

Andrew Pickup Award – Leah Hawes Reflections

The Andrew Pickup award allowed me to complete a placement in Peru with the organization Asociación ANDES, based in Cusco. This placement shaped not just my research, but the theme of my dissertation overall, which examined how Quechua communities are preserving crop biodiversity through non-competitive markets, and the resulting impacts on food systems. The money that I was awarded went into funding my plane ticket and lodging during the two and a half months that I spent in Cusco, crucial aspects to my research as they allowed me the access to fly to Cusco to complete my placement in-person. This was an incredibly enriching and rewarding experience. I was able to visit the Parque de la Papa in person, attending important events such as the Día de la Papa (Day of the Potato, May 30th) when the communities that make up the Parque celebrate the potato and its role in their communities. I was also able to see first-hand how these communities value the potato and how these relationships shape cultural ideas and practices around food, something that was crucial to my research.



Figure 1: Potatoes in Ceremonial Mound at Día de la Papa



Figure 2: Me in Cusco with an alpaca!

My travel also allowed me to explore and experience events such as the barter

market in Lares, where women gather weekly to barter goods that they have grown at various altitudes that other households may not be able to produce. The point of these markets is that they rely on trade and social relationships (not money) in order to function, ensuring that all households are able to participate no matter their yield. The Andrew Pickup award gave me the financial ability to participate in these activities in a meaningful way. Meeting the people who are part of these communities and markets, and hearing their stories and experiences directly, felt like it not only better empowered their voices but also allowed me a fuller understanding of what goes into shaping cultural perceptions of food and the impact that local movements can have on food systems.