

## **Panimatzalam's Voice of Transformation: An Indigenous Mayan Writing Project for Youth Activism**

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This chapter tells the story of how a group of young Mayan teachers in the village of Panimatzlam, Guatemala, utilized indigenous research to write a book that engages youth in the culture, spirituality and community development of their village. Led by shaman Domingo Quino-Solis, the process began with a Mayan ceremony. The book is an example of Freire's critical pedagogy fused with indigenous cosmology, offering student activities to participate in creating the future of their community. In the article, these teachers speak about the profound impact of the process on their lives. Lessons learned contribute a concrete example of indigenous research in practice and ways to engage indigenous youth in the social and economic development of their communities.

I would like to tell an inspiring story of how a group of young educational activists in a small Mayan community in Guatemala utilized Linda T. Smith's (2001) indigenous research to create educational curriculum to keep middle school students engaged in the cultural, spiritual and economic development of their community. This story has two goals. The first goal is to present the curriculum book as an example of how to engage indigenous youth as activists in their own communities. The second goal is to present the inquiry and book process as an example of indigenous research. In the final reflection session about what the participants learned from the process, I foreground the voices of two leaders, Sandra Rosalia Quino-Juracan and Rebecca Elizabeth Xinico-Quino, from the young leaders movement ADJIMA (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud Maya—The Association of Mayan Youth for Integral Development). In this way, I hope that this article presents a way for teachers to speak directly to other teachers concerned about similar issues and projects.

The 102 page book titled *De un Juego de Naipes a Una Coordinacion Regional de Cooperativas Integrales*, which translates "From a Game of Cards to a Regional Coordination of Integral Cooperatives," is written in Spanish (See Figure 1 on page 140). Its four chapters focus on: (1) The historical development of the country, including the brutal thirty year civil war; (2) The history of the village of Panimatzlam, from its founding to the development of regional systems of cooperatives and indigenous schools; (3) More recent community development projects in the village, and (4) The process and themes of community development and the Mayan Sacred Calendar or *El Cholqij' o*. This book is currently being shared with a network of indigenous middle schools (ACEM—Asociacion de Centros de Educacion Mediano—The Association of Centers for Mayan Middle Schools) across the country, and various indigenous education organizations in Guatemala. The author of this article is also pursuing grants to publish the book for use throughout Guatemala. It is an example of critical pedagogy, where students are actively engaged in activism in their com-

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munities, while learning about their culture, philosophy, history and the process of community development.

Mayan youth in Guatemala, like many indigenous youth in the United States and around the world, are leaving their communities, cultures and languages. In Guatemala, young women enact *disvestido*, literally changing their indigenous dress for European clothes, to fit into the world of the Guatemalan capital in order to survive.

A 30 year US backed brutal civil war, ending in 1996, left 250,000 indigenous Maya murdered, with nearly the same number left homeless (Lovell, 2001). Communities were devastated and thousands are still landless. Interreligious conflict and vigilantism still reign outside the capital. However after the Peace Accords of 1996, a vibrant Mayan activism has inspired a movement of indigenous education throughout the country. This movement began working with the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) funded CNEM (Consejo Nacional de Educacion Maya - the National Council for Mayan Education), a national movement to develop indigenous curriculum throughout the country. Local indigenous education organizations engaging in this movement sprouted across the country fueled by a movement of young teachers. While this movement focuses on Pan-Mayan curriculum reform, many Mayan education activists find that it fails to engage youth in activism in their own communities and cultures, where it counts the most. They feel that education activists in the capital have another agenda than helping Mayan students where they live. In the words of Mayan shaman, Domingo Quino-Solis, the main facilitator of the present indigenous research and book project:

The specific institutions that are responsible for the education drive at the national level lack updated educational documents which are relevant to the present juncture, and they utilize imported educational materials with cultural approaches completely different from those of the Mayan people. This has been one of the reasons in the description of the book that its objective is to be an educational material, which will be for the service of the young Mayan and non-Mayan students at the middle school or secondary level, and for the adults who, in one way or another, receive formal or informal education in their advanced age. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 10)

### **The story of ADJIMA**

In the village of Panimatzalam, a movement of young Mayan professionals began taking the lead in both the educational and community development process. This movement is called ADJIMA (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud Maya—The Association of Mayan Youth for Integral Development. Antecedents of this organization began three generations ago with young leaders creating the community's first cooperative. Later, they assisted landless families in obtaining their own land. Two generations later, other young leaders created ACEM, a network of nineteen middle schools. For quite awhile now,

youth obtaining university degrees and certificates from indigenous leadership institutes have returned to the region as leaders in ADJIMA, becoming local accountants, managers, technical and agricultural experts and teachers. One of their main projects is the creation of Mayan primary schools (*Basicos*). Today, ADJIMA covers a network of many villages near the original community of Panimatzalam. They view their work in ADJIMA as both teachers and young professionals as the same project and they focus on keeping Mayan students engaged in the development of their communities while at the same time learning values of their Mayan culture, history, spirituality and language.

The present project is largely a result of ADJIMA's participation. In this article the voices of these young leaders are presented, reflecting on the impact of their inquiry and personal transformation through writing a book about the village's history. The story of ADJIMA is also integrated into the curriculum book itself.

**The inquiry team: the *Asemblea***

The research team was called the *Asemblea* (The Assembly), consisting of three members of ADJIMA in addition to Quino-Solis and myself. Felix Noé Mátzar Calel taught at the indigenous technical institute entitled *Chilam Balam* (named after an ancient text of Mayan history and philosophy). He was trained as a car mechanic and served on the village *Consejo* (town council – from now on referred to its name in the village: COCODES - The Council of Community Development) as well as being on the board of ADJIMA. Sandra Rosalia Quino-Juracan was the secretary of ADJIMA, a teacher at Chilam Balam and a teacher at the community Basico (Mayan primary school). Finally Rebecca Elizabeth Xinico-Quino taught at the ACEM school in the nearby community of Santa Cruz, was Coordinator of Civic Action in Panimatzalam, the president of ADJIMA and a coordinator of tourist guides. Each participant choose to wave their right to anonymity in my dissertation that I am currently writing because they were proud of the work they had done, and wanted to use the book as a way to work with other Mayan communities.

Elizabeth Xinico-Quino gained a renewed sense of purpose from her work on the book:

After the process that we have arrived at in this work, it has strengthened me and given me the courage to share all about my culture wherever I may be, because undoubtedly there exists many other aspects of my culture that I have lost. (Quino-Solis et al., 2006, p.15)

She also felt a specific duty in her role as teacher of Mayan culture:

The production of the book was a further motivation for me not to remain as I am, but I have to work arduously in the aspects of my culture and new forms like how to make education an instrument of change for the new generations. (Quino-Solis et al., 2006, p. 16)

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Rosalia Quino-Juracan emphasized the inquiry and the book's value in reclaiming culture that had been lost, as well as its use for youth to contemplate and reflect upon in taking action. She echoed Xinico-Quino's belief that the book would create a new movement of solidarity amongst Mayan youth:

This document will help us so that the youth, children and the population in general may know, redeem and practice the values that our ancestors have taught us and in this way, create an environment of solidarity which can elicit valuable contribution from the institutions that support Mayan Education. (Quino-Solis et al., 2006, p. 16)

### **My own background**

As for me, I am a grateful beneficiary of the work of this community. Most of my adult life has been dedicated to community transformation through community-based research. I also believe that education reform and community development are the same project. As part of a spiritually based social activist organization, PROUT or Progressive Utilization Theory (Sarkar, 1992), I seek to develop a society in harmony with the environment. PROUT stresses movements for regional self-reliance within a global network of cooperation. This organization has found success in founding large eco-city projects and training in the development of cooperatives in rural area. It opposes free market capitalism by promoting people-based economies. I realized that my own organization needed liberation from a Western-based research paradigm. That was the initial impetus that led me to the work of T. Smith (1996) and John Heron.

First arriving in Guatemala in 2003, I stayed with friends and then began a quest to find an indigenous community that would work with me. Meeting with leaders of CNEM, they suggested that I work with ACEM, stating that it was one of the most dynamic indigenous education networks in the country. Hitching a ride with the ACEM director, we ended up in his home village of Panimatlam. Then Domingo Quino-Solis invited me to stay in his house. Our first discussions were magical, both of us sharing a passion for community transformation.

Panimatlam is approximately four hours from the capital city and near the regional capital of Solola. It is about forty minutes from the tourist city of Panijachel on the shores of magnificent Lago Atitlan (Lake Atitlan). Panimatlam retains many of the qualities of a traditional Mayan village, comprised of many milpas or household plots of land, collective work projects, Mayan shrines, and annual cultural and spiritual festivals. Inhabitants are also indigenous Kiche or Kachiq'el (two of the twenty-three Mayan language groups) speakers, yet it is also a village in the modern world, especially regarding its successful community development projects, such as agricultural cooperatives, schools that teach bilingually in Spanish and native languages, radio stations, a community bank and village Consejo or council (COCODES)

Quino-Solis echoed my interest in hosting an inquiry that represented the active voice and involvement of village members. He was also interested in a book that told the story of historical transformations in the village. This is really

a story of the community taking ownership over the process and the creation of the book. I returned home sick soon after the book research process began.

### **The Indigenous inquiry process**

Like many indigenous peoples this story involves brutality enacted upon the community, yet also tells the story of a dramatic triumph in developing a strong, autonomous village. The inquiry process and book challenge modern day indigenous youth to learn from their ancestors. It is a call to action that has become the legacy of young leaders in this community for several generations.

The inquiry and curriculum book are very much in the emerging paradigm of indigenous education as espoused by Cajete in *Igniting the Sparkle* (1999). Cajete emphasizes the indigenous ontology of holism, interconnectedness, sense of timelessness, oneness with the natural world and problem posing education. However the present project is also very different in offering concrete activism and skills to involve youth in the economic and community development process of their village. I argue that this additional focus in offering youth a realistic future is critical to keeping youth at home as well as committed to their communities and cultures.

In our earliest discussions I asked Quino-Solis about the Mayan way of storytelling. He told me that Mayan tradition is always to share stories that take the listener to beginnings—the beginning of the cosmos, the beginning of the place called Panimatzalam and the stories of ancestors and elders that teach life lessons.

The research team would move from house to house, interviewing elders about the history of the community. Periodically team members would come together, sharing what they learned and revising goals and objectives for the inquiry. Then they would compile the information for the book and then write it.

Quino-Solis own story played a vital role in inspiring the process. With a Catholic religious education that opposed his own cultural heritage, he was repulsed when told by his new aunt-in-law (also a Mayan spiritual guide) on his wedding day that it was prophesized that he would become a Mayan spiritual guide or shaman. He dismissed the idea as witchcraft and carried on with his life. However, other Mayan spiritual guides would not leave it at that. They frequented his house on their travels through the region and often invited him to nearby ceremonies. One time Quino-Solis acquiesced to attending a large gathering of spiritual guides when he was pressured by a group of them who took him to Mayan shrines cross the country to begin his education as a shaman.

One night he escaped and ended up in a near fatal accident, the scars of which still tell the story. During this time, a particularly kind shaman frequented his bedside, encouraging his recovery and offering healing herbs, which he eventually accepted. He began to sense a power that was neither Catholic nor Evangelical in origin, but something from his deep past. In Quino-Solis' own mind, his tremendous suffering was leading him to surrender to Ajaw, the Mayan concept of the Great Creator.

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With this background as a Mayan leader, he was able to unite Catholics, Evangelicals and traditional Mayans in a common movement for the future of their community. He helped introduce formerly antagonistic Christians to the true story of their cultural and spiritual roots. He was also a teacher and leader in the newly indigenous education movement and a mentor to young leaders in ADJIMA. Some might find these roles mutually exclusive, but it was the very syncretic nature of these contradictions that made him an effective leader, negotiating between his deep spiritual and cultural roots and the influences and impacts of Western culture. It is much like Farella's dialogue with a Navajo medicine man in *Wind in a Jar*:

There is one community with a lot of medicine men, one that is always referred to as traditional by those who know about such things, where I had the following conversation over and over again: Are you a medicine man? Yes. Do you believe in the traditional religion? Yes. Are you a Catholic? Yes. Native American Church? Sometimes. Well, which is it, traditional, Catholic or peyote? Yes. (1993, p. 12)

Quino-Solis and I traveled the countryside, brainstorming ideas for our project and learning about one another. I witnessed his work, both as a regional shaman and as a community activist. For both of us there was an inspiring synergy amongst our spiritual philosophies and experience of activism. He would tell me about the stages of development in the village's history, and the process for our project took shape. We then developed a PowerPoint presentation about our proposed process that would be presented for approval to COCODES. They enthusiastically adopted the project and suggested that a member of the board (Matzar-Calel) join the team. It was then presented to several members of ADJIMA to attract their participation. We discussed the work of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, as well as aspects of Mayan culture, history and spirituality.

Notions of John Heron's *Collaborative Inquiry* (1996) in developing an emergent and organic inquiry that includes cycles of action and reflection and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2001), which integrates indigenous worldviews and cultural processes inspired the process. The inquiry would integrate Mayan cultural and spiritual processes into a set of stages that would result in a truly indigenous inquiry and the production of the curriculum book.

### **The Mayan blessing ceremony**

The six of us (The three young activists; Quino-Solis; his son and I) walked through Quino-Solis' *milpa* (family agricultural field) and into a stand of pine trees. We then entered a timber-lined hut...his altar. Quino-Solis formed a circle of sugar, drawing criss-crossing lines within the circle, with each point signifying one of the four directions. In reporting this ceremony I refer to the film documentation of the process as well as a detailed description of the same ceremony that is present in the region of Solola from Molesky-Poz's *Contem-*

*porary Maya Spirituality: The Ancient Ways Are Not Lost* (2006). This book is an extensive ethnographic and emic (insider's) account of the world of Mayan mysticism throughout the region of Solola, the same region where my PhD dissertation takes place. Molesky-Poz, after years cultivating relationships with Mayan shamans, offers in-depth accounts of specific mystical processes within the context of Mayan community life. As such, it is perhaps the most reliable source of cotemporary Mayan practices in Guatemala.

We all gathered around Quino-Solis, who was dressed in a traditional Mayan turban, ceremonial shirt and blue cortas (traditional short pants). He then began chanting as he formed a circle of sugar on the earth, and then streamed a line of sugar, dividing the circle in quarters, from east to west and north to south. He placed his ceremonial bundle at his side. The narrative of the ceremony from Molesky-Poz continues:

Red flowers in the west, yellow flowers in the south, white flowers in the north. They scattered handfuls of green pine needles around the circle of sugar, softening the ground. Kneeling around the hearth, [the Ajq'ijab' (Kiche name for shaman began)] to spiral the ensarte discs (pine resin), round and round sun wise until they filled the circle. [He] planted a thin green candle and then a blue one in the center of the hearth, circled the candle couplet with laurel leaves, and then ocote (pine kindling). (2006, p. xiii)

Later, I ask Quino-Solis what the importance of various colors were for the inquiry process and the book,

As for colors, color red, is immersed in the ideas, knowledge and wisdom of each person who gave their input in the process of the book. The color is black implies the energies of grandmothers and grandfathers which were invoked in the ceremony and held in the process of the book. The color yellow is linked to three generations who have given life to the community Panimatzalam. Implicit in white is the path that the three generations passed in arriving at the social condition that is currently lived. The color green is immersed in the growth of the sacred corn that is part of the everyday life of the Mayan people. (Quino-Solis, 2006, pp. 33-34)

Then the shaman continues, offering the narration of Mayan cosmology; the creation story; mention of key Mayan heroes; supplication to the Great Creator and the forces of nature, and recognition of the ancestors:

In the name of the Heart of the Creator of the Wind, in the in the name of the Heart of the Creator of Fire, in the name of the Heart of the Creator of the Earth, we give thanks to you that you work with us. You, Creator, you planted us, raised us, and you make us, work us. So, we

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give thanks to you, Creator. Thank you for all of this, all you did, all you do. Thanks for all your work. You, the one who made the road, made the mountain, who created the trees. You, the one who created all the animals of the world. You made the road for the rivers, the ones who live in the house, the ones who live in the mountains. You create all the trees, all the weeds, all the animals who take care of the mountains. You create the air, the clouds, the wind. You make the farther and the closer. You worked on it; you put your seeds on it. You created it; you worked on it. And we remember those who never give thanks to what you made. For all of your children, who never remember you, we wish that you wouldn't place any sickness on them. Don't abandon them....

Ixmucane, Ixpiyacoc, Junajpu, b'alanke, B'atz' [names of Mayan heroes]. We're here. Those who call you, these really pray, really beg you in the night of the darkness, in the day, in front of the stars, in the wind, in the drizzle, in the mists, in the thunder, in the rocks, for all those in this sacred cave [altar]. These are the words that the ancestors gave us. And that's how it started when the light hadn't come yet, when it was not clear....

Heart of Heaven, this is how our ancestors talked with the people. This is what the *Pop Wuj* says, "You are the Creator, Former. Don't leave us. Give us ancestors forever." (Molseky-Poz, 2006, p. xiv)

Then Quino-Solis recounted the 20 nawales (roughly translated as "vital energy" or vital force"—discussed in greater detail when presenting the curriculum book), that make up the Mayan Calendar; comprising 260 days in total. Each nawal represents aspects of Mayan cosmology for particular days. Reviewing these serves as a basic teaching and initiation into the philosophy of the Mayan worldview. All of human expression and that of the created universe is related to one of the 20 nawales of the calendar. This is the lens through which Mayan peoples frame and interpret their actions in the world. By discussing these nawales, we are able to understand the ontology of the inquiry. Each individual's relationship with other people in the village is impacted by the knowledge of their personal nawal. The way to understand who these people are today and the ancestors of the past, and why they developed the community as they did is related back to the nawal that identifies their particular qualities and potential. In village life, discussion of individual nawales is comparable to discussing the formation, development and manifestation of individual potential as in any culture.

Quino-Solis then waved smoke over the head of each person after which each participant lights two candles and places them on the altar. I repeat the final closing from the text of Molesky Poz:

Pay attention to what I am saying.... These are the words of our grandparents. The day comes, and we have to go back, they say. And they went back where the day ends. We are going back and we'll be



saying bye, bye. We'll have to say goodbye to our houses, to our land. We're going back to where we came from. These are the words that our granparents left, that we're remembering and mentioning now. (2006, p. xvi)

At the end of our ceremony with Quino-Solis, each participant helps spread out the ashes from the fire, until what is left merges into the large blackened spot that greeted us when we first entered the shrine. From this somewhat brief review of a two to three hour process, we glimpse the importance of the ceremony and Mayan ontology, epistemology, axiology and practice.

Back in Quino-Solis' house we brainstormed ideas about the inquiry process and the duties that each participant would take. The two female teachers, Quino-Juracan and Xinico-Quino, would conduct the bulk of the community interviews and meetings in order to narrate the history of the village. They would also collect legal documents, letters and data about the history of Panimatzalam and the country of Guatemala. Matzar-Calel would focus on acquiring graphics, photos, charts, political cartoons and illustrations that portrayed both the history of the village and that of Guatemala.

After this, Quino-Solis asked participants to brainstorm the major topics of the book. They mentioned economic, political, cultural, spiritual, agricultural, educational and ecological themes of the community's history. Then Quino-Solis wrote down the major events in history that he encouraged the participants to investigate. These included the formation of the first cooperative, the movement to acquire more land for the community, the impacts of the civil war, the development of the networks of cooperatives; the development of ACEM and the founding and development of Chilam Balam and projects such as ADJIMA.

From this point on, participants were actively holding interviews and meetings with elders and participants in various organizations, as well as researching documents about the village's history. They were also gathering parables and stories about Mayan culture as well. They would return to Quino-Solis house each week to share what they had learned and to start organizing the chapters of the book.

This story of community development begins when three brothers keep their winnings from a card game and buy consumer goods to sell to the community. This began the first cooperative. The following year, several more youth join in and a youth movement is born. Next was the phase when members began to outline, compile and finally write the curriculum book. All the information from interviews, discussions, investigations, the collection of documents and illustrations came together as the participants assisted in the organization and writing of the book.

### **Review and analysis of the curriculum book**

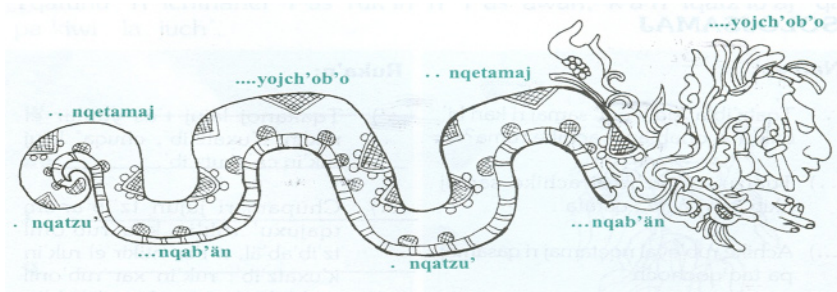
The book cover (See Figure 1 on page 140) is filled with a variety of colorful weaving patterns like ones you would find on a local huipila (woman's traditional

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blouse). The pattern and colors of each pattern then form borders for each chapter. There are also photos of the Bella Vista Cooperative, the first cooperative; the headquarters of CORCI (Coordinacion Regional de Cooperativas Integrales - The Regional Coordination of Integral Cooperatives); the village church, and a photo of the first group of youth leaders. Many pages have clip art images; cartoon drawings of political and community events; photos of events; key people in the village's history; community buildings, and Mayan symbolic art.

Quino-Solis later explained the meaning of the “Plumed Serpent” and its importance to the inquiry and to the book. Inserted at the very end of the book (See the stylized Mayan serpent in Figure 2 below) it indicates a sense of Mayan spiritual mission that is referred to again and again by members of the Asamblea To Quino-Solis, this is about addressing the importance of Mayan ontology of the past, present and future in the process of integral development and in the process of the research and production of the book.

**Figure 2:** The Plumed Serpent



The head of the serpent is represented in *Yojch'ob'o*, signifying “to think of the past to strengthen the present as a way to improve the future.” This word appears again on top of the second curve of the serpent. The first curve in the upper body, termed *Nqetamaj* and appearing again towards the end of the tail signifies “to understand the past, the present, and the future.” In the lower part of the body and repeated in the first lower curve and at the end of the tail, *Nqatzu* signifies “to see the past, the present and the future.” The final curve, *Nqab'am* situated at the bottom of the head and again in the second bottom curve, signifies “taking action, taking into account the past, to strengthen the improvement of the future” (Quino-Solis, 2006, p. 40).

The text of the book is an example of critical pedagogy. Founded by Paulo Freire (1995) and best explained in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critical pedagogy is a strategy of teaching that asks the reader to reflect upon and challenge their own life experience and then to take action about issues that concern their daily lives. Freire, through his Spanish language classes, showed students illustrations of their present exploited lives, often in the form of drawings of people in harsh factory conditions. Then he would show them illustrations of people in idealized lives, living a pristine life in harmony with nature and in harmony with one another. In his teachings he would then ask them to take action in opposition

of oppression and to achieve the goals of these idealized dreams. When asked about the impact of Freire upon the book, Quino-Solis stated:

That which concerns the pedagogical studies of Paulo Freire, to this point, has a certain impact on this book. During my studies at the University, we have utilized educational materials focused on popular education, educational invoking, as an element of support in the search of integral development of the communities. (Quino-Solis, 2006, p. 35)

The book follows Freirian imagery and the problem posing dialectic that follows as well. The first two chapters chronicle the exploitation of the rural Maya by a succession of corrupt politicians, religious figures and the influence of the U.S. government and U.S. multinationals. It also refers to the Freirian process of conscientization as a major theme of community development. To the authors, this term refers to villagers identifying and fighting the cause of exploitation, and then awakening to the power of their own participation in shaping their futures: "To invite, convince, encourage, and make people understand the importance of their participation in the meetings scheduled in the communities, that is called conscientization" (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 89).

With each revelation of exploitation, the reader is asked about how these experiences impacted village life in Panimatzalam. By engaging students in how the wider political specter also impacts their own lives, it follows Freirian practice by asking what the life of the exploited feels like. In this case students are asked what it would have meant to their elders to experience exploitation.

The critical response is illustrated in subsequent chapters, which chronicle the development of the village. They cover the initial organization of the village, the development of the first cooperative, the development of religious unity, and the emergence of the regional integral development movement (CORCI) and the movement for Mayan Middle Schools (ACEM). Within each chapter, and especially at their end, students are asked to reflect upon the experience of the progress and transformation of the village and how this impacts their own choices in life. As each chapter proceeds, students are challenged to act in greater levels of engagement to create a future in a participatory and collective manner that benefits everyone in the village.

In the introduction it is stated that students would be challenged to action through the text, and this is emulated at the end of each chapter through a section titled *Manos de Obra* or "Hands to Work" (also translated as "handy work"). The image of a seated Mayan scribe (left), signals this discourse. This is the inquiry team's engagement of youth again in a Freirian process and the impetus to act upon what is learned in their daily lives. Regarding the importance of *Manos de Obra* in the book, Quino-Solis stated:

The questions direct the youth to solve problems, that are planted after studying each chapter, which is described in the work featured in the Mayan icon, title 'Hands to Work' that the students are able to realize

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in the educational annals or after them. The methodological strategy of group and individual work planted in hands to work is for much practice and success, but, depending on the responsibilities of the learners. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 7)

The beginning of the first chapter is dedicated to dialoging with youth and setting the tone to entice youth into action:

Esteemed young people, I am very glad to be with you with the hope that this meeting may strengthen you to learn about the arduous work of our ancestors who lived in this place of land where we were born. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 1)

Later folkloric tales teach parables and call students to action. The authors also use metaphors from Mayan life, especially those that are central to Mayan worldview, such as the significance of corn, and importance of elders:

I invite all of you to start a journey on the path where our history has passed, which is like the mountain ranges of our mother earth, some high, some medium-sized and other of flower heights.... Certainly, you are left to ponder how much to contribute your grain of corn, and that way allow the continuation of the integral development of our communities our fathers desired so much. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 1)

And further, from an insert on the first page:

The ancestors of the community remembered in each gathering that the youth are the future leaders of our development. For the same reason, they need to take responsibility for collective work, from fifteen years of age, so that they understand how to live together, and how to participate with their elders, and in this way the seed of unity will not die. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 1)

The introduction of the reader has philosophical stances that are presented as values or principles that pervade the history of the village:

It can be said that what helped them (our fathers) to achieve the social development of our community is the respect, the will, the love and the unity amongst all, without any discrimination and as a result our community exists as it does today. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 2)

### **The geopolitical situation: The October Revolution, 1944–1954**

The October Revolution section tells the story of the democratic and agrarian reforms enacted under the leadership of President Dr. Juan Jose' Arevalo. The period from 1944-1954. This was an era of economic abundance throughout

the country and especially for the campesino (peasants). There were local banks established and incentives for small farmers. Networks were developed for export products. However, rich European land owners and US corporations, afraid of losing their land, funded a movement of violence and brutality (Quinto-Solis, et al., 2004).

This is an important national backdrop from which light is shed on the movement for the integral development of Panimatزالam. After forming the first cooperative, the military stole the goods sold there, forcing the cooperative to close for two years. During this time there was widespread kidnapping and murder by the military within and surrounding Panimatزالam. The bodies were buried in clandestine cemeteries. After two years, their burials were exhumed and those killed were given a burial in the Panimatزالam cemetery. At the end of the chapter is a memorial to and list of those slain, “as a reverence to them and a reminder to those of us who are fortunate to read this text” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 10).

The pedagogical purpose of the book is re-emphasized at the end of this section, with the authors suggesting that “it is important that you share your knowledge in class, with the objective of sharing what you have learned in the first part of the text.” Then students are encouraged to read on as a special task, with a reminder that it may cause sorrow as they learn about the brutal violence supported by the government and perpetrated by the military against thousands of rural Mayan people.

The next section titled “The Bitter Fruits of 1970–1996” is a chronicle of the infamous thirty-year Civil War. During this time military forces used the excuse of fighting a largely fictitious guerilla army to subdue and enact genocide upon indigenous Mayan peoples. Village members hid in the nearby mountains. Family members were killed and their bodies never returned. Work ceased and people stopped traveling out of fear: “The corpses of dead people were scattered along the roads of the country, with missing arms, eyes or tongue, a sign that they were brutally tortured. From Panimatزالam to Panajachel the tortured lay on the road.” Then there is a special message to students by the authors to personalize this narrative in a style of storytelling:

It was truly years of much pain, terror, fear and insecurity. Some of the people alive today were also included in the black list of death, but thanks to the protection of AJAW and Mother Nature, death was not permitted to touch us. That is how I could relate these experiences and if I am able to tell you another experience at some other opportunity, I will with much pleasure. (Quino-Solis, et al., pp. 16-17)

At the end of this chapter students are asked to review “what touched your heart the most.” Students are then asked to form groups of six in order to begin a reflection and investigation activity. They are asked to write about:

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- What was the cause of the internal war?
- What changes occurred after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996?
- Who benefited by these Accords?
- Why do schools not teach the real meaning of revolution?
- Investigate the history of education in other countries where revolution has been experienced. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 18)

Finally students are asked to develop their own text of history in order to develop a plenary—an interactive session within their groups.

The next chapter leads us through the story of the founding and initial functioning of the village. This begins through the early stages of community organization, to the first cooperative and ending with the founding of Chilam Balam (the indigenous technical institute). Next comes the defining story for the collective development of the village. It is the story repeated often of how a group of four brothers were playing cards in the corridor of the school led to the formation of the first cooperative. This occurred in April 1965. After winning at least 100 *Quetzals*, one brother asked the other three to contribute the same amount of money. This brother would then sell fruits, vegetables, candies and biscuits during Holy Week. These goods were sold for a total of 800 *Quetzals* and a total profit of 400.

To the authors, this was an exciting breakthrough, where the benefit of the spirit of collective work and unity began to evolve. More meetings were held in the community, and more youth continued to join the enterprise:

At this point Quino-Solis and Juan Morales Quino; two original members of this young leaders group, created a vision for the long-term development of the cooperative. The goal would be to expand our cooperative in the coming years to generate jobs for the members and leave in inheritance a better future for our sons and daughters. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 33)

After this, the authors ask students to rest from the story of the village and listen to a Mayan parable. They entreat students to listen and learn from the stories of their grandfathers, told while gathering around a fire:

When grandparents narrate something, it is always with educative values as they wish for their children to be obedient, responsible, educated and good workers, so that they may know how to make one's living when they become adults. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 39)

The parable tells the story of a lazy son who would daydream all day, and then answered yes to his father when asked him as to whether his work was progressing. One day the boy spied a turkey buzzard and grew jealous of the care free life that the bird seemed to have; easily getting food, not doing work, not tiring,

and not having to change clothes. The buzzard plucked his feathers and put on the clothes of the boy, at the same time that the boy took off his clothes and put on the feathers. In this way, they exchanged lives. Soon the boy was repenting his plight, having to eat dead carcasses to survive. One day, however he thought that the smoke from a mountain indicated the cooked carcasses of animals. Diving down, he realized too late that the smoke he thought was from a cooked animal was really a mountain fire. Thus he met his demise. The obvious lesson for the reader is that nothing is gained through lethargy; they are to take this story and compare it with the lives of the founders of the village.

I quote the *Manos de Obra* at the end of this section, again a didactic tool for action and reflection in full detail:

Young students, you have realized bit-by-bit, step-by-step, shoulder-to-shoulder, how the inhabitants of Panimatzalam have achieved progress and transformation for the benefit of all. Now, please analyze and make comparisons of this legend with the life of the first dwellers of Panimatzalam:

- (1) Make a description of how the idea of organizing themselves came about to the first inhabitants of the community
- (2) Make an investigation about the perspectives of Panimatzalam in the coming years from old people
- (3) Make a description from your readings done up to this point of the second chapter - what touched you most and how the people of the community related to each other?
- (4) What concerns should the residents of communities address in regards to collective projects. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 41)

The next challenge in the book was that most of the residents of the village were tenant farmers. They worked the land under contract from an owner that managed land throughout the country. The problem was that whether crops were successful or not, farmers had to pay the same amount for renting the land. If they could not pay, the farmers were forced to work extra time on the farms owned by the same owner on the South Coast as payment. The result was a great deal of suffering due to low wages, deprivation of housing, lack of treatment for diseases and lack of education for children. On these plantations up to two hundred people slept in a single large hut.

For the book's authors another major step towards the goal of integral development was the purchase of land formerly owned by *Ladinos* by the village of Panimatzalam for the landless community members. With this step, families were able to quit their near slave jobs on the coastal plantations. The farm contractors, who preyed upon family weaknesses, disappeared and every family could then provide for their own food security.

Seeing the political conflicts that often short circuited projects in surrounding communities, the members of Bella Vista Cooperative met together to form a regional network of agricultural cooperatives. Aware of the development of

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cooperatives in villages in the region of Panimatزالam, members met to discuss ways for other cooperatives to coordinate their work together.

The next major step in the development of the community was to begin to send youth to three indigenous leadership institutes; one in nearby San Andreas Semetabaj; one in city of Santiago on the shores of Lake Atitlan, and an additional one in the ancient capital of Antigua. While hundreds of thousands of indigenous Maya were leaving their communities, desperate to find work in the capital or in U.S., this new group of educated professionals returned to Panimatزالam as public accountants, rural teachers and managers in local and neighboring cooperatives and community businesses. Soon, these educated youth had formed their own organization, the Association for the Integral Development of Mayan Youth (ADJIMA), and were adamant about starting a school for professional education in the community.

At this, we come to the close of another chapter. As in other chapters, there is a personal note to students about using the knowledge learned from their readings, and there is a *Manos de Obra* narrative, calling students to reflect upon what they learn and take action. The note to students begins:

Very good, my dear students. I think that you have taken much experience from the wide and narrow paths, and for the short and long paths that you have crossed in the journey of the projects for collective integral development that are described in this valuable educational text. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 59)

Students are then reminded that the purpose of this document is not merely for reading; it is for carrying forward the “frontiers of our work.” They are invited to reflect and comment with their friends in a way that will help them to build an understanding to carry forward with their mission: “that has been entrusted to you from the Heart of the Sky and the Heart of Mother Earth” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 60).

As in the previous chapter, there is a moral parable attached to the end of the chapter that brings to vivid life the exploitation that families experienced at the coastal plantations and the story of unity and collective work that brought the community forward in its progress. This story is of Isabel, a fictional character, who is much like the children of Panimatزالam whose families had to travel to the coastal plantations as indentured laborers. She had no change of clothes, and there was hardly any food. Her mother hid green bananas in her shawl to give her. Isabel promised to help her mother earn money if they stayed at home. In the afternoons, after her work in the fields, she studied to become an organizer in community development. She worked in the community, “organizing the people, training and educating them about ways to avoid returning to the coastal plantations, telling her own story as an example” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 61).

The *Manos de Obra* after this story, as in other chapters, invites students to reflect upon the contents of the chapter. Again, students are asked about what touched them most about the history of the development of Panimatزالam. Sug-



gestions are made for the youth to begin to engage the community in a number of community programs, including cultural nights; community forums; photographic exhibitions and radio programs. Students are reminded to plan activities strategically with clear methods, contents, time schedules, and responsibilities. They are encouraged to solicit the support of their companions in order to carry out projects in a “dynamic and participative way.” Then they are minded to develop presentations that carry a message that catches attention and “gets through to their life” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 64).

The beginning of the following chapter gives a quick review of the development of four public schools; the developments and improvements of the Bella Vista Cooperative; the founding of CORCI, The Regional Coordination of Cooperatives; COCODES, the village council; and the Union y Fuerza de Mujeres (the Union and Strength of Women) discussed previously. Then a more recent women’s organization founded in 1999 is introduced that runs an academy for women’s economic development, teaching hairdressing, sewing, and typing. There is a second corn mill in this building and here also women produce fabrics for export. There is also further elaboration of the work of ADJIMA, also mentioned earlier in the book. This organization has grown to include both professional and non-professional youth and also includes those working in schools in the region of Solola. Their participation in primary schools in the region has inspired a greater number of youth to continue their education at CHILAM BILAM.

The following chapter is a purely pedagogical text, teaching the stages and processes of community development through a personal sense of activism. It begins with the story of Rigoberta Menchu Tun, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, as an example of a leader who paved the way for others. She spoke out about the suffering of Mayan people and drew international attention to their cause. Readers are minded to learn from these leaders and to follow in their footsteps, and according to the authors, changes in communities have to occur, and for this reason participatory action is encouraged, inspiring new ideas and changes that support integral development. What is left is to learn “what and how to act for the benefit of those living in a specific place” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 85).

Readers are then given a comprehensive vision—a set of values and principals, a respect for Mayan spirituality, a plan of action, a nexus of services and a coordination of organizations that defines integral development:

When, in a given community, there is sufficient food, land for cultivation, a decent house to live in, schools for children to study and other basic diversified educational centers; if there are higher education schools, educational centers with practical and productive workshops, sports fields, community assembly halls, health dispensaries and low cost medicines available to the people, potable water for consumption as well as respect for the rights of people, equality for all, and where every man, woman, youth and child are organized, we refer to that as

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integral community development. In addition, if we can count on an updated education, which takes into account the different cultures of people, according to the region, all inclusive, free from class, religious or any other discrimination; an education that fosters unity, respect of mother nature and the harmonious practice amongst all as brothers and sisters within a cosmographic horizon, that I call integral development. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, pp. 85-86)

Next comes themes of integral development, as processes essential to the success of the above vision. The first theme is that “communities are changing, they are not static.” We are told that community life has a rhythm of changes; changes in population, culture, language, dress, script, work, climate and spirituality. Those responsible for change are responsible for accommodating for these rhythms. With sensitivity to diversity in age, social status and the participation of women, and moving from the family to the group, community, region and nation, “inculcate an education with social meaning for life’s formation” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 86).

The second theme is to “break the paradigm of silence.” This is to change the situation of people who have been silenced due to the “fear, terror, divisiveness, exclusion and extreme poverty” from the 36 years of civil war. Community activities inspire people to share their stories and to stand up against continued exploitation. Added to this are the dogmatic preachings of religious and cultural doctrines that have been inculcated in people by the exploiters to cultivate passivity. Examples include: “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, “Seek the things from above and not those of the earth” and “Why should we organize ourselves when Christ is already coming?” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, pp. 87-88). These and similar doctrines are heard often in public squares, in meetings and at religious activities. People manipulated by those in power often refuse to attend community meetings because they consider this a sin.

The third theme is carrying out conscientization meetings. Conscientization meetings for the authors have the goals of addressing solutions for socio-psychological problems. In meetings, people challenge the dogmatic preachings mentioned above that relegated people to poverty, and realize that there are no distinctions based on class. The challenge is then for people to work in unison and to collaborate in contributing their ideas for future generations.

As mentioned at the beginning of the book, the way to conscientization is: “To invite, convince, encourage and make people understand the importance of their participation in the meetings scheduled in the communities, that is called conscientization” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 89). The idea is to help people to overcome their negativities, by explaining the benefits of working together. A saying from the *Popul Wuj* (the ancient book of the Maya) is then quoted to emphasize the goal for all to move ahead in unison: “that neither two nor three lag behind, all are united to continue ahead” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 87).

The next theme is “Organize to educate.” The idea here is to gather people together, producing a collective strength that rises above the individual, where

every individual has something to contribute. The educational aspect of this theme is show youth and children through personal example with the “object of making them learn how to work in community, and to manage collective projects for the benefit of those living in communities” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 89).

Once a collective effort begins, then basic steps in organizing need to be followed, deciding who forms part of the organization, who leads it, what resources exist, what the objective is and where it will function: “We refer to all this process as organization and capacitation” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 89). The authors draw an analogy with the work of ants, bees and others: They are well-organized, have their own responsibilities, and work unselfishly for the collective good, able to move large piles of earth overnight through collective work. At the end of this section, students are invited to take action based upon what was learned in the chapter. Students are asked to review their purpose for being born; which is unveiled in their particular nawal (vital force tied to particular calendar days).

Following this is another message to students challenging them to review what they have learned throughout the entire text, and what they have put into practice. Students again are admonished not just to read the text, but also to put into practice what they have learned in their communities:

Dear students, I invite you to take up the great challenge of those great people whom we owe much for what we are enjoying nowadays. They brought nothing with them of what they labored upon this earth, before taking birth in this world.

From mother earth they (the ancestors) learned everything that they did for the good of humanity. If this is so, think about and investigate yourself: why did your parents beget you, what mission do you bring upon earth, and towards where are you going, as one who doesn't know where he/she is heading is lost. Before making your corresponding work we propose that you read attentively the specific contents of the 20 nawales of the Sacred Mayan Calendar, which will help you a lot. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 95)

### ***El Cholq'ij' o Calendario Sagrado Maya: The Mayan Sacred Calendar***

Finally, there is an explanation and description of the full Mayan calendar, called the *Cholq'ij'o*. Considering that the sun, the moon, the stars, and earth and the people are all interconnected, it is important to consult the calendar in daily life, which elaborates the forces of nature and the twenty nawales which are the vital energies that pervade life. I continue with my dialogue about the calendar begun earlier in this article with information from the text. Each day is associated with a particular nawal; which tells us when it is suitable to carry out the wide variety of activities in the daily life of Mayan people, from commercial activities, to planting and harvesting, or celebrating marriage. Each of these life forces describes the character and traits of the people born on those days. The translation and meaning of each of these were passed down from the oral traditions

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of “our grandmothers and grandfathers” as well as from Mayan spiritual guides. Reading over and contemplating each nawal reveals an elaborate philosophy of life, which is the Mayan worldview. It also reveals the variety of human traits, values and ethical principals that make each person a leader in their own way. There are three nawaes to take into account with each person, including the day of conception, birth, and the avocation of the person (determined by shamans).

Next to each of these life forces in the text is the symbol or glyph of the nawal that helps form the symbols of the Mayan alphabet. Rather than going into the details of each one, below is a sample of five of them to show what they mean and how they are applied in life:

- *Batz* means monkey or thread. This is the life force of arts and textiles, and it is a propitious day of activity, finalizing or breaking off an affair. People born on this day are sculptors, engravers or musicians. The positive traits of people born on this day include being positive, intelligent, friendly and reserved. The negative traits include anger, unbelieving, aggressive and ambitious.
- *Ix* signifies the Jaguar. This is the nawal of nature and Mayan altars. It is a propitious day for requesting physical and mental strength. The positive traits are being valiant, reserved and having good health. The negative traits being enamored, lazy, unbelieving and seeking pleasure.
- *No'j* signifies idea or wisdom. It is the life force of intelligence, and is a propitious day for requesting wisdom, talent and good thoughts. The positive traits include: good ideas, good imagination and the quality of investigation. The negative qualities include being enamored, vain, unbelieving and vicious.
- *Toj* signifies offering, payment and rain. This is the nawal of the four lords of fire, indicating a day for settling and paying off debts. The positive traits are being trustworthy, visionary, pleasing, and sensing foreboding. The negative traits include being lazy, ambitious, a sinner, destructive and fragile.
- *Keme* signifies death and the master of darkness. This is the nawal of all types of death, and is a propitious day for requesting death to stay away or to grace the dying with peace. The positive traits are to have wisdom, wealth and to be a protector or philosopher. Negative traits are being prone to slander and diseases and being enamored and domineering.

At the end of this chapter is the final *Manos de Obra*. As in other chapters, students are asked to reflect upon what they learned and to take specific action from what they learned:

Have you read the entire educational text? Very good, a lot of congratulations from myself. Have you put into practice what you have learned

from the book while. . . in the diverse pages? If not, think and analyze that it is not enough to read the text for the reading's sake. Do something so that on you may become a better leader and a better professional. Demonstrate to the humanity that you have the capacity but you don't have to shout it to the four winds, and it is necessary too show your example, and by doing so, you will gain the confidence of your fellow beings. Now investigate why and for which purpose there is so much talk about community development....

Investigate when and why people turn to be leaders according to the Sacred Mayan Calendar. Form groups of four or five people and make a newspaper mural putting down or pasting newspaper clippings with drawings that represent the types of existing leaders. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, pp. 100 & 102)

Students are then encouraged to develop plans for their activities, stating objectives, program and contents of tasks, taking into account that the work of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Then there is a personal parting note to students:

Well, as you know everything has a beginning and an end. These have been the experiences and knowledge that has been achieved through the year, which I hope, may be of much use for you to share with your parents, friends and other associates.... the Heart of Heaven and the Heart of Earth permit to grant us some more years of life and the possibility of sharing with you arising one more time, it will be one more opportunity. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, p. 102)

At the bottom of this last page is the Plumed Serpent referenced at the beginning of the book discussion. Its curves are metaphors for phases in the inquiry and book process, for example, "to understand the past, present and future" and engaging in action, "taking into account the past, to strengthen the improvement of the future" (Quino-Solis, et al., 2004, pp. 101- 102).

### **Final reflection**

Approximately one year after the first draft of the book was completed, I phoned Quino-Solis to ask him about how reflection was utilized in the inquiry. He reported back that the team would often meet to discuss their experiences during the process. The team also kept meeting after the completion of the book, because their consciousness had been raised through the process, and they wanted to continue to apply ideas learned in the inquiry. One concrete outcome was that they began working together to develop a fruit tree cooperative with students in ACEM schools. They were putting their knowledge of community development into practice through a pedagogy that engaged youth in real world work. In this sense I can report, that because of the book and the inquiry, youth were indeed engaged in developing the future of their community.

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Following are the answers to reflection questions posed by both Quino-Solis and myself by Quino-Solis and two of the leaders from ADJIMA (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006). A key question begins this section, “What inspired you to become involved with the book? In answer, Quino-Juracan addresses a very personal mission of the value of the teachings of elders and the lessons of history to the future of youth:

My inspiration was imagining the importance of the ability to redeem our history and shape it into a document that really benefits the community of Panimatزالam as well as the educational community at the municipal, regional and national levels. The compilation of all the facts will help us to appreciate our elders and redeem values that lamentably have been lost nowadays, which will help our young women and men, children, and all the people in general to contemplate upon, considering the book as a document of our Mayan culture. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 11)

Quino-Solis mentioned the value of the book as a tool to teach not only in Panimatزالam, but other villages in the region of Solola the important processes that shape identity and transformation:

Personally, the idea arose for the publication of a book, which can serve as a documentary compilation of the historical process of the Panimatزالam community, wherein the processes of organization, identity and culture, development, transformation, and the present conjunctural situation are immersed. It will be a valuable patrimony of the community of Panimatزالam and an example for different villages of the diverse departments that form the Guatemalan State. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 2)

Asked about how the Mayan blessing ceremony made them feel, Quino-Juracan and Quino-Solis echo each other that before undertaking any significant enterprise, it is a custom to ask the permission of AJAW (God), and then to ask for strength and support to obtain the objectives of the work. For Xinico-Quino, it is a way to communicate with the Supreme Being. Quino-Solis added a more specific response about the meaning of AJAW, the way in which AJAW will support their work, and the specific benefits this will have for the book:

In the Mayan civilization, before beginning any work, you always need to invoke AJAW, the spirit of the ancestors, and the energy of our mother earth, as a medium to request strength, knowledge and effective functioning of our sensorial bodies; [and] active participation of the investigators and interviewees to obtain the objective of what one proposes, specifically, the publication of the book. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 19)

A second question, also rewritten by Quino-Solis, asked, “What is the impact of the Mayan calendar book” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p.19). Xinico-Quino responded that the important support of AJAW brings a spiritual presence throughout the book process:

Inside the Mayan culture, the practice and value of spirituality is fundamental in all that is felt, and [it] is not only at the beginning of activities, but also during the process that has already occurred many times, certain improvisations that one also consults to AJAW (God) and the nawales of our ancestors to set our path for the most part of the development of the work and thus successfully until the finish of the planned work (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 24)

For Quino-Solis there is a broader importance of the ceremony to the success of the book. Grounding the book in a Mayan ceremony brings a heightened sense of importance and commitment from the community. We get the sense that the book would not have been a truly “Mayan” enterprise without the ceremony:

The impact of the Mayan Ceremony, in the process of the work done in relation to the investigation that was required for the publication of the book, was very important. One can notice palpably the impact, that at the time of visiting the families they did not limit themselves in providing certain information. The elders and leaders became interested in the book, and they emphasized immediately that the book is the patrimony and the cultural wealth of Panimatzalam. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 5)

He then gave a concrete example of the way in which the ceremony brought a greater participation from the community and more specifically from CO-CODES:

When we held the community meeting to present the initial data and draft of the book, the Community Council of Development (COCODES) contributed their ideas to improve the same. The positive contributions of the Council and Elders, along with the active participation of the community demonstrate that the celebration of the Mayan Ceremony has and will have its impact in the process and conclusion of the book. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 11)

Xinico-Quino mentioned the importance of the medium of oral traditions through parents, and adds that living in the midst of other cultures includes additional responsibilities. Quino-Juracan and Quino-Solis emphasize the importance of working from the impetus of elders—it is due to them that customs and traditions continue. It is also they who help new generations assimilate new knowledge.

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Another question addressed the Mayan process of inquiry that was applied to the book. Quino-Solis phrases this question as “What was the Mayan process [of inquiry] before producing the book?” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 20), From the answers, I would rephrase the question to be one of how a Mayan process of inquiry was applied in the production of the book?

Quino-Juracan repeated her previous statement about the importance of seeking the support and acknowledgement of AJAW “who is the owner of all from whom protection, strength, understanding are requested?” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 20). Then she mentioned the importance of seeking the ongoing approval, support and comment from COCODES, which is made up of representatives of all the committees of Panimatzalam and represents the authority of the village. Xinico-Quino specifically mentions Paq’uch, which translates as a sense of mutual support and solidarity:

Within the Mayan culture, a purely integral task is practiced in the midst of the family, with the objective that all work is completed with success and within the community—that work is done in a reciprocal manner, which the Mayan people call Paq’uch. That means work amongst everyone and in this way a good result is achieved and done in less time; practicing a value of Mayan culture that is solidarity and mutual support. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 16)

Quino-Solis echoed Xinico-Quino:

In the Mayan culture, to begin any type of work, whether spiritual, material or physical, there exist certain disciplines that one needs to respect, which are derived ever since the conception of our ancestors. The initial process always takes into account the Mayan ceremony, as an alternative of invoking the energies of our ancestors, and in this way, obtain without any problems the success of the work planned (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 5).

Quino-Solis’ voice in recognizing the authority and role of COCODES was also more active. With the following passage we gain great insight into the essential role that this body plays regarding all projects in the community, and this certainly impacts the process of the inquiry and the book:

The meeting with the Council of Elders, that has been transformed into a new organizing effort as the Council of Community Development COCODES, which is the highest body of the community, is where the realization of any investigation is planned. They are the ones who give information about the development of the program to be implemented.... Thereafter, the investigation team went to carry out the group, individual and organizational interviews. The finished investigation is presented once again to the Council, who gives approval as to whether the writ-



ten facts are true or if it is better to modify them. Then it is submitted again after having made the changes and corrections recommended by the Council and in this way proceeds with the formal description of the work realized or planned. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 15)

Quino-Juracan related the question to a very personal sense of mission and especially her role in helping youth to embrace and feel pride in their culture:

As a former student of a Mayan educational center, it has raised my consciousness to value our culture because it is one of the surprising cultures due to its values, customs and traditions that have produced great personalities in our lives. And I am inspired to contribute a little so that other young people may find satisfaction with their identity that they may be proud of wherever they go, along with the practice of our values, customs and traditions. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 11)

Xinico-Quino expressed the urgency for people to practice the essential values of their culture with pride for their roots. In this way all people will be able to contribute to insure the life of their culture. Quino-Solis returned to the abiding mission that he brings to all of his responsibilities as a Mayan priest as well as a leader of the community development process in the village and the process of transformation for the entire country:

My experience within the process of Mayan Education and the continuous practice of Spirituality, as the fundamental base of the Mayan Worldview, has infused in me a mission and a great challenge to continue supporting the community in the field of education; specifically the youth, as future architects of the collective transformation of the communities of diverse municipalities that form the departments of the southwest of our country. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 3)

Quino-Juracan reported,

During the process of interviews with the members of the community, we learned the importance of solidarity and support of each one of the community members; as everyone possesses information or a story of great importance. When cooperation exists we can achieve the objectives that we intend to achieve. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 13)

Xinico-Quino noted,

I learned the histories of our people; the wisdom in the thoughts of the elders, only that no one has been interested to collect, write and shape them into a document as the patrimony of the author and of the community. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 16)

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Finally, Quino-Solis added the question “What was the process to support liberation, intellectually, culturally and spiritually?” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 14). He answered it in a very personal way regarding his own path of liberation:

In the process of my personal academic formation and in the discovery of my vocation, I have come to realize that every person brings with himself certain talents that move him/her to exercise his/her mission among fellow beings. Thus, inquietude was engendered in me to reveal in broad daylight what I feel, what I achieved by studying and what inspired me to produce the book. All these are immersed within spiritual, cultural and intellectual liberation, which has made me feel content and joyful after finishing a valuable project for future generations. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 4)

Xinico-Quino talked about an inner drive of inspiration, understanding the work of community and its own development, and “witnessing people that love their community, [that were] desirous to see its transformation and progress” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 21). Quino-Juracan spoke of the initial phase when Quino-Solis sought out participants who were professionals, both in the realm of education as well as leaders in the community’s process of community development. Quino-Solis is specific about the importance of the personal skills as well as the motivation and maturity of potential participants:

Regarding the organization of the work team, first we analyzed the profile and responsibilities that people needed to do, the willingness to complete a collective work, the mastery of our mother tongue, the personal development to carry out the interviews, the ability to transcribe data, the clarity in the presentation of questions and answers, etc (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 11)

The next set of questions dealt with how and to what extent the inquiry process and book production engaged youth in the creation of their future. A second concern was to understand to what extent the process focused on the process of community development? In answer to the question, “What is your objective for writing this book?” Quino-Juracan mentioned the book’s value as an educational tool for youth to contemplate the values of Mayan culture. For Xinico-Quino it’s purpose is for youth to learn about the real accounts of history. To Quino-Solis as the major author and the facilitator of the process, he again lamented the lack of publications that addressed the struggle of specific communities. This was one of his driving reasons for beginning the book in the first place.

Quino-Solis was also more elaborate and specific about the purpose of the book for youth. One of the driving purposes of the book for Quino-Solis was to address the problem in existing educational materials, which are neither relevant to this phase in history (when youth must create the future of their communities), nor relevant to Mayan culture in general:

At present, in the social sphere, the specific institutions that are responsible for the education drive at the national level lack updated educational documents which are relevant to the present juncture, and they utilize imported educational materials with cultural approaches completely different from those of the Mayan people. This has been one of the reasons in the description of the book that its objective is to be an educational material, which will be for the service of the young Mayan and non-Mayan students at the middle school or secondary level, and for the adults who, in one way or another, receive formal or informal education in their advanced age. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 2)

Xinico-Quino answered that the book offers a new vision and a new methodology for the future. Quino-Juracan concluded,

This document will help us so that the youth, children and the population in general may know, redeem and practice the values that our ancestors have taught us and in this way, create an environment of solidarity which can elicit valuable contribution from the institutions that support Mayan Education. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 11)

Quino-Solis added,

The utilization of the book for young students is for them to know, understand, practice and take to themselves, from a humanitarian social life, which is inclusive and non partisan, a work with an integral and collective approach based on Mayan Culture, that will contribute to the life of the youth as professional protagonists of social change in the community of Panimatzalam, and within the scope of action of the CNEM and ACEM as governing bodies of Mayan Education at the national level. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, pp. 2-3)

Xinico-Quino mentioned the importance of teachers as educational advocates and the importance of the book as a tool for future generations. Quino-Juracan repeated the importance of the book in redeeming history and social values at all levels of education that have been lost, which will help youth and all people to use the book to contemplate upon. She suggested that youth themselves be involved in creating documents based upon similar actions from the book to "Motivate the youth about the importance of shaping important deeds into documents that may serve as evidence of support for the educational centers" (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 21).

Xinico-Quino stated that youth will benefit from the book as they learn about the process of community development in the village. Quino-Juracan again emphasized the importance of imparting the community development theme of unity and solidarity when engaging youth:

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As a teacher of education I am fortunate to be able to share ideas with children and youth and make them understand the importance of redeeming values that we have lost as well as to encourage the solidarity and unity, respect and cooperation to achieve work efficiently. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 14)

Finally Xinico-Quino stated that youth will benefit from the book as they learn about the process of community development in the village.

In answer to my question, “What are the important themes for the book?” participants repeated many of the same convictions that are mentioned in other sections. After all, the way that people are engaged, the way that culture is addressed, and the way that solidarity developed in the village are all focused upon an abiding philosophy that pervades history. To Quino-Juracan these themes were illustrated through the persistence of unity and solidarity that are reflected in the history of the development of cooperatives. She also mentioned the lessons learned from the Guatemalan Civil War. She believed that learning itself is a major theme, and as with Quino-Solis, that suffering can bring additional insights. Xinico-Quino emphasized the theme of transformation itself, and the development of the various forms of organizations, which are exemplary for surrounding communities and other regions of the country.

As when narrating the story of the community’s transformation, Quino-Solis referred back to the importance of the formation of the original cooperative, which was based upon the winnings of a card game by three brothers. To Quino-Solis, this step was a great leap in consciousness that formed the groundwork for future change: “the cooperative organization was transformed into a coordination of organizations with the institutions working in the surrounding communities” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 7).

In another statement, Quino-Solis echoed Quino-Juracan’s emphasis on learning from the suffering from the Civil War. Transformation here is the community’s ability to persist and continue to develop and transform, even in the face of death and the ransacking of cooperatives:

Another of the important theme described in the book are the consequences of the internal war we experienced personally that remind us of the human losses we have suffered. These are political situations of social exclusion imposed by the governments in power, which did not permit the impoverished population to come out of the difficult situation that they encountered. At the time of the internal war, our companions and members were kidnapped and killed and our cooperative organization ransacked. Nevertheless, they couldn’t extinguish our organization. (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 9)

A final question, asked by Quino-Solis was “[What are the] important values of being a member of Panimatzalam?” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 19) elicited similar responses to the comments above. Participants mentioned the importance

of the “Practice of unity and democracy;” “Collective and Integral Work” “Practicing the value of work in our life;” “Tolerance in difficult situations of daily life;” “Abiding by the counsels and advices of our elders;” “Community participation in various projects,” and “Conservation and practice of the traditions and ancient customs of our community” (Quino-Solis, et al., 2006, p. 12).

### **Conclusion**

What lessons were learned that can be passed on and what does the work of ADJIMA especially have to offer other young indigenous educators and community activists? It is clear that while young indigenous teachers gain a great deal from formal training at universities and indigenous institutes, it is imperative for them to rejoin their communities as young leaders, and that they are inducted into the process of indigenous community development as well as into their own cosmology and spiritual processes. This sets up the process to engage youth in their communities. It is essential that youth are engaged in action throughout their learning in order to maintain their sense of commitment. When challenged by the pull of urban environments, youth that are fully engaged in the development of their communities have more to gain by staying at home.

It is critical that indigenous peoples lead their own processes of inquiry and research attuned and driven by their own indigenous identities. While outsiders may act as partners in such a process, it is imperative that community members take over the creation and facilitation of the process. In this way neither language, nor culture, nor activism is usurped by well-meaning, yet potentially destructive outsiders driven by their own academic agenda.

Those passionate about the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) will realize that the process of indigenous research in Panimatzalam is one of the first such projects to be carried out in an indigenous community. In the recent book, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* by Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008), it is lamented that while many academics are inspired to write about and reflect upon indigenous research, there is a lack of research that brings about this process in practice. Yet, there is strength in this message. Perhaps it is at times best that teachers share their experiences with one another, without the lens of the academic to filter their experience.

I want to recognize the contributions of Domingo Quino Solis in the preparation of this article and his guidance in the project as well as the involvement of Rosalia Quino-Juracan, Elizabeth Xinico-Quino and Felix Noé Mátzar Calel as active creators and participants. I regret that I alone wrote this article, especially since I left during the process. At the same time it acknowledges that teachers busy teaching and activists busy building their communities have little time to write articles such as this one. The proof and value of their work is seen in the youth that they work with, the creators of the future. However I do hope that I can play a role in assisting those involved in the project with networking and connecting with others with similar passions.

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## Glossary

- ACEM*: Asociacion de Centros de Educacion Mediano Asociacion de Educacion Mediano—Association of Mayan Middle Schools
- ADJIMA*: Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud Maya - The Association of Mayan Youth for Integral Development
- Ajaw*: God or The Great Creator
- Asemblea*: Assembly. In this case the name of the inquiry team
- Basico*: primary school in Guatemala
- campesino*: peasant
- El Cholqij'ó*: The sacred calendar of the Maya
- CNEM*: Consejo Nacional de Educacion Maya—The National Council of Mayan Education
- CORCI*: Regional Coordination of Integral Communities
- COCODES*: Council of Community Development (Panimatzalam's town council)
- cortas*: traditional short pants of Mayan men.
- Consejo*: town council
- Chilam Balam*: The ancient text of original teachings. Also the name of the indigenous technical institute in Panimatzalam
- Council of Elders*: Local council in Panimatzalam that advises the committees and cooperatives of the village of Panimatzalam
- disvestido*: The act of taking off traditional clothing to be accepted into the social life of the capital: Guatemala City.
- huipla*: Mayan women's traditional blouse
- Kachiq'el*: One of twenty-three Mayan language groups
- Kiche*: One of twenty three Mayan language groups
- Manos de Obra*: Handy work
- Milpa*: Mayan household land, including nearby agricultural fields.
- PROUT*: The Progressive Utilization Theory—A philosophy and strategy of social change towards a sustainable and equitable society (Founded by P.R. Sarkar)
- Paq'uch*: "Solidarity" in Kiche or Kachiqu'l or the way that Maya work towards the common good.

