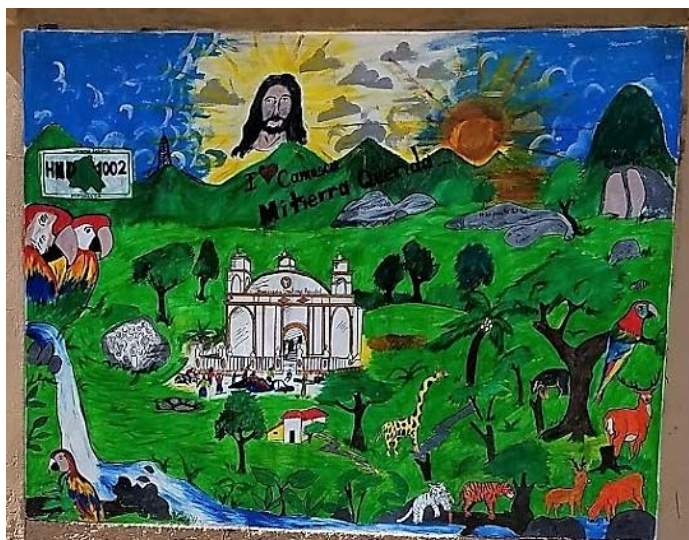


## A Brief Reflection of My Summer in Camasca

This past summer, I spent six weeks in Camasca, Honduras as part of a team of students from Duke University that partnered with Shoulder to Shoulder to volunteer and conduct research in the community. Every morning, the other three Duke students and I went to the local elementary school, La Urbana, to teach English lessons to the students at the request of the professors. To be completely honest, I had no idea what exactly this experience would entail or look like, having never travelled to Honduras before or taught English as a second language to children. However, the professors at the school were overjoyed with the opportunity to provide a unique educational experience for their students. Their positive attitude and their drive to emphasize the importance of learning to their students was what my team members and I used to try to devise meaningful lessons and games, ranging from songs about sports to putting on plays with dialogue. We acknowledged during our time in Camasca that these students may come away learning some basic English skills. But perhaps more important is the exposure to a new aspect of learning that could provide motivation to further their education. As an anecdote, some days we offered students the option to choose the types of topics that they wanted to learn about. Many of them were very energetic and excited, mentioning themes like animals, sports, planets, and how to describe likes and dislikes. We then adapted our lessons to meet the requests of the children so our short time there could be as useful as possible to the students.

Overall, I found a very strong sense of community in Camasca during my time there, both in schools like La Urbana but also in the department as a whole. Whenever we encountered our students outside of the classroom during the afternoon, they would greet us and talk to us or even occasionally challenge us to a game of fútbol, or soccer. Some of the professors and students from La Urbana still keep in touch with me and the remainder of my team members, asking us about our studies and keeping us informed of how they are. The friendliness of the community was also made apparent when we conducted our research, as we were often welcomed to most people's porches before even introducing ourselves. Similarly, in many ways, Camasca felt like home because of how the students and professors were so inclusive, willing to take us on hikes or show us around in our free time. I chose to include a picture I took of this mural below, which was painted during our time there because I think it perfectly encompasses the strong sense of welcoming and community in Camasca, saying "I ♥ Camasca, my cherished land". I am very thankful to have worked so closely to Shoulder to Shoulder and the people of Camasca and hope to stay involved with the community by assisting next year's team of Duke students to continue strengthening the relationships we continued to build.





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