participant.

Please remember that with your presence and your donation to the community project, your group is already contributing greatly to the local community. While there is often incredible need
in the community you will visit, arriving in the community with bags and bags of material donations is not necessarily the best route to take. So much “stuff” can detract from building human relationships.

That said, there are great needs in the communities you will visit but your role will be to share in the joys and sorrows of the community and to learn as much as you can to bring home with you. We often say that the solidarity-learning journey really begins when you arrive back home with your stories to share with family and friends. Through you, people will be able to learn about what it means to be a global citizen and hopefully contribute to Casa - Pueblito’s long-term community development projects in the future!

WHAT IF YOU ARE ASKED TO GIVE?

If the situation arises in your community home stay that you are asked to give above and beyond what you have already given to the project, make sure to let people know that the way you are helping the community is by contributing to a community project in order to benefit all community members and not just one individual family.

Please do not give any direct donations of money to community members. Your home stay families are already well compensated for hosting and your group has already contributed greatly to the community by fundraising for the project you are a part of.

Please do not make any promises to fund any proposed projects in the community. Let people know that you are working with Casa - Pueblito and that they should present their proposal ideas to us. Communities are able to submit up to one proposal every year for funding.

Giving can be complicated, and can have impacts on relationships and communities that we may never have thought of. We encourage all groups to have open discussions about appropriate gift giving and feelings around how we can use our position of privilege in the most effective ways.

Local street vendors, Managua. PWB.
CHALLENGES

We have three challenges for you while you visit Nicaragua:

1. *Wash own clothes at least once.* Have your host mom or sisters teach you how. Laundry is done by hand by women in Nicaragua. The host families will offer to do your laundry. Try at least once to do it yourself to a) see how hard and time consuming it is; and b) demonstrate that men too are able to wash clothes.

2. *Interact with youths in the host community as a group.* It’s often the most difficult to try and relate to people your own age that come from a completely different context. We suggest that the group organize one or two youth-focused activities so that you can get to know your peers, their dreams and their perspective on the world.

3. *Recognize the privilege of being able to be on this trip.* It is a privilege to be in Nicaragua on this school trip. Most youth in the world cannot travel overseas for educational purposes. They would not get the travel visas and/or they would not be able to raise enough funds etc. Please be aware of how lucky you are to be here.

*A bean farmer whose family sells beans on the Atlantic coast to make a higher profit than in the city. This farmer and his family are involved in the Casa - Pueblito latrine program in Esteli. PWB.*
Before you go IV: Finances

HOW MUCH MONEY WILL THE GROUP NEED TO FUNDRAISE/SPEND?

The cost of a Casa - Pueblito solidarity trip is broken down into three components:

1. **A Project Fund donation** (to be fundraised by the delegation)
   Your delegation’s Project Fund donation goes towards our Casa - Pueblito Project Fund (see page 6). This fund relies on our Global Education solidarity trips, and is divided equally amongst our community partners to fund their various development projects. Therefore, this fundraised donation is considered your delegation’s contribution to the various community projects we support. These projects have a broad range of focuses such as youth programs, construction projects, agricultural projects, and music and arts classes.

2. **Per-person in-country costs**
   In-country costs are projected expenses that your delegation will encounter once in Nicaragua. This money is not handled or stored by Casa - Pueblito and is therefore the responsibility of the group leader/group members. There is a table displaying the breakdown of your in-country expenses on the following page. This fee covers things such as transportation and lodging in your host community,

3. **Per-person participant fee**
   The Participant Fee covers delegation-related expenses that ensure a successful global education experience for groups. This includes 4 nights of lodging in Managua, your group facilitator and the logistics and plan for your trip as pre-arranged by your group facilitator. This money should be sent to Casa - Pueblito before your journey.

The table below displays the amount associated with each component in CAD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Amount (CAD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casa Project Fund Donation</td>
<td>100% of this donation is put towards community development projects</td>
<td>$6430 for whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per-Person in-country costs</td>
<td>Projected amount of money you will spend in-country</td>
<td>$585/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per-Person participant fee</td>
<td>For housing in Managua, facilitation, etc. All prearranged by Casa-Pueblito</td>
<td>$400/person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below displays the projected in-country cost breakdown (in USD, as this is the only foreign currency accepted in Nicaragua):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Amount (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-country transportation</td>
<td>Buses between sites and during tours</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food in Managua</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Lodging in host community</td>
<td>$15/person/night (assuming stay at host community is 6 nights)</td>
<td>$1,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers &amp; workshops</td>
<td>$50/speaker, differs depending on how many speakers your delegation schedules</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport entrance fee</td>
<td>$10/person, payable upon entry into the country</td>
<td>$160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>Recommended reserve in case of emergency</td>
<td>$700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Water, snacks, toilet paper, cellphone, photocopies</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This graph projects group costs for a 14-person delegation. To find a per person total divide the group total by 14. Roughly and accounting for extra money in case of emergency, this projection estimates $440 USD/per person for in-country costs.*

**FUNDRAISING FOR THE CASA - PUEBLITO PROJECT FUND**

We ask groups to fundraise CAD $6430 (or more) for the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund. The money raised will go to supporting all of the Nicaraguan projects funded through Casa - Pueblito that year. You are then hosted by one of the communities funded through the Casa - Pueblito Projects Fund, but your fundraising is actually going to benefit not only your host community but also other Nicaraguan development projects. For a complete list of all of the projects supported, please contact the Casa - Pueblito staff at info@casapueblito.org

We are able to start projects whenever funds arrive, so please let us know when you are ready to send the project funds so we can get started with the communities on their projects before the group arrives. Ideally, if you are able to send donations for the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund roughly six weeks before the trip starts that gives us enough time to get working!

**FUNDRAISING IDEAS**

There are multiple ways to raise both funds and awareness about the relevant issues at the same time. Students are often very creative, resourceful and committed. We recommend creating fundraising events that don’t simply focus on the monetary cost of the trip but instead the
importance of the cultural exchange and solidarity that your group will be a part of. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

**Past successful fundraising ideas:**

- **24-hour famine**: Fast for 24 hours alongside your fellow delegation members. Ask individuals in your school, community or family to sponsor you, and at the end reflect with your group about the difficulty of irregular access to food and nutrition. During the famine, participants are encouraged to drink juice and water frequently in order to avoid feeling lethargic.

- **Wake-a-thon**: Wake-a-thons involve a group of students attempting to fundraise who stay awake all night, participating in various activities and challenges, and are sponsored for not going to sleep. You could organize this event at your school, somewhere of note on campus, or at a participant’s home.

- **Silent auctions**: You could find items in your community to donate or even contact the Casa - Pueblito staff to ask for potential items from Nicaragua and Central America to bid.

- **Coffee House/Talent Night**: Sell Central American coffee or sell tickets to a talent show/coffee house in which participants and other members of the community can perform for others. This event would demonstrate bringing together a Canadian community in order to support a Nicaraguan one, which is at the core of international solidarity.

- **Community raffles**: Source items from your community or ask Casa - Pueblito in order to sell them to whoever buys the correct raffle ticket.

- **Documentary film night**: Find a film about Central America and perhaps the current struggles they face that we in Canada to not. Sell tickets for this film and promote it within the community in order to raise awareness as well as funds.

If you have any additional questions about fundraising or would like more suggestions, feel free to contact us at info@casapueblito.org!
Many groups take to selling things. Often you can do this in coordination with other organizations, such as Cafe Etico in Vancouver. Cafe Etico has organic, Nicaraguan coffee that groups can buy for fundraising purposes. Chocosol is an amazing fair trade chocolate and coffee business in the Toronto area.

Other groups – such as Champlain College – have had success selling awareness raising items. One year, they sold neon orange shoelaces – and it really took off! Once you have been to Nicaragua once, you can capitalize on crafts you bring back such as hammocks, ceramics, t-shirts etc. and use them for the next round of fundraising.

Many of our groups have had success with food-related benefits, beyond the often-used bake sale. Special banquet dinners with a fixed ticket price are generally a great success – the menu can be gallo pinto (Nicaraguan rice and beans), spaghetti, whatever your group feels up to making.

Shows and expositions are another fundraising idea. Try an international talent show or a photo gallery/art exhibition.

Finally, don’t forget that local businesses and community organizations also have funds that they can donate to your group’s endeavor. Try Rotary Clubs, the Lions Club, and local churches as well as the local teachers’ union and unions that parents and friends might belong to.

Podcasts for Peace interior. PWB.
After your trip
(welcome back!)

An overseas service-learning trip has the potential to have a profound effect on all participants. It is very important to keep in mind that participants may suddenly see their home community and their home country in a different light after this trip. Furthermore, once a group has had the privilege to travel to Nicaragua, it has acquired the responsibility to educate other Canadians about the issues they learned about on the trip. Therefore, there are many things to do and to consider once the group returns to Canada.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AT HOME

It is a privilege to be able to travel to another country. For example, few Nicaraguans are able to travel to Canada. Having taken this trip implies an ethical responsibility to share what you have observed and learned with other Canadians. Furthermore, many people in Canada helped your group get to Nicaragua. They will want to know what you did and how it went.

REMEMBERING NICARAGUA

The group will leave Nicaragua with very strong feelings towards the people they met on the trip. While we don’t expect those feelings to last forever and while we recognize that communication with these people will be difficult, there are many ways that the group can honor their new Nicaraguan friends.

For example, photos are very important for Nicaraguans. The host families and the host community in general will be delighted by seeing photos of your time spent together. Upon return to Canada it would be a very kind gesture to collect photos for the host community. Casa - Pueblito in Managua is open to delivering mail designated for host families when we visit our community partners. Furthermore, more and more Nicaraguans are using digital means of communication. Likely at least one person in your host family or host community will have access to email or Facebook. We recommend this as a way to stay connected with your host community.

Sometimes a community member will ask delegation participants directly for funds either during the trip or after. Casa - Pueblito works hard with each of our counterparts to identify projects that are the priority of the whole community and will benefit the greatest number of people. They then submit these projects to the Casa - Pueblito Project Fund to be funded by groups like yours. If someone from your host community writes to you to ask for funds, please contact Casa - Pueblito. We would be happy to work with you to support a project identified by the community as their
priority. However, we would rather you not fund the communities directly because it doesn’t honor the fair processes that communities go through in order to put their respective projects together.

One of the best ways you can remember your host community is to tell stories about your time living and working together. Try to tell stories not just about the poverty and challenges you saw, but also about the strengths of the community and what we as Canadians can learn from these communities in terms of attitude and solutions to global issues.

*Students performing a traditional Nicaraguan dance at an arts school and Community Centre in San Ramón. PWB.*
Solidarity trips: Conclusion

It can be easy to get swept up in the fundraising, packing lists, and logistical details of a trip. We hope that this guide, along with discussions with the Casa - Pueblito coordinators, can ease this process along, and allow your group to prepare for a transformational experience.

Maybe this is your first time travelling to Latin America or maybe you have been coming to Nicaragua since the brigades of the 1980s. Either way, if you bring a spirit of fascination and passion, you will inspire your whole group. This could mean reading news articles about Nicaragua, or starting a journal to reflect on your own expectations and assumptions in the lead up to the trip.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at info@casapueblito.org. We would also appreciate any feedback and suggestions on how to improve this guide for future editions.

In peace & solidarity,

Casa - Pueblito

Students at an art school and Community Centre in San Ramón. PWB.
A Contextual Guide to Nicaragua

INTRODUCTION

We believe that before venturing out to visit a country, it is important to have a basic level of knowledge about that country. And so, in the name of solidarity and cultural exchange, we have created a Contextual Guide to Nicaragua that will provide you with information about the country’s history, climate, political context, culture, etc. This guide isn’t exhaustive, and therefore we would advise individuals seeking more information to watch documentaries, read articles and perhaps speak to individuals they may know of Nicaraguan descent. We have some resources listed on page 46.
Nicaragua is the largest nation in the Central American Republics. It is flanked by Honduras to the North, Costa Rica to the South, the Caribbean Sea to the East and the Pacific Ocean to the West.

Eastern Nicaragua is compiled of coastlines and planes that are generally flat and level. The Western half of the country is much more rugged, with mountains, volcanoes and valleys outlining the coast. Also to the West is Lake Nicaragua, the largest lake in Central America, which houses multiple small islands and volcanic formations. The nation’s capital, Managua, has a freshwater lake nearby as well, self-titled Lake Managua.

The city of Managua is Nicaragua’s largest, and houses roughly one-sixth of its population.

Nicaragua has a predominantly tropical climate, and its weather typically alternates between dry and rainy. In the central region, the rainy season lasts from May to October. The dry season then occurs from November to April.

The weather is generally more temperate in December. Nicaragua’s warmest months are March, April and May, otherwise known as the ‘sea season’.
As of 2017, Nicaragua has a population of roughly 6 million people. As a former Spanish colony, many of the nation’s inhabitants descended from that era. Nicaragua’s most prominent ethnic group are called Mestizos. Mestizos comprise around 63.1% of the population and have Spanish and Central American Indigenous descent.

Nicaragua’s second-largest ethnic group consists of whites of European descent, and this takes up roughly 14% of the population. The third largest ethnic group is made up of black Nicaraguans, and these individuals make up 8% of the population.

Indigenous presence is very prominent in Nicaragua, and the nation’s indigenous peoples are split into groups across the east-coast and west-coast regions.

Nicaragua’s first large literary creation was a comedy-dance titled ‘El Güegüense’ or ‘Macho Ratón’, which was first published in Carazo in the 17th century and written in Nahuatl and Castilian. The play is from an anonymous author and portrays Nicaragua during colonial times. In the play, the Güegüense uses his astuteness to trick the ‘authorities’ of the play, who represent the Spanish conquerors. This theatrical play was recently named one of the ‘Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ by UNESCO, because it represents indigenous resistance towards the authoritarian cultural imposition of the Spanish conquerors.

The global opinion on Nicaraguan literature is heavily influenced by poet Ruben Darío (1867-1919), known in Hispanic culture as one of the creators of Modernism. Nicaragua is a nation of many poets and narrators. Nowadays, modern authors known internationally include Ernesto Cardenal, Gioconda Belli and Sergio Ramírez.
Religion

Officially, Nicaragua does not have a state religion. Despite this, roughly 3/5 of the country are of Roman Catholic faith, both due to the influence of Christianity in Central and Latin America as well as the legacy of Spanish settlers during Nicaragua’s colonial period.

Catholicism has deep roots in Nicaragua, however as the 1980s approached, as did the influence of Evangelical Protestantism, especially among the poorer sectors of society. Today, Evangelical protestants comprise around 1/5 of Nicaraguans.

Nicaragua houses other religions and atheists as any nation does, however the majority of the country worships one of the two aforementioned sects of Christianity. It also houses a small Jewish population concentrated mainly in larger cities.

Economy

Nicaragua is one of Latin America’s poorest countries, with a high unemployment rate and mounting external debt. The majority of its foreign income comes in remittances, which are from individuals who send money back to Nicaragua from abroad to support their families.

In the 80s and 90s, Nicaragua faced severe inflation and subsequently adopted austerity policies due to pressure from the US and greater international community. These austerity measures somewhat stabilized the Nicaraguan economy but at a severe cost to the most impoverished individuals in the country, who were forced to subsist without welfare and social services. This past economic instability continues to impact Nicaraguans and their financial prospects today.

Roughly one third of the labour force works in agriculture, primarily fishing, mining or farming. Nicaragua’s currency is the called the Córdoba.
Nicaraguan culture reflects the religious and ancestral differences between its eastern and western peoples. In the West, Nicaragua is culturally similar to other parts of Central America that speak Spanish. For example, the region is strongly influenced by folk tradition, noticeable in its art, music, dance, festivities etc. Meanwhile, Eastern-Nicaragua is more connected to Afro-Caribbean expression. This is because the east was colonized by the British, and their presence left a legacy in the region. Therefore, the east produces fairly different cultural artefacts that are similar to those produced by other former British colonies. For instance, eastern music is influenced by dance melodies. One popular example is called ‘Palo de Mayo’, or Maypole, which is celebrated during the Maypole Festival in the month of May. This festivity is derived from the British Maypole or May Day celebration, but adapted for Afro-Caribbean culture.

In the last 15 years or so, Nicaragua’s Tourism industry has experienced an economic boom, positively affecting public life and the economy. According to the Ministry of Tourism of Nicaragua, the colonial city of Granada is the most popular tourist destination. Additionally, the cities of León, Masaya, Rivas and the likes of San Juan del Sur, San Juan River, and others are main tourist attractions. The emergence of ecotourism has also attracted many tourists to the region. While the tourism sector has contributed to economic growth, critics have noted that it has also led to social milieus that create tension in local Nicaraguan communities. For example, rising housing prices in areas such as Granada and San Juan Del Sur has led to gentrification in regions that are now owned and managed almost exclusively by foreigners. Furthermore, income inequality and stratification have increased dramatically as foreigners buy properties and live beside villages where residents face severe economic hardships. This sharp financial contrast often causes tension and resentment towards foreign visitors that choose to move there.
The official language of Nicaragua is Spanish. Nine other main languages are/were spoken in Nicaragua. Currently 7 of these are considered living languages whilst 3 of them are extinct. Below is a list of these languages along with some details about them:

- **Spanish**: Also known as Castellano. Spanish spoken in Nicaragua is a different dialect to that spoken in Spain. Despite this, anyone that can speak it will be able to communicate in Nicaragua.
- **Garifuna**: Also known as Caribe, Black Carib or Central American Carib is a Caribbean language. Garifuna's vocabulary is broken into terms used exclusively by men and terms used exclusively by women, but not in all cases.
- **Miskito**: Is also referred to as Mosquito, dialect used mostly by the Miskito Indians.
- **Nicaragua Creole English**: Most people who speak this language will also speak Spanish and English. Creole languages are those which have developed from combining two or more different languages.
- **Rama**: This language is said to be going extinct. Speakers of Rama also tend to speak another language.

Nicaraguan music and dance is a product of national heritage and the blend of different cultures within the country; from indigenous tribes and European conquerors to African slaves. Its music and dance were born in different regions of the country. Although each region has its own traditions, all Nicaraguans consider themselves to share one cultural identity. This is why dances from the Caribbean Coast (which have a lot of African influence) are performed in the Pacific, and northern dances are just as well performed in the south.
Nicaragua takes its name from Nicarao, chief of the indigenous tribe that lived around present-day Lake Nicaragua during the late 1400s and early 1500s. In 1524, Hernandez de Cordoba founded the first permanent Spanish settlements in the region, including two of Nicaragua's principal towns: Granada on Lake Nicaragua, and Leon east of Lake Managua. Nicaragua gained independence from Spain in 1821, briefly becoming a part of the Mexican Empire and then a member of a federation of independent Central American provinces. In 1838, Nicaragua officially became an independent republic.

Much of Nicaragua's politics since independence have been characterized by the rivalry between the Liberal elite of Leon and the Conservative elite of Granada, which often led to civil war. Initially invited by the Liberals in 1855 to join their struggle against the Conservatives, an American named William Walker seized the presidency in 1856. The Liberals and Conservatives united to drive him out of office in 1857. Three decades of Conservative rule followed. Taking advantage of divisions within the Conservative ranks, Jose Santos Zelaya led a Liberal revolt that brought him to power in 1893. Zelaya ended a longstanding dispute with Britain over the Atlantic Coast in 1894, and reincorporated the coastal region into Nicaragua.

The United States intervened in Nicaraguan politics by applying economic pressure and sending armed forces (such as the U.S. Marines, who remained in the country from 1912 to 1933) into the country. Following this Marine occupation, the United States backed a military dictatorship headed by General Anastasio Somoza who, after three decades of rule, was succeeded by his two sons. From 1936 to 1979 the Somoza “dynasty” ran the country as a personal fiefdom in conjunction with several wealthy landowning families whose estates were worked by an increasingly poverty-stricken peasant class.

Discontent with the widespread corruption of the Somoza regime and its brutal tactics against all political opposition within Nicaragua led to the creation of a Marxist-oriented political and military movement known as the Frente Sandinista para la Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, or FSLN) in 1961. The “Final Offensive” against the Somoza regime began in 1978, allowing the Sandinistas to seize power the following year and established a five-member junta which ruled until, in 1984, they became the dominant party in a freely elected national assembly. The Sandinistas adopted an economic model that mixed state and private ownership in agricultural and industrial enterprises while nationalizing banking and monopolizing government control over foreign trade. The confiscation of properties owned by the Somoza family and its associates, which included a fifth of the country’s arable land, facilitated an agrarian reform that benefited 60 percent of rural families.
Friendly relations established by the Sandinista government with the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist countries angered the United States, which in 1981 cut off aid to Nicaragua, blocked loans from international financial institutions, and eventually imposed a trade embargo. The United States also helped to train and fund a rural mercenary army known as the contras, who launched a war against the Sandinista government. This led to nearly a decade of civil war during the 1980s and resulted in the death of about 30,000 people, the emigration of more than one-fifth of the population, and the internal displacement of a quarter of a million Nicaraguans. The entire population ultimately suffered because of a decrease in social spending, and shortages of food and other necessities.

Nicaragua’s fragile peace, inaugurated in 1990 by the electoral victory of the U.S.-backed Unidad Nacional Opositora (United National Opposition, or UNO) was marred by resurgent contra violence that was not fully extinguished until 1994. The Sandinistas remained an oppositional political force but were weakened by internal conflicts.

Former Managua mayor and Conservative candidate Arnoldo Alemán then won the 1996 election. Former Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega was his closest electoral rival.

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed more than 9,000 people, left 2 million homeless, and caused $10 billion in damages. Many people fled to the U.S., which offered Nicaraguans an immigration amnesty program until July 1999. Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

In the Nov. 2001 presidential elections, Enrique Bolaños, the ruling Liberal Party leader, defeated Ortega, who was attempting a comeback.

In Aug. 2002, former president Arnoldo Alemán was charged with fraud and embezzlement, and in 2003 he was sent to prison for 20 years. Subsequent President, Bolaños triumphantly called it the “frying of the Big Fish.” The anticorruption watchdog, Transparency International, ranks Alemán among the most corrupt leaders of the past two decades.

The country received an enormous show of support from the international community in 2004 when the IMF and World Bank forgave $4.5 billion of Nicaragua's debt. In April 2006, a free-trade agreement with the U.S. (CAFTA) went into effect.

Former Sandinista president Daniel Ortega won the November 2006 presidential election with 38% of the vote and took office in Jan. 2007. His term as president thus far has been incredibly controversial.
Ortega has received harsh criticism from right-wing politicians in Nicaragua, primarily to do with his ongoing expenditure of public money on FSLN propaganda, the amount of power his wife seems to yield in the decision-making process, and several constitutionally questionable political decisions. The mayoral elections of 2009 were said to be rigged, a claim supported by a number of international governments and that resulted in the U.S. withdrawing significant human development funding from the country. The aforementioned propaganda can still be seen at the major intersections in Managua, where massive signs display Ortega’s headshot against the backdrop of the fluorescent pink, chosen as a party color by his wife. Ortega modified the constitution to allow himself to run for president in more consecutive terms, a decision that many have deemed illegal and in violation of the constitution itself. He has also been heavily criticized by the left-wing for having passed an anti-abortion law that does not even allow for therapeutic abortion, which are abortions that occur when deemed necessary for the health of a woman.

All of the above being said, the Ortega government has made progress in a number of areas over the past four years. They injected a considerable amount of money into public education, making it truly public for the first time since the 1980s. They also executed a number of programs for campesinos, purchasing chickens and livestock for families to contribute to their self-sustainability. Most Nicaraguans will also tell you that, while still dismal, Nicaraguan healthcare has improved some since the FSLN took power again in 2006.

Daniel Ortega won a third presidency in 2011, election results that have been riddled in controversy, since the constitution of Nicaragua states that a president can only be in office for two periods. Daniel Ortega had been president of Nicaragua from 1985 to 1990, and a second time from 2006 to 2011, which should technically disqualify him. However, the Supreme Court ruled that Daniel Ortega would be able to run for a third election, which worries critics as it may open doors for a president to remain president for life with indefinite re-election. International observer missions of the Organization of America States, the Episcopal Conference, the European Union and the United States concluded that elections failed to be transparent. Daniel Ortega won this election with 62% of the vote.

In Daniel Ortega’s government, Nicaragua’s economy has been diversified with Free Trade Zones, mining concessions, natural resource extraction, tourism, and foreign investment. Around this time, Nicaragua was being praised for its social stability and a lack of gang violence, in contrast with neighboring El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. However, critics have accused the government for lacking transparency and repressing and stifling of opposition movements.
In the lead-up to the 2016 elections, Nicaragua was hit with a drastic three-year drought that impacted campesino farmers throughout the nation, especially the Northern and Pacific areas. Furthermore, since 2013, the government of Nicaragua has been in negotiations with the Chinese enterprise HKND to create a Nicaraguan Inter-oceanic canal that would rival the Panama Canal. This development project has received much opposition, with mass movements being formed in communities around Lake Nicaragua and the planned construction site to stop the canal. There had been over 40 anti-canal marches in country as of 2016.

By 2016, Ortega’s popularity had slightly risen due to the impact of his social security programs. Despite this, there was also discontent with his seemingly increasingly authoritarian rule, lack of transparency and control over multiple governmental institutions. Ortega was ultimately reelected in 2016 with 72 percent of the vote, and his wife Rosario Murillo was elected vice-president; although this result has been disputed by government sources who cite the fact that abstention rates in the 2016 election were unusually high.

In April 2018, the Ortega administration began to face mass protests in response to a social security measure that reduced workers benefits and increased contributions by employers. These protests were met by violent police repression, causing the deaths of student protestors and initiating a country-wide movement calling for an end to government repression. As these protests continued they morphed into demands for Ortega and Murillo to step down.

Daniel Ortega rescinded the original policy that sparked these protests, however they have continued to escalate and demand the removal of Ortega and Murillo from power. In response, police have attempted to suppress citizen uprising and as a result furthered Nicaragua’s socio-political turmoil. As of June 2018 the death toll is estimated to be close to 300 people.
Spanish to English Phrasebook

- **Buenos días** / Good morning
- **Buenas tardes** / Good afternoon
- **Buenas noches** / Goodnight
- **Como estas?** / How are you
  - Estoy bien / I am good
- **Pase adelante** / Come inside
- **Tienes hambre?** / Are you hungry?
  - Tengo hambre / I am hungry
- **Tengo sed** / I am thirsty
- **Donde esta el baño?** / Where’s the bathroom?
- **Con permiso** / excuse me (greeting when entering someone’s house)
- “**Buenaaas**” / greeting to see if someone is home
- **Mucho gusto** / Nice to meet you
- **Ya llego** / I’ll be right there
• Un momento / One moment
• Por favor / Please
• Gracias / Thank you
• Me regala un poquito de agua? / Can I have some water please?
• Que me le vaya bien / Travel safe/take care
• Que paso? / What happened?
• Mi nombre es _____ / My name is _____
• Soy de _____ / I am from _____
• Tengo _____ años / I am ___ years old
• Tengo hermanos/hermanas / I have brothers/sisters
• Me voy a dilatar un poco / I’m going to be a little late

These words are more slang/popular, and should be used with people in your age group – elders should always be addressed more formally

• Tuanis – cool
• Que onda (prix/mae)? – How’s it going?
• Que tal? – What’s up?
• Entonces? – Hey! (general greeting)
• Deacachimba – Cool
• Ideay pues – What happened?
• Dale pues – Okay
Resources about Nicaragua

ENGLISH READINGS:
- Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements, James DeFronzo
  This book charts major revolutionary movements in history and analytically examines each.
- Revolution and Intervention in Central America, Marlene Dixon
- The Paradox of Democracy in Latin America: Ten Country Studies of Division and Resilience, Katherine Isbester
- A Magazine of Marxist Politics and Theory. The Rise and Fall of the Nicaraguan Revolution, New International
- Nicaragua in Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture, Hazel Plunkett
- Until the Rulers Obey: Voices from Latin American Social Movements, Clifton Ross
- Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino, Thomas Walker
- Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution, Matilde Zimmermann

ENGLISH VIDEOS:
- Cover Up, 1988, USA, David Kasper and Barbara Trent
- No Pasaran, 1984, Australia, David Brandbury
- The World is Watching, 1988, Canada, Peter Raymont/White Pine Productions
- The World Stopped Watching, 2003, Canada, Peter Raymont/White Pine Productions

ENGLISH ONLINE RESOURCES:
- Envio Magazine: www.envio.org.ni
- Zmag: www.zmag.org
- Resource Centre of the Americas: www.americas.org
- Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CERLAC), York University: www.yorku.ca/cerlac
FRENCH ONLINE RESOURCES
- Solidarite, Union, Cooperacion (SUCO): www.suco.org

SPANISH READINGS
- Entre el estado conquistador y el estado nación: providencialismo, pensamiento político y estructuras de poder en el desarrollo histórico de Nicaragua, Andres Perez-Baltonano

SPANISH VIDEOS
- Vos que sos mi hermana, 1999 (Spain), Director: Yolanda Olmos Ruiz, Producer: Entrepueblos (Spain)
- No todos los sueños han sido sonados, 1994 (Canada), Producer: SUCO (Montreal), SPA w ENG subtitles
- Los Amantes de San Fernando, 2001 (Nicaragua-Sweden), Director: Peter Torbiörnsson, SPA

SPANISH ONLINE RESOURCES
- Revista Envío: www.envio.org.ni

NICARAGUA INSTITUTIONS/ENTITIES
- Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica: www.ihnca.edu.ni
- CIPRES: www.cipres.org.ni
- Puntos de Encuentro: www.puntos.org.ni/default.php
- El Nuevo Diario: www.elnuevodiario.com.ni
- La Prensa” http://www.laprensa.com.ni
At Casa - Pueblito our understanding of solidarity is constantly being re-evaluated as our organization grows and changes over time. Our philosophy is rooted in the values of our founders, who became involved in the Nicaraguan solidarity movement in the late 1980s. They began to engage with the processes of social change taking place in Nicaragua at that time and supported the movement toward greater equality and justice in which the majority of Nicaraguans participated. As time passed, our involvement with our Nicaraguan friends has focused increasingly on community-based grassroots, social movements that have asserted an important place in Nicaraguan society since the 1980s.

Our understanding of solidarity is the driving force behind our community development projects and the Nicaraguan experiences that we facilitate. We are dedicated to a vision of solidarity that is not based on charity. We believe that one-sided donations of resources, monetary or otherwise, are meaningless because they do not challenge unequal power relations or contribute to building meaningful relationships.

At Casa - Pueblito, we have collectively chosen to define solidarity as: A reciprocal relationship in which people work together to challenge oppression through mutual respect and valuing of each other’s contributions towards common goals. While solidarity has a variety of meanings and connotations, we feel that it is important that our partners and friends know how we understand the concept, as expressed through the following values:

**Value 1: Equitable and Meaningful Relationships**
We believe that the construction of equitable and meaningful relationships between individuals and communities is the foundation from which we can work toward a more just and sustainable world.

**Value 2: Social Justice**
We believe that social inequality and material poverty are rooted in unequal and unjust global power relationships. This situation cannot be resolved through material charity but rather through seeking to understand this reality, and working together locally and globally to make changes in the global power structures that affect us all.

**Value 3: Education of Self**
We believe that education is a life-long voyage. We believe that we can learn profound lessons from people of different cultures, different historical experiences and different present realities. We believe that it is very instructive to attempt to understand the world from the standpoint of someone else’s cultural norms and worldview.

**Value 4: Education of our Peers and Community**
We believe that everyone benefits from a more equitable world and that the privilege of education and travel comes with the responsibility to engage with the people around us to inform our communities and take action together to address local and global issues.
Disaster Preparedness and Response Policies

The following policy has been developed to facilitate disaster preparedness and response at Casa - Pueblito’s Centre in Managua, Nicaragua, so as to contribute to the health and safety of Casa - Pueblito’s Canadian overseas employees and/or any other Canadians or international visitors to Nicaragua visiting under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming should such an event occur. This policy applies to both natural and man-made disasters.

1. Introduction

First and foremost, Casa - Pueblito Canadiense – Pueblito Canada Community Development Centre (heretofore “Casa - Pueblito”) recognizes that preparation is the most important aspect of disaster response. Casa - Pueblito will therefore seek to contribute to the health and safety of its Canadian overseas staff and any other Canadians or international visitors to Nicaragua visiting under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming, in the event of a disaster, by focusing on disaster preparedness.

Second, given Casa - Pueblito’s modest size, capacity and nature, in the event of a disaster, Casa - Pueblito’s primary role will be to facilitate communication and provide all available information to help manage the situations. All individuals associated with Casa - Pueblito and its programming will need to have their own insurance to cover the costs associated with emergency repatriation.

Third, should Canadians or international visitors to Nicaragua visiting under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming be caught in a disaster, Casa - Pueblito will rely on Canadian teachers accompanying the students (heretofore “teachers”) to respond to the situation as prescribed by the disaster or emergency response policies, practices and expectations of their sponsoring organization (e.g. school and school board policy) for such events.

Fourth, Casa - Pueblito recognizes the important role of the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Canada’s consular services in responding to issues of the safety of Canadians abroad. In the case of the disruption of normal commercial means of travel, Canadians must turn to GAC.

2. Disaster preparedness protocols

2.1. Disaster preparedness kits

Casa - Pueblito’s Centre in Managua will have two disaster preparedness kits that will be stored in two separate locations in the Centre. The contents of these kits will be based on the recommendations for such kits published by the Canadian Red Cross.

The Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) will review the kits on an annual basis to ensure the integrity of
the contents and renew/replace items as needed.

2.2. Visitor orientation

Everyone planning to visit Nicaragua under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming will be provided with basic disaster preparedness information in advance of their departure. This information will cover basic recommendations for staying safe during and after a disaster (specifically earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes) as provided by the Canadian Red Cross and suggest additional resources for further information. This information will be included in the pre-departure information provided by Casa - Pueblito to groups.

Upon arrival, Casa - Pueblito will brief groups on disaster preparedness and response, as part of the general orientation provided to group participants and teachers. In addition, visitors to the Centre in Managua will be advised of the wall posters (see 2.2) and be asked to review the information.

2.3. Registration with Canadian Authorities

Casa - Pueblito recommends that everyone visiting Nicaragua under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming register with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) through GAC’s Registration of Canadians Abroad (ROCA), in advance of their departure. This recommendation will be included in the pre-departure information provided by Casa - Pueblito to groups.

2.4. Emergency contact information

Teachers traveling to Nicaragua will be requested to provide the Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) and the Office Administrator in Toronto with a list of group participants and their passport numbers, plus contact information for at least one emergency contact person in Canada (preferably a school or school board official). In accordance with Casa - Pueblito’s privacy policy, this information will be retained only for the duration of the trip. In the event of a disaster, this information may be shared with the Board of Directors, GAC or another government agency and/or the Canadian Red Cross, as the Board of Directors determines is appropriate for the purpose of assisting group participants.

2.5. Alternate communication routines

Should the disaster have severed normal means of communication (i.e. telephone and internet), Casa - Pueblito will seek to communicate via the Consular Services provided by the Canadian government.

The information regarding local emergency services provided by the Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s)
to teachers will include the number for the Canadian Embassy in Managua, and instructions to report to the Embassy should the magnitude of the disaster have severed all other means of communicating with the Casa - Pueblito and the group’s emergency contacts in Canada.

2.6. Emergency funds

Canadians or international visitors to Nicaragua visiting under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming will be reminded to arrange, in advance, for access to emergency funds, so that they can cover their own expenses related to emergency medical treatment, lodging, food, water and travel in the event of a disaster or other emergency.

3. Disaster response protocols regarding visitors to Nicaragua visiting under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming

In the event of a disaster in Nicaragua while Casa is hosting Canadian or international visitors under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming:

- Casa - Pueblito’s priority will also be the health and safety of Canadian or international visitors under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming.
- The Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) will seek to establish immediate contact with teachers in order to ascertain the group’s location, condition and threats posed by the disaster to members’ health and safety;
- Both parties will seek to maintain regular communication once established, in order to keep each other abreast of important developments;
- The Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) will ascertain how to support the group in responding to the disaster as required by the emergency response policies and practices of their sponsoring organization;
- The Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) will keep the Board of Directors abreast of the group’s situation;
- The Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s) will immediately inform both the Board of Directors (through the established liaison person or alternative designate if necessary) and the teachers should their ability to respond effectively and in accordance with this policy be compromised (e.g. severe illness, collapse of transportation infrastructure), and in such a situation, all parties will work to provide for an acceptable alternate arrangement.
- A decision regarding the Casa - Pueblito Coordinator(s)’ immediate return to Canada will be also be premised on their ability to support the group and on the conditions and safety of the group and its members.
- The Board of Directors will decide when and if it is necessary to contact the group’s
emergency contact in Canada in relation to the disaster and the group’s health and safety as described in Casa - Pueblito’s Crisis Response Policy.

Should a group of Canadian or international visitors under the auspices of Casa - Pueblito programming be scheduled to arrive in the immediate aftermath of a disaster that has affected the entire country or the region the group was scheduled to visit, Casa - Pueblito will consider the option of advising the group to cancel their trip. A decision to provide such advice to a group would mean that Casa - Pueblito would not provide the group with services or accommodation, should the group choose to continue with its plan to travel to Nicaragua. Casa - Pueblito will not be held responsible for any costs incurred by the group in having to cancel its trip.
Endnotes


2 “The World Factbook: NICARAGUA.” Central Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, 4 June 2018


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid

Bibliography