

The Community Ascent Network



Annual Report 2018/2019



communityascent.com
970 Kelly Dr. Castlegar, BC
250 505 9071

Opening Letter

This has been our first year as an organization and its been an unbelievable learning process for all of us!

Thinking back to several years ago when I first descended from that cloudy mountain pass and walked into the magical community of Piñán, it would have been hard to understand then just what was being set into motion.

Since the idea for our project with Piñán was launched I've been faced with many exciting and new challenges. I can honestly say that at times its taken me well out of my comfort zone. I've stepped into roles that have scared me forced me to perform tasks I previously never imagined I could have accomplished. But what's kept me going has been the enormous support I've received from everyone who's come into contact with this project. Even the initial launch in Ecuador was based on the amount of support I found just by sharing the idea.

The completion of this year in itself has been an accomplishment. We still have our biggest objectives ahead of us and still so much to learn about building our organization. (something about Piñán).

In this report you'll be able to learn about the our achievements and struggles from this past year as well as our vision and objectives for the next. I want to thank everyone who has been a supporter of this project from the very start, from those who first inspired me to our partners and board members who are making it all happen. And of course Piñán for bringing me into this amazing experience.

Simon Cretien

Founder, Executive Director
CAN

About CAN



The Community Ascent Network (CAN) is a not-for-profit organization with a mandate for social welfare. The purpose of CAN is to work alongside small communities in Ecuador, to facilitate development projects and promote sustainability through providing the necessary resources, networking and funding. Through our projects we intend to create a network of working partnerships by creating connections between communities, private and public partners and sponsors in Ecuador and Canada.

Our Mission:

Through a network of communities, businesses, organizations and people we aim to bring communities to the forefront of their own development.

CAN board of directors

Meet the CAN board of directors, a group brought together by a shared interest to work alongside with communities and a commitment to social welfare wherever in the world they may be.

President: Aylen Sanchez



Alyson Stadnyk



Gordon Truscott



Secretary: Robert Cretien



Treasurer: Sarah Meunier



Year in Review



Through our first year it felt as though every step was a massive achievement. From registration to our first fund-raising event. But in Ecuador was where we had our biggest breakthroughs, such as being able to create momentum and a strong support network around Piñán's vision for their development.

On one of my first visits to the community, their president, Fausto Rodriguez told me how their community was one of the most forgotten in Ecuador. And this can easily be seen as true. No land rights ever came about for Piñán in the nation wide land reforms that returned stolen property to indigenous communities. A passable road into the community has never been completed. A complete education program has never been provided by the state. But the hope to keep moving forward is alive in their vision.

These have, without a doubt been our biggest achievements of the year:

1. Through meetings and outreach on Simon's trip to Ecuador Enough momentum was created around this project to get government offices in Ecuador to recognize Piñán's need for a secondary education program and new school.
2. A full time teacher was contracted and as of September 2019 has begun to give the first ever year of secondary classes in Piñán.
3. The old community classroom was equipped with computers and a projector we sent down for the new curriculum.
4. The land has been surveyed to begin designing the new schoolhouse where all consequent generations will be able to study and graduate.
5. We've raised over \$5000 through coffee sales in our first year and through a recent outreach project in our last month we more than double our monthly sales for fundraising and are broadening our following in Canada.

My last couple of visits in Piñán I spent a lot of time with the students who were ready for their next

step of education. They are at an age where they are looking to their future, starting imagine what they will become and how they will help their families and community. Through various activities and interviews I learned how they actually envisioned this future. Their aspirations were for career goals were nothing short of virtuous, They told me they would become social workers, teachers, lawyers who wanted to see social justice, mountain guides who wanted to bring ecological tourism to Piñán. It was truly admirable. But this project still seemed so new to them. I could see the students were completely skeptical that this could happen. Up until now this had been as far as their education would take them.

But, it seemed that at some point, during the many meetings we had in Ecuador, a certain chord was struck and the momentum started to build. Officials started recognize the value and necessity of the project and Piñán was put on the map the local school board. They began taking initiative help advance the project: In August all of the eligible students were registered through the district for vocational classes. The community's first professor was contracted and arrived in September to begin teaching the first ever secondary classes in Piñán.

Now the first group of students have their eyes set on their future and their brothers and sisters will follow closely behind. The whole community is excitedly preparing to partake in the construction of the new schoolhouse this spring, and I'm excited to return to join them. The designs are in the works and our new fundraising goals are being set for the year. We truly have a lot to look forward to!



So, What Comes Next?...



This next year is a defining one for our project with Piñán!

Overall our vision for the year is to have Piñán's new vocational program operating smoothly and their new schoolhouse built in time for the next school year in 2020. As well, now that we've established ourselves we're aiming to make more of a presence in our home community in the Kootenays through events and partnerships.

Our main goals for the year are:

1. The design and construction of Piñán's new schoolhouse:
 - We are currently working with the department of architecture at Ecuador's University of Azuay to design the new school house. The building will include 3 classrooms which incorporate a computer and science lab as well as a library/ study room and an administrative office. Once the planning is completed community members from Piñán will build the school through a *minga*, an indigenous tradition in which the whole community will work together to complete a project.
2. Implementing workshops and programs designed for professional student interests:
 - To supplement the general sciences program being taught we will be developing a number of workshops to be taught in the community based in professional interests of the students and families. We will be looking for experienced professionals and educators as well as the equipment to deliver these workshops and, based on their outcomes, work with the school board to integrate them into the curriculum for certification.
3. Starting our volunteer program for teaching English in Piñán:
 - English skills are identified by the community as one of the most important subjects the students can be studying. This is especially in regard to developing a sustainable tourism industry in Piñán. Our goal is to develop a program where volunteers stay in the community to teach English thereby helping Piñán to develop skills with language

and hosting visitors. At the same time as offering an opportunity to Canadians get involved with the project and experience the kindness and beauty of this remote and magical community.

4. Create more local involvement through events and fund-raisers....

- We are planning a whole series of social events at home in the Kootenays. Our goal is to help our friends and peers at home learn more about who we are and what it is we're doing and to find out how more people would like to get involved...

Here are some of the events that we'll be hosting in the upcoming year:

- Film screenings
 - Coffee socials and monthly orders (Join on our order list to get notified of shipments)
 - A wrestling game-show extravaganza! (Trust me you won't want to miss out on this one)
 - The Cloudy Way Cafe will be hitting up festival season in the Kootenays once again
- ➡ This fall we'll be launching our crowd-funding campaign with a video filmed by the talented Samuel Balet of Greenative Design. It's a stunning visual display which brings you to visit the community of Piñán from the ground and sky to better understand our project. We'll be showing it at some of these social events to kick-start the next phase of our fundraising and project activities.

So whether you're in Rossland, Castlegar or Nelson, keep your eyes open for these events in your home town!



CAN 2018-2019 Financial Breakdown



Total funds raised: 5754.35

Total Donations: 3840.00

Operational Costs: 1056.00

- Through sales of Cloud forest Coffee and Cloudy Way Clothing merchandise as well as our Cloudy Way Cafe working at local festivals we've raised a total of \$5754.35 in our first year.
- Our total for donations received this year is \$3840.00! On the next pages we've mentioned who are major donors were and how you can support us this year.
- We like to keep our operational costs as low as possible in order to ensure the majority of your contributions go straight to Piñán to make difference there.

Acknowledgements: Support and Contribution

If this report is for anything its so that we can say thank you to everyone who has contributed and helped us stay on the path that's gotten to where we are now.

Major donors and contributors:

A huge thanks to all of the my hardworking and open-hearted friends at Greenpeaks who planted thousands of trees in our Plant-aThon fundraisers and made an enormous contribution to our cause! And of course a huge thank you to the ever generous Owen Stuart who matched it all and then some!

Thank you Frank Baker for making such a generous donation in our formative phase, for believing in us right from the start, and helping us get our feet off the ground.

And a special thanks to Jonathan Robinson for your offer to sponsor all of the computers we have just sent down to Piñán. Those are going to be some happy students!

Thanks to both Amissa and Made in the Shade Festivals for inviting us to your parties and giving us the space to fundraise with our coffee each year.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us along the way. Just to name a few: Johanna who sent me on a whirlwind trip of Ecuador to meet her family and friends who have all become project supporters; Marcelo Munoz who has been a mentor since the very beginning; Michael Bloomfield for showing me the ropes in this field, I look forward to learning all that I can from you; Ivan Suarez for being the main catalyst to make my ideas happen; and to Luis Alfredo my friend from Piñán who has taken it upon himself to introduce and integrate me to the magical and incredibly different world that is Piñán.

Acknowledgements: Our Partners



I'd like to acknowledge all of our amazing partners in this project:

Fundación Cordillera

Fundación Cordillera has been a major ally in the project since its conception. The Ecuadorian organization has been working with the community of Piñán for more than a decade. They facilitate our communications with the community and have been invaluable advisors throughout the project.

Cloud Forest Coffee

Owned and operated by Francis Bueckert, this micro-roaster based in Ottawa, Ontario has been providing us with the delicious coffee that has been our main funding for the project. Sourced from a cooperative in a valley just below Piñán, Francis is also a friend of the community and was the instigator for our first visit there.

Educational District of Cotacachi Ecuador

The regional Educational District is one of our most important partners. They have been incredibly pro-active in bringing the next level of education to Piñán since we introduced the project to them. We literally could not move forward with this project without their cooperation and hence we are extremely grateful for their involvement and we look forward to working with them throughout.

Universidad de Azuay

The department of Architecture and Planning at Ecuador's Universidad de Azuay have very graciously offered their full support in the design and supervision of the construction of the new schoolhouse in Piñán. We can't thank you enough!

Getting Involved

Does our project interest you?

Are you wondering how you can get involved or contribute to the community?

Interested in joining our team?

Well, it just so happens that there are a whole variety of ways you can get involved, help out and contribute to our organization and project!

1. This year we are creating an English teaching program in Piñán.
 - This means we will be looking for volunteers to visit the community in Ecuador for a minimum 1 month stay and deliver English classes to the students based on their school curriculum. If this is an opportunity that interests you, please get in touch to talk about your ideas and availability.
2. Help us hold an event in your community or with your friends.
 - We are always looking to get involved and spread awareness about the project in our home community of the Kootenays. If you'd like to help us host or plan an event in your community or simply hold a film screening or coffee social at your house and invite your friends we'd love to collaborate with you!
3. Arrange a coffee ordering group among your friends or household and sign up to our order list.
 - Just contact us and we'll help you set it up!
4. Do you have skills or ideas that you would like to contribute to the project?
 - If you'd like to help out with any part of our project please contact us and we can arrange a meeting. Board meetings are held every second month and everyone is welcome to sit in.
 - Currently we are looking for help in grant research and writing. If this is an area that you're interested to help out in don't hesitate to contact us!
5. Donations can be made through our website or in person at any time.

communityascent.com
don.simon.rc@gmail.com
250 505 9071