

September 30, 2022

Dear Rocky River Friends Meeting:

I am very pleased to affirm and support the work and ministry of Emma Condori Mamani and the Friends International Bilingual Center (FIBC). I serve on Emma's Anchor and Support Committee and work with her on the Steering Circle for the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (QREC). I have collaborated with Emma for nine years especially around creating and translating Quaker religious education materials and building up a community of practice among Bolivian Friends who teach Sunday School.

Emma combines a deep, living faith with creative initiative by which she perceives what materials might be useful for Latin American Friends and then procures or prepares them. She encountered John Lampen in Britain and knew his small book for children, *Peaceful Inside*, would benefit Bolivian children. She was bold enough to ask for permission to translate it and make it available in Bolivia. He agreed! She and Audreyanna Elliott, a member of NEYM teaching in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, realized the youth with whom they worked needed help dealing with racism. Emma and Audreyanna applied for a grant to translate Lisa Graustein's *A Racial Justice Curriculum for Teens*, adapting it for a Latin American context.

Emma's ministry in La Paz is vital and is especially crucial for women, children, and young adult Friends. FIBC is a truly unique institution in Bolivia creating the perfect container for Emma's work. Through it, she is able to serve across all five of the yearly meetings in Bolivia. All five are represented in La Paz and yet they do not easily and readily cooperate. The power dynamics are such that the independence of FIBC is critical so that Emma may host religious education trainings and offer workshops empowering women as leaders. Emma travels in the ministry internationally and brings that richness home to Bolivian Friends through FIBC. For example, she has introduced the Godly Play and Faith & Play Storytelling method which conveys and explores Bible stories and Quaker stories of faith and witness. In 2019 at the QREC Annual Conference, Emma learned about using Legos to teach Bible Stories as presented by Liz Yeats from



Emma Condori and Sunday School teachers at workshop 2019



Language lessons at FIBC—learning continued during the pandemic.

Austin Friends Meeting. Soon after returning home, Emma offered a workshop to encourage young teachers to explore this new approach.

FIBC is also a hub for ministry to the wider community in La Paz and nearby cities and regions. Language lessons open the English-speaking world to Bolivian children. Lessons in Aymara open their own history and the stories of their elders to them.

Emma partnered with Friendly Water for the World to learn to produce Biosand water filters. They were sold at very low prices to bring clean water to those with modest means. This became an opportunity for public witness about climate change and a boon to the poor. This was an ongoing service project of young adults that Emma organized prior to the COVID-induced slowdown. Lack of income prevented Emma from purchasing the necessary supplies to continue. During the pandemic, Emma helped to provide masks to children in the nearby city of El Alto whose families could not afford them.



Friends International Bilingual Center helped youth to organize a public witness about using water wisely.



FIBC youth make biosand water filter

FIBC is truly a hub for cross-cultural exchange. North American Quakers have sojourned to FIBC to learn and serve. Emma actively mentors young leaders and accompanies them to religious education gatherings. She lifts up their work and creates opportunities for them to share their approaches and methods. Emma encouraged Rossio Quispe, an art teacher and Sunday School teacher, to present her work at the QREC Annual Conference in 2021, online. Rossio used Color Theory in her design of teaching materials and the physical setting of the room to set the stage for class members to be peaceful, open, alert as they explored Quaker faith together.

Both the political unrest in Bolivia in 2019 and the COVID pandemic were extremely challenging for Emma and FIBC, as it was for most non-profit organizations. She navigated the financial crises brought on by the lockdown with prayerful tenacity and creating thinking. She minimized costs and finally released her office space when that became necessary. She kept her ministry and service alive operating from her living room.

It is my hope and prayer that way will open for Emma to re-establish an office for FIBC in a central location in La Paz. The office space allows children, teenagers, and teachers to participate easily in the classes and workshops. Also, this office will allow her ministry to serve at its full measure again. Her Anchor and Support Committee assists with fundraising. We are grateful for this opportunity to express how much we value Emma's ministry and how significant we feel it is for both Bolivian Friends and the worldwide family of Friends.

In faith and friendship,

Beth Collea

QREC Steering Circle member