



“Youth Ambassador Program for Minorities” (YAPM)

Please visit our website www.teccultures.org/bj/yapm

Project Directors:

Albert Ruan: Co-founder of YAPM, currently coordinates YAPM’s website

Juliet Zhou: Co-founder of YAPM, will soon lead a preparatory survey in Anlong County

Project’s Tax Status:

YAPM is a subsidiary of TECC (www.teccultures.org), a non-profit organization established under IRC Section 501(c)(3), enabling YAPM to leverage on TECC’s volunteer resources and financing channels. Though associated with TECC and TECC’s goals of connecting cultures through technology and education, YAPM distinguishes itself from TECC’s existing projects by addressing a new concern, minority culture preservation.

Project Overview:

Uniting education and technology in an innovative program, YAPM aims to promote greater awareness and understanding of China’s national minorities by empowering local minority youth. YAPM believes that the key to preserve the disappearing Chinese national minorities’ culture is to evoke self-awareness and a sense of responsibility among ethnic minority youth because they are the only ones who can keep their culture alive for future generations. The YAPM project will empower local youth to become global ambassadors of their unique traditions through a 10-day summer institute and subsequent online forum. With access to technology for the local youth and through the collaborative efforts of students from top universities in both China and the United States, YAPM hopes to promote the importance of cultural diversity preservation on an international scale. The project also intends to raise local governments’ attention concerning the necessity of incorporating ethnic culture into local school curricula by campaigning for an ethnic culture course in the schools. With its bottom-up rather than top-down approach, YAPM’s potential lies in utilizing local initiative and resources rather than relying on outside parties to be effective. The localized structure can be mirrored in other minority regions, giving YAPM the potential to spread to broader areas without diluting the power of its program in any particular locale.

Project Description:

A. Project significance:

China, home to 55 minority groups, enjoys a rich ethnic and cultural diversity. However, minority cultures are at risk of being marginalized by economic modernization and national education. Confronted with the outside influences of Western and Han culture,

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local youngsters are unaware of the role they should play in preserving their own culture. Many younger Chinese minority members are abandoning their traditions, mother tongue and artistic heritage. For example, out of 112 Miao Villages in Tianzhu county, southeast Guizhou Province, only 32 villages still speak the Miao language. While most programs address minority culture preservation through recording and documenting carried out by outside observers, YAPM will actively involve local youth by making them ambassadors of their own cultures. The vision of YAPM is to awaken a sense of responsibility among local youngsters and empower them to play a positive role in protecting their own culture and constructively impacting their surroundings.

B. Participants:

- 30 local youngsters in Anlong County (Guizhou Province, southwest China) between the ages of 12 and 16 will participate in the 10-day summer institute, at least 20 of whom will be the Buyi ethnic minority, the dominant local minority. The project will potentially impact over 3,000 students in Anlong County (1,500 each in 2 local middle schools). YAPM will reach an even broader audience when an ethnic culture course is incorporated into the local curriculum, and when the project is replicated in other areas of China. Teachers in local schools will nominate 90-100 candidates, from which 30 finalists will be selected by the YAPM committee.
- 15 volunteers recruited from college campus as coordinators, approximately 10 from Mainland China and 5 from the United States.
- Members of local art associations and culture preservation organizations, scholars and researchers will serve as tutors in the summer institute.

C. Project Objectives

1. Raise awareness about quintessential elements of Buyi culture and stress the importance of cultural preservation among local youth.
2. Educate local youngsters to use digital cameras, audio recorders and the Internet to record the Buyi culture. Encourage local students to communicate with the outside world and provide a platform for global interaction.
3. Devise an organized and effective ethnic culture course to incorporate into local schools' daily curriculum.
4. Refine a local culture preservation model which other minority groups can adopt.

D. Detailed plan

1. Desk research to investigate the region, culture, and customs of the Buyi minority.
2. Interview with scholars, educators, government officials in relevant areas and seek for advisors for the project.

Note: The Dean of Yunnan University Ethnic Minority Research Center, Professors Fang Tie, has agreed to join our advisory board.

3. Partner with Qianzhong Culture Promotion Association (QCPA, www.pku.edu.cn:8000/life/xuehui/qzwh/site) in Peking University which conducted a survey on minority culture in Guizhou (2005) and has established and maintained a friendly tie with the local government and education department.

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Note: Agreement of cooperation between YAPM and QCPA has already been reached.

4. Conduct an on-site survey in Anlong County during the winter break with QCPA to decide on local student selection channel, summer institute schedule and nature of collaboration with local government and schools.

Note: The on-site survey will be implemented from January 15th to 22nd, 2006.

5. Cooperate with local teachers to create diverse educational and entertaining activities for the summer institute. Activities include story telling, folk songs, handcrafts lessons, lectures and field work, such as interviewing residents, photographing traditional handcrafts and architectures, and recording folk music.
6. Finalize the list of coordinators. Volunteers will be selected based on past experience in leading workshops and interest in preserving minority culture. Ten volunteers will study alongside local students, teach youngsters to use digital cameras, audio recorders and the Internet, collect their feedback and closely monitor students' participation and program progress. Two volunteers will collect tutors' feedback and discuss how to incorporate the course into local school curriculum with local educators. One volunteer will record footage of the project for a documentary film. The remaining volunteers will manage food and accommodation needs.
7. Establish YAPM's website and create a forum to serve as a platform for local students to discuss culture preservation and allow them to exhibit their work, which will be encouraged by periodic evaluation and annual competition on photography and writing.
8. Produce a short documentary highlighting the summer institute and send it to local government and other minority areas with the aim of promoting YAPM. Hold seminars to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness for involvement of more minority groups from other areas.

E. Expected Results

- Students' work, such as pictures and handcrafts will be exhibited both locally and in Beijing to stimulate public interest and awareness. Awards will be given to the best pieces.
- Volunteers are required to integrate their findings into a report targeted at the local education administration, providing a structured and practical course design and promoting the idea of incorporating ethnic culture into local schools' daily curriculum.
- To create a long-term impact, local youngsters are encouraged to upload their pictures, sound recordings and articles on the Internet. An annual evaluation will be held by the YAPM committee to reward those with high quality work and active involvement.
- Seminars will also be held inviting experts and scholars to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the project and devise proposals for involvement of other Chinese minority groups.
- Selected media will be invited to report on the summer institute to maximize the project's social impact.

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G. Timetable

- October 2005: Foundation of YAPM team
- January 2006: Obtain initial funding from SEF and conduct on-site survey in Anlong County with GCPA to learn about local education circumstances, discuss summer institute schedule and implementation details.
- January-June 2006: Create YAPM website; recruit and train volunteers.
- June 2006: Finalize summer-institute schedule and local participants. Purchase digital cameras.
- July 2006: 10-day summer institute in Anlong county, Guizhou Province.
- August-December 2006: Exhibit the project in Beijing and evaluate the possibility of the disseminating of the YAPM model to other regions. Continue discussion of preserving ethnic minority culture through YAPM's website.

H. Funding

- Short-term funding: first year funding covered through seed grants and aid from local enterprises, government and schools.
- Long-term funding: Tsinghua and Peking University, as well as other foundations and organizations. Costs will be greatly reduced by government funding when the ethnic culture course is incorporated into local schools.

Method of Evaluation

- Request that summer institute participants fill out a short but mandatory survey.
- Conference, attended by YAPM planners, attendees and advisors, held in the beginning of autumn, during which involved and interested parties can engage in a fruitful discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the YAPM project. This conference would take many factors into evaluation such as:
 - The quality of reports, photos and handicrafts made by the participants.
 - Analyze the aforementioned surveys.
 - Assess the recording made by volunteers that is meant to create the short documentary. This provides a real-time visual of events at the 10-day institute.
 - Quality of the ethnic minority culture course incorporated into the local school curricula and the number of schools accepting the course.
- Ongoing evaluation through :
 - Comments from a guestbook on the YAPM website, where visitors are encouraged to share their opinions and recommendations
 - Media coverage
 - Participation rate and success of the online discussion forum