

Communication and Cultural Awareness

Have you ever spent time with an indigenous family?

Living with an Indigenous Family

Jayson McNamara is an Australian journalist, writer, and a TV production editor who lives in Buenos Aires. He is passionate about traveling and history. In his blog he shares his experience living with an indigenous family in Ecuador. He says that South American indigenous communities are very distinct and provides some tips to keep in mind when you live with an indigenous host family in Ecuador.

Faith

In Ecuador, many types of mixed religious expressions are possible. They have their roots in both history and nature, with the Spanish having implanted their European religion and the indigenous population having maintained a strong spiritual connection to the land.

Pachamama

The Pachamama, otherwise known as Mother Earth and also referred to as Mama Pacha, is an Andean spiritual figure from ancient Incan society where she was considered the **bearer** of fertility, as seen in her influence over the **harvests**. Throughout the year in Ecuador, spiritual practices in indigenous communities see the Pachamama help with good harvests.

Gender

Gender roles are different in indigenous families, especially when it comes to the role of women. Native women have important leadership roles within indigenous families and communities, taking charge of household finances, participating actively in agriculture, and taking on the role of *curanderos*, or spiritual healers.

Medicine

In indigenous Ecuador, traditional and natural medicine dominates. They rely on a variety of plants to cure common illnesses. In the culture of Otavalo, for example, people believe that illness is caused by four things: **fright**, evil wind, evil spirits, or foreign objects.

Adapted from <https://bit.ly/38ZyHNE>

Decide if the following statements are **True (T)** or **False (F)** according to the reading.

- | | True | False |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Indigenous families are only one religion. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. The Pachamama is a god. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. The Pachamama influences the harvest. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Women have an important role in families. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. In Otavalo, people believe illness is caused by bacteria. | ☐ | ☐ |

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- Why do you think foreigners like to learn about Ecuadorian family culture?
- What do you know about indigenous families in Ecuador?
- Would you like a foreigner to share time with your family for a couple of months?
- How do you think foreign families are different from families in Ecuador?

Vocabulary

bearer. person who has or holds something

harvest. when a person collects fruits and vegetables that are ready to eat from the plants

fright. fear