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*Education is one of the most important issues facing Indian communities everywhere in South and Central America. The young must be educated in a way which preserves the culture of their ancestors, and the whole community must learn together how to confront the challenges of non-Indian society. The following statements offer insights on a range of educational concerns in Indian communities.*

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## ‘The Things That Are Important To Learn’

The things that we think are important to learn about now are addition; punctuation; the comma; the tilde; the vowels; the difference between s and c; between ja, xa, and cha; the difference between ga, ge, gi, and gua, gue, gui; the sounds of que, qui, ca, co, cu, lha, lhe, lhi, lho, lhu; the letters of the alphabet, the Portuguese language of Brazil, to communicate with others, to know what it means, to learn to read and write.

See, we already have suffered very much. We want to study in order to stop being slaves, so that whites are not always on top of Indian people. We are also people of this round fruit, breathing in this air that protects our bodies, drinking water of the river mixed with the juices of the forest. We live in the light of the day priceless before the sun. The moon comes, the stars, from 6 to number 12.  $6 \times 2 = 12 \times 2 = 24$  hours. We exist before the sweet flower that gives strength to all.

We want to know what the government means, the military police. We want to know about the promises of FUNAI [the bureau of Indian affairs]. We want not only to learn, but to know how to make our school work with Indian teachers. We study to learn how to give value to our land, to know how to live on it with our people who have been massacred with rifles, with all 10 fingers. We are also children of this earth. We forgive what has been done to us. Long ago we were millions of Indians. We decreased. Now we are few. We don't want our race to end, because we are children of the Father.

To learn the hours of the clock. To know the price of merchandise in the city, to defend us from captivity in the hands of the hurricane. To study serves us to know the measure of work, to learn how to talk to you. The school can help us organize our cooperative. To teach the children and the adults to learn how to find the price of the materials, to sell our products at a normal price, to learn how to count 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, +, x, -. To make agreements with the rubber tappers, the squatters, with the Indian leaders.

To know how to use drugs from the drugstore to cure sick people, to learn how to give injections and what pills to take. To know how to sell what we produce and how to buy things from the owner of the market for our cooperative in the forest, administered by us Indians. With our school at our side, teaching the ones that are just being born, the others won't steal from us anymore. We Indians live in this world also. We have arms to hold with, legs to walk the earth. We have bellies to feed, heads to learn, eyes to see the people in this land and the light of our world, little round clarity.

—Osair Sales-Sia, Kaxinaua Indian from Acre, Brazil

