

CLAG 2020 FIELDTRIP: RABINAL AND THE MAYA-ACHÍ TERRITORY, BAJA VERAPAZ

JANUARY 5-8, 2020

FIELDTRIP FACILITATORS:

Nathan Einbinder, PhD Candidate, Departamento de Agricultura, Sociedad y Ambiente,
El Colegio de la Frontera *Sur*, San Cristóbal de las Casas (*ECOSUR*)

Grahame Russell, Director of Rights Action & Adjunct Professor, Geography Program,
University of Northern British Columbia

Catherine Nolin, Associate Professor & Chair of Geography Program, University of
Northern British Columbia



1 CEDEAS garden in Pacux, Photo: Catherine Nolin, 2018

Fieldtrip Description & Costs:

Cost per person based on a group of 8: US \$350 [cost covers transportation & fuel, 3 nights of accommodation, food, translation, and honorariums]

The objective of this fieldtrip is to introduce participants to the Maya-Achí region of Baja Verapaz, with a specific focus on local indigenous initiatives that aim to recuperate Achí culture and society through popular education and sustainable/traditional agriculture.

The trip will include a series of visits with at least three organizations, including **CEDEAS** (Centro Educativo Desarrollo Experimental Agrícola Sostenible), an agroecological field school located in Pacux, where survivors of the Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro Massacres live with their families; **Qachuu Aloom** (Mother Earth), a local association of mostly women focusing on seed saving, consciousness raising (*concientización*) and organic home gardens; and **ACPC** (Asociación de Comites de Producción Comunitaria), a watershed association that works with coffee farming, agroforestry, and the recuperation of ancestral crop varieties and practices. With a variety of objectives, and methodologies, these groups are united by common history, social context/problems, as well as a focus on agricultural activities and spiritual connection/commitment to Mother Nature, also key tenants of Achí culture.



Visits will range from two to four hours and include meetings with local leaders and farmers, as well as students at the CEDEAS garden and educational center. There will also be an opportunity to receive a tour by a local agroecological expert and *promotor*. Through these visits, participants will gain understanding of the many interrelated crises faced by Achí *campesinos*, for example recurring drought, continued community division due to the conflict, and the devaluing of peasant agriculture by the Guatemalan state. In addition, we hope that these meetings will offer an interesting and inspirational example of alternative indigenous development and its transformational potential.

1 Nathan Einbinder, Photo: Catherine Nolin, 2018

We propose **three days/three nights in Rabinal**, the main town in the region. Travel will be conducted by a dedicated driver in a van; accommodation will be at the Posada San Pablo, centrally located two blocks from the central park, site of an important regional market and a 16th century church founded by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Transportation to our visits will be on foot, as well as in our van in order to reach some of the more rural and distant communities.

Tentative itinerary and cost estimate:

Day 1, Sunday, January 5, 2020:

- Drive from Antigua to Rabinal in van (5 hours). Grahame Russell: Van-ride talk on key issues of 'life after genocide' & memory-truth-justice for survivors; Nathan Einbinder: Van-ride talk on 'life after genocide' & buen vivir in Indigenous life strategies
- Leisure afternoon exploring the market, and a visit to the community museum focused on the armed conflict and the massacres in Río Negro, Plan de Sánchez, and Chichupac
- Informal presentation by Carlos Chen, key protagonist in the struggle for community reparations post-genocide

Day 2, Monday, January 6, 2020:

- Morning visit to Pacux (2km from hotel, so either walk or drive depending), meet with students and leaders at CEDEAS.
- Afternoon drive to Xesiguan (8km from hotel) to visit with ACPC director, Alfred Cortez, at his home. Have lunch there and spend afternoon talking with him, viewing his coffee farm, and meeting other members of his organization.
- Informal post-dinner presentation by Jesus Tecú Osorio, key protagonist in the struggle for community healing post-genocide, Director of the Rabinal Legal Aid Clinic & Founder of the Fundación Nueva Esperanza

Day 3, Tuesday, January 7, 2020:

- Morning hike to Cahyup, pre-Colombian ruins above town with local guide.
- Midmorning meeting at Qachuu Aloom demonstration garden and amaranth processing center, also in Pacux. Receive a small demonstration and explanation before heading out into the field with a local *promotor* to visit women members at the garden plots.

Day 4, Wednesday, January 8, 2020:

- Morning drive back to Antigua.