

Maya Educational Foundation

P.O. Box 1483, Wellfleet, MA 02667, USA
www.mayaedufound.org



Maya
Educational
Foundation

Changing Lives
through Education
since 1992

2021-2022 Report



The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) supports the educational and professional advancement of the Maya people in Guatemala, southern Mexico, and Belize, with special consideration given to women and girls and to students from remote areas.

Iris with her parents under a Ceiba tree after graduating with a Licenciatura degree in chemical engineering in Guatemala, 2021

Dear Friends,

Despite the challenges that our partner organizations in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico as well as the students they oversee are facing, we are happy to report that the current students continue to make great progress in their academic pursuit.

We are also happy to share with you that a good number of the scholarship recipients in the country we serve have received the first Covid-19 vaccine while a smaller number of them have also received the second dosage. In fact, students under the supervision of our partner organization FEPMaya in Guatemala all have received the first dosage of the vaccine Moderna. About half of these students had also received the second dosage while the remaining students are waiting for the vaccine to become available in the near future.

With the constant shift in the modes of operations occurring at the educational institutions that students attend due to the high cases of Covid-19, the students have demonstrated patience and flexibility in adapting to these changing circumstances and have shown to be resilient individuals committed to achieving their educational and career goals. For example, classes in Guatemala were mainly online and more recently have transitioned to a hybrid mode of operation.

The scholarships that you our donors generously support are changing the lives of indigenous underprivileged youth and their communities. It has increasingly opened up employment opportunities for students in the private and public sectors. As an example, in our small scholarship program in Livingston (Guatemala), Ilsa, a very dedicated Garífuna student recently completed not only her Licenciatura but also a Master's degree in accounting and has already found a good job.

We bid farewell to Christa Little-Siebold who is retiring after serving six years as a MEF board member. Her valuable contributions to the organization are very much appreciated. We will miss her.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Christopher Lutz, a co-founder of MEF, for being awarded “La Orden del Pop” this past July from Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín. This award recognizes Dr. Lutz’s continuous efforts to investigate, preserve, and disseminate the Mesoamerican culture. An honor well deserved.

Finally, we are delighted to announce the celebration of a big milestone in 2022, our 30th Anniversary, and hope that you will continue to support the educational goals of Maya students with your donations.

With best wishes, especially for good health.




Pablo Chavajay, MEF President

Congratulations to all our graduates who have managed to obtain their degrees during the pandemic. Ilsa pictured here and Iris on the title page:

You make us proud!

Staying Strong

by Elisabeth Nicholson, Executive Director

All through 2020 and 2021 our partners, without exception, have stood strong and made us proud. There have been many difficult moments, mostly caused by the loss of treasured and beloved persons, but our colleagues in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize have persisted, as have we. Together we continue on our path. We know that the Maya students

need us and we also know that our late friends Robert Laughlin, Vincent Phillips, Narciso Cojtí, and Xhun Guzmán would want us to press on.

Xhun, one of the founders of Colegio Paxil in Nebaj, Guatemala died from COVID earlier this year. After having worked at the school for several years, his daughter An K'a'ch Guzmán has now been elected to be the Directora of the school.

She will carry on her father's work on behalf of Maya students in the Ixil area, honoring the ancestral customs and traditions while also providing a good básico education at this school. Xhun will always be remembered as a community leader by his family, his community and his friends at MEF.



Making Even Greater Strides

At MEF, in addition to continuing the work, we have also made new strides and started new initiatives to serve more Maya students and to help them more effectively. We have raised funds thus far for 38 laptops with our [Bridging the Digital Divide Campaign](#), started a [Pilot Project for medical students in Alta Verapaz](#), and, with the kind help of volunteer coordinator Randhi Wilson, facilitated [Online English Classes](#) for 30 Maya students who log on to join the class from Guatemala. Astrid, shown on the right, is one of these students.

Lately, we have noticed more interest in the work we do, probably not least due to the tremendous influx of Central American migrants to our southern border. We need to look further than the border, to the root causes in the countries that people are fleeing. To simply say "Stay home, don't come!" will not work. What will work is a more level economic playing field in these countries. What will help over the long-term is to offer opportunities for these would-be emigres to improve their situations in their home countries. With higher education and professional degrees, MEF graduates have better chances to make a living, to make a difference and to stay in their countries. We now see our graduates working in many different fields, even in government jobs. MEF scholarships are not handouts but rather a helping hand. Students like Astrid, who wants to become a nurse, have to work extremely hard to succeed in their studies.



Bridging the Digital Divide

Thanks to generous donors, we have been able to purchase and provide 34 computers to MEF scholarship students in Guatemala and Chiapas thus far, with four more being ordered. With your help we can continue this amazing effort. Here is the reaction of [María Yolanda](#), a MEF scholarship student at our partner FEPMaya, after receiving a laptop:



“When the pandemic started, I faced a very stressful situation because I did not have my own computer. Due to this difficulty, I left my village to go to an internet center to rent a computer to receive my classes online. However, this worried my parents as it exposed me to contracting the virus. MEF gave me the opportunity to be a beneficiary of a computer, to continue my studies.

Thanks to this help I can now receive classes online, use various platforms to deliver my career assignments, communicate with university professors and colleagues, and conduct videos or research. I feel very fortunate to have received a computer, as my parents do not have the resources to support me. Now I continue studying to one day be a professional nurse and contribute to my family and country.”

Art for Good



San Pedro volcano, Atitlan, 30×40 in. 1973

We are thrilled by this generous offer and invite those of you interested to get in touch with us at 508-349-1330 or mayaedufound@aol.com Suzanne herself will answer any questions you may have about the art pieces.

You will find more information about this at <https://bit.ly/3RAn8D1>

Suzanne Ruta, published author and widow of renowned painter Peter Ruta (1918-2016), has decided to dedicate several of his Mexico and Guatemala paintings to the Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) to support its cause of making university education possible for Maya students in Chiapas Mexico, Guatemala, and southern Belize. At this time, Suzanne has selected a small number of beautiful and haunting Peter Ruta oil paintings to go to those making a substantial donation to MEF.



Chiapas woodlands, Tenejapa Road, 40×48 in. 1976

Students Helping Their Communities

At our scholarship partner Sna Jtz'ibajom in Chiapas, Mexico students are not just studying towards their degrees. During the pandemic, where many of them were (or still are) at home studying remotely, they also found productive ways to help their families and communities:

[Agustín](#) studies education in Chiapas. He sent us photos of families he visited in Jolbón, Chamula where he spoke with the people and distributed important health information and posters instructing folks in Mayan and Spanish to stay at home to combat the spread of the virus.



[Jessica](#), while being home and taking her university courses in public accounting online, took time to completely reorganize and improve her family's and relatives' vegetable plots. She also taught her younger family members basic accounting so that they learn how to plan and manage their financial resources.



We thank our colleagues at Sna, especially Jorge Gutiérrez, for watching over and inspiring our 30 university students!

[Juan Leonardo](#) used his time at home not only to study English online. He also coordinated with his local leaders to set up a space for safe-distance meetings and for teaching girls and boys in his community so they can maintain consistency in their educational activities.

Your \$200 donation to MEF will support a university scholarship for a student in Mexico, Guatemala, or Belize for one month.



Hunger for Knowledge of the Maternal Languages

During the last two years, the Maya writers' group Sna Jtz'ibajom (Sna) in San Cristóbal de Las Casas has grown stronger again, from five to ten members. This growth is due to a resurgent interest in the Maya communities for language instruction in their maternal languages Tzotzil and Tzeltal.

We thank the Albert & Elaine Borchard Foundation, the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, and the Robert and Miriam Laughlin family for supporting these special cultural strengthening projects. They are important efforts that promote the self-worth and identity of the Maya people, many of whom still know how to speak their maternal language but want to learn how to read and write them as well.

In addition to teaching the indigenous literacy courses, Sna members produce literary works and theater in Mayan languages for children and adults.

We commend Sna and in particular also CIRMA in Guatemala for doing this valuable work of cultural preservation and outreach. See more about both these nonprofits at www.mayaedufound.org



In Belize, Roberto Kus is a Maya student who graduated from our small scholarship program with the Julian Cho Society in Punta Gorda. He now has a degree in Natural Resource Management. A brilliant young man, he is currently helping at the Julian Cho Society and hoping to continue on to a graduate studies program.

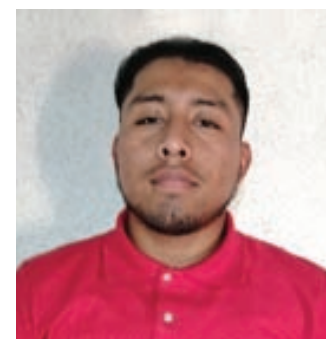
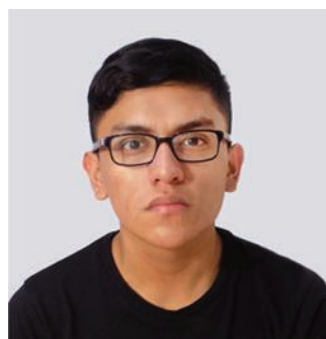
You can hear and see him in this video:

<https://bit.ly/2YmVRxR>



Pilot Project for Medical Students

A special grant allowed us this year to begin a program in Alta Verapa, Guatemala where MEF sends scholarship funds for Maya students in the medical field directly to the University Rafael Landívar, campus San Pedro Claver, located in San Juan Chamelco. Four students are benefiting already and we plan to increase the number to eight next year. We are grateful to the donors for making these scholarships possible for this medically underserved region of Guatemala.



Daniel and Irma are in Nursing School.

Mike and Esteban are in Medical School.

This year, MEF is providing scholarship support to 504 Maya students in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize. Help us invest in these bright young people by donating to MEF at

www.mayaedufound.org

Thank you!

How You Can Help

There are several ways you can help MEF:

- ✓ by making a financial contribution
- ✓ by considering a bequest to MEF
- ✓ by asking family and friends to make a donation to MEF in your honor (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions)
- ✓ by volunteering your time and expertise
- ✓ by making an in-kind contribution
- ✓ by exploring and utilizing employer matches to multiply your donations
- ✓ by spreading the word, liking us on Facebook and following us on Instagram
- ✓ by shopping online and making MEF your chosen charity, e.g., at smile.amazon.com

MEF is a 501(C)(3) public charity. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Your donation to MEF will help change lives.

Your Donations at Work

- \$ 750 covers the purchase of a laptop for a student.
- \$ 200 supports the education of a Maya student at university for one month.
- \$ 100 supports a Maya student in high school for one month.
- \$ 50 covers the cost of weekend workshops that teach individuals how to read and write their indigenous language.

Any amount helps.

Make your donation to MEF
by mail, phone, or online at
www.mayaedufound.org

Thank you!

Maya Educational Foundation

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