



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Tanzania: The Warm Heart of Africa      **Name:** Doreen Weiss, Ruth Finkel  
**Other Team Members:**  
**Program:** Chicago Program  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001      **Location Visited:** Tanzania  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** Tanzania is a politically stable, developing country in East Africa, with magnificent natural beauty. The United Republic of Tanzania contains some of the world's most astounding landscapes, including the Serengeti Plain, with its beautiful vistas and abundant wildlife. The population of 38 million consists of 126 ethnic tribes. Each tribe speaks its own language, although Kiswahili and English are the national languages and universally spoken. The economy is mostly based on agriculture, and many families have small plots of land to grow crops for their own use or to sell at market. The Tanzanians are a warm and gracious people. NGOs, such as Kilimanjaro Women and Children Against AIDS (Kiwakkuki) in Moshi, assist hundreds of children and families affected by HIV/AIDS, which infects approximately 7% of the population. Education in Tanzania is compulsory for children for 7 years, ending at the age of 15. 82% of primary children are enrolled, although some tribes, such as the Maasai, are very reluctant to take advantage of the opportunity, and many others can not afford school fees. Resources in schools are sparse with few books and materials available in classrooms.

As primary school teachers, we teach our student to investigate their ancestry, to learn their families' stories, and to gain a better understanding of the tradition of passing down family stories to younger generations. They create a family tree, examine artifacts and the stories attached to them, and learn about countries around the world. Traveling to Tanzania gave us the opportunity to learn about a culture both similar and different from our own. Our relationship with Kiwakkuki was already developed; our previous classes had collected supplies for school children as well as personally sponsored children for primary school uniforms and fees. We had a specific interest in seeing the Memory Books that are created at Kiwakkuki. Our students create an ancestor project that we thought paralleled some of the work the women's cooperative did with orphaned children.

Family history is central in cultures different and distant from our own. We learned that the Memory Books are created primarily by mothers stricken by HIV/AIDS. These mothers, whose life span is generally two years after infection, create a book which includes a family tree, stories about the family, and advice to the soon-to-be orphaned children about how to stay safe and healthy. The books are then given to the children upon the parent's death. We were profoundly moved as we met with the staff of Kiwakkuki, and the director of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Project.

Storytelling, we learned, takes many forms. Grandparents tell stories to their grandchildren, teachers teach lessons about health, and tribes tell stories to teach their children how to sustain themselves within a defined and separate culture. Within classrooms we saw little evidence of "story" books.

HIV/AIDS has taken a huge toll on this country. Hundreds of children are orphaned, some infected themselves. Many live alone, or in child-run households. We met several families in these circumstances and spoke with orphans. Yet, with all these challenges, the children kept an immaculate home, with plastic flowers, doilies on tables, and small stuffed animals. The dignity of these children was evident in every instance. These images will stay with us forever.

**Career Impact:** Our exploration of Tanzania was exciting, interesting, and challenging. We had spoken to people who had traveled and volunteered in Tanzania, so we were familiar with the citizens of the country, and knew of their welcoming spirit. We knew about the dedication of the women at Kiwakkuki, and we were eager to visit schools and meet with teachers and children. We paid special attention to becoming aware of certain customs and formalities within the culture. Our major concern was to be respectful of the culture. Prior to our trip we read extensively and researched the country and people. We participated in a series of workshops entitled "Cultural Connections" at the Field Museum. We wanted to learn about a modern African country and its people, not simply Africa through the lens of slavery. As we began to explore the curriculum we would develop, we had many in-depth dialogues about what concepts and understandings we would expect from our students. As teachers who believe in experiential learning, we wanted to bring Tanzania to life. Seeing a map, but bringing life to the map, learning about cultural differences and similarities, and one's responsibility to a global society; our increased knowledge and awareness will bring this to our classrooms.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** Our students will directly benefit from this fellowship. We are continuing to develop our ancestor unit to include lessons on cross-cultural understanding, and the common experience of family storytelling. We plan on increasing our use

of technology within our newly enhanced unit. Our students will practice their writing, interviewing, and research skills as they investigate their own family's history. Photographic documentation will be included so that the children can see daily life in Tanzania, thus adding new meaning to the geography and cultural lessons that we teach our students.

We collected many artifacts as we traveled. Music, artwork, sculpture, jewelry, newspapers, and books in Swahili are just a few examples. Masai milk gourds are displayed on a table in the hallway of the Primary school. The children are being asked to observe the objects, and answer such questions such as "What is it, where did it come from, and how is it used?" This has created a sense of anticipation and excitement among the students. Parents of former students as well as faculty members have shown great interest as well. Significant school-wide collaboration will come out of this fellowship. We have begun to speak to our art and music teachers about introducing our students to East African music, dance, and art.

Our community night will provide the entire school community with the opportunity to see our video footage as well as a website that describes and explains our trip and allows viewing of our photographs. We have discovered that our enthusiasm is contagious, and we, indeed, have many stories of our own to tell. Some stories are amusing, some fascinating, and some heart-wrenching. But, we feel, all need to be told.

**Open Response:** Our proposed fellowship will help our students grow into a more aware, respectful and responsible community of global citizens with a keen interest in family history and appreciation of cultural diversity. Our work will start in small ways, appropriate for our primary grade students. Objects to look at and the stories that they tell will later lead to our students' own investigation of their families' histories. As evident in the past, our students are very sensitive and caring about people in distant lands. Former students and their families have contributed generously to help the children of Tanzania. We hope to continue that support through a continued relationship with Kiwakkuki, sending both supplies and monetary donations so that schooling is available.

Our ancestor project will include the opportunity for inquiry based learning. Our students will study their own family's history. They will interview relatives, look at documents and photographs, and search out artifacts that are important to the family. The children will learn that objects have stories too. They will research a country where they may have had ancestors. They will hear stories of people around the world, including Japan, Russia, France, and Tanzania. Our students will engage in a focused study of Tanzania. They will learn about the art, music, and customs of people who live in places both similar and different from our own. In addition, we will use "green screen" technology to prepare a presentation that will be shared with second grade parents. Students will practice their writing and speaking skills as they share stories, recorded and then presented at our gathering.

**Quote:** Students learn best when they can see, touch, and experience. We had the opportunity to do that and more. The beauty of Tanzania and the graciousness of its people will impact our teaching for years to come.

Photos:



Maasai warrior



Maasai schoolboys



Elephants on the Serengeti Plain



Lions on the Serengeti Plain



Second Graders View Tanzanian Artifact



Doreen Weiss and Ruth Finkel





Kiwakkuki Staff



Primary School Children