



Our 2018 Accomplishments

In both the U.S. and Guatemala, 2018 was a year of political upheaval, intensifying state repression, and massive mobilizations for social and environmental justice. With both countries brought to the brink of constitutional crises by openly corrupt administrations bent on bolstering corporate power, this year made clear that our movements need one another--and that internationalism is essential to sharing strategies so that we can win.

Throughout NISGUA's lineage, we have strived to build unity across distance and context by cultivating a solidarity that is both expansive in its internationalism and deeply local in its relationships and practice. As we close another year of work, we reflect on the road we've walked in 2018 toward realizing this vision. This year, our work in Guatemala continued to focus on leveraging our political access as a U.S.-based organization to support the work of organizers fighting to realize their rights, defend their collective memory,

and protect their homes against forces of extraction, displacement, and erasure.

Meanwhile, we have seen governments swing further to the right and scale up their attacks on immigrants, refugees, People of Color, Indigenous people, trans and queer people, women, the environment, and more. **With so many of our communities in the United States under attack, we've asked ourselves how our decades-long work also contributes to solutions that address the global conditions we increasingly experience at home.**

This is why this year we've recommitted our energy in the U.S. to creating mutually resourcing opportunities for political education and horizontal exchange between movements and communities most directly impacted by global systems of oppression. Read more below and join us as we continue this work next year.

Defense of Life & Territory

Standing with communities defending their lives and territories against unjust trade policies and resource extraction.

Amid deepening climate crisis, this year we witnessed a dramatic increase in attacks against environmental defenders; in Guatemala, at least 20 leaders in movements to defend the Earth and community self-determination were assassinated. In this context, our [Defense of Life & Territory program](#) continued to provide strategic support to communities standing up against imposed transnational extraction projects and in defense of their communities and Mother Earth.



Left photo: At the water's edge, children scratch "No to the Xalalá Dam" on broad river rocks; Right photo: Thousands of people gather in Guatemala City for the "March for Life" in recognition of the Xinka People and to demand closure of the Escobal mine.

“As Indigenous people, creating international links with communities from other countries strengthens our struggle for the protection and stewardship of our common resources. Solidarity helps us acquire information about, and intervene in, the capitalist system’s plans against our people.”

-- José Gómez, Maya Mam community organizer with ACODET and 2018 NISGUA tour speaker

This year we:

- Responded to violent attacks, criminalization, and militarization by documenting abuses, facilitating diplomatic visits, and coordinating a unified international response. This work included co-coordinating a [letter signed by over 60 human rights organizations](#) from the U.S. and Canada condemning the murder of environmental defender Ángel Estuardo Quevedo and demanding an investigation; [co-writing an open letter](#) to the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, denouncing U.S. intervention in favor of Tahoe Resources’ silver mine; and urging Guatemalans living in the U.S. and their non-Guatemalan allies to contact the Guatemalan Embassy and Consulates to denounce militarization and demand respect for the right to protest.
- Launched our **“Defend Community Consultations”** campaign, organizing alongside our partners to defend the rights of Indigenous and *campesino* communities to self-determined administration of land and natural resources. We wrote [a report to educate](#) our base about the democratic practices that communities use to say “yes” or “no” to megaprojects, accompanied peaceful encampments to uphold these decisions, and collected [hundreds of postcards](#) from people in the U.S. to express concern about proposed legislation that threatens to undermine them. This campaign is ongoing.
- Celebrated the restoration of [life-saving security measures](#) to the Reynoso Pacheco family, who have faced multiple attacks for their outspoken activism against the Escobal silver mine, including the 2014 murder of their 16-year-old daughter, Topacio, whose killing has not yet been fully investigated. This came after NISGUA [facilitated an international letter](#) to Guatemala’s Interior Ministry last year demanding recognition of the Reynoso Pacheco family as threatened human rights defenders and full restoration of the measures.



Photo: Maya K'iche' and Maya Uspanteko citizens vote in an October 2010 referendum in Uspantán, El Quiché. Postcard created as part of NISGUA's "Defend Community Consultations" campaign. Visit nigua.org/take-action to sign this and other actions! Photo: Graham Hunt.

TAKE ACTION : Seeking Indigenous and ally signatures to public statement:

“We call on the Peoples of the world to stand in solidarity with the struggles fought by our Indigenous brothers and sisters around the world for the protection and defense of their territories. We must come together to protect biodiversity and life from the greed of extractive corporations that put all living things at risk.”

--Excerpt from the statement

SIGN IN SOLIDARITY AT NISGUA.ORG/TAKE-ACTION

We will use this genocide verdict to leave a good tree planted, with strong roots – the fruits of which will be enjoyed by our children.

Edwin Canil, President of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation

Justice & Accountability

In support of Guatemalans who seek justice and an end to impunity for crimes committed during the Internal Armed Conflict.

NISGUA's [Justice & Accountability program](#) provides information and strategic analysis to our grassroots network and organizational partners to monitor important human rights cases, the political context in Guatemala, the role of the U.S. government, and the struggle to end impunity for crimes against humanity and genocide. In 2018, we provided coverage of key human rights cases and ongoing analysis of [Guatemala's political crisis following President Jimmy Morales' break](#) with the UN-backed anti-impunity body known as the CICIG.

This year, we:

- Developed materials and educational opportunities on the legal organizing strategies of survivors of state violence and genocide, including a [visual summary of key transitional justice cases](#) carried out since 2000, and a Spanish-language webinar that reached 50+ participants, [featuring Edwin Canil](#), president of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), following the September verdict in the retrial of the Ixil genocide case.
- Monitored and provided sustained analysis and coverage of human rights cases of global importance, including the [Ixil genocide case](#), [Military Zone 21](#), and [Molina Theissen](#). These cases set historical precedents, with survivors achieving trials and sentences confirming genocide, prosecuting the largest discovered case of forced disappearance, and convicting military intelligence for its role in forced disappearance and sexual violence.

Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP)

Providing a dissuasive presence to threatened environmental and human rights defenders.

Through our [Guatemala Accompaniment Project \(GAP\)](#), NISGUA has trained and placed U.S. volunteers to work as international human rights accompaniers in solidarity with Guatemalan activists for over 20 years. Leveraging the privilege linked to having a U.S. passport, accompaniers work to increase security by attending trials, visiting communities, sharing stories and action opportunities with their networks, and more. Accompaniers also play a role in shoring up internationalism in U.S. movements for justice, building links between struggles by integrating their experiences into their activism upon returning to the U.S.

This year, we:

- Revised our U.S. GAP training to prioritize skill development that both prepares volunteers for their work in Guatemala and supports their personal transformation into lifelong activists, resourcing them to integrate their experiences into organizing work upon their return to the U.S. This year, we took initial steps toward broadening the impact of this political education work by making our curriculum and training materials available to more people, work which we're excited to continue in 2019.
- Expanded our Guatemala-based volunteer opportunities by piloting an activist fellowship program, inviting a recently returned companioner to deepen her skills as an organizer by continuing her accompaniment work while supporting NISGUA's environmental justice campaigns.

Photo right: Accompaniers wait in line with Ixil women to enter the courtroom in the genocide trial against former Head of Military Intelligence José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez. Credit: ACOGUATE



This year, we trained six U.S. volunteers and a total of 20 volunteers from a variety of countries to act as human rights accompaniers. Together, they provided accompaniment to 340 activists from 26 organizations fighting for justice, accountability, Indigenous and women's rights, and community self-determination.

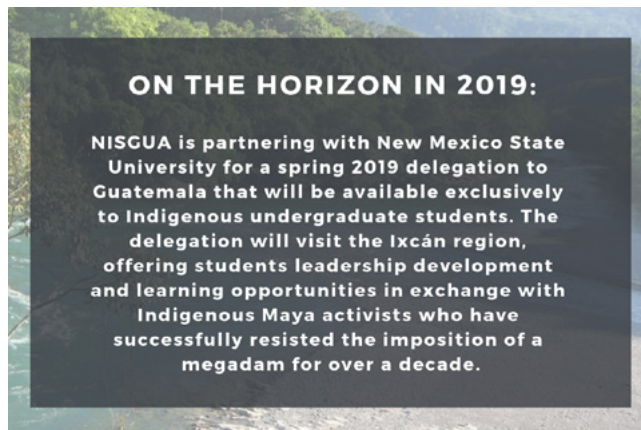
Political Education & Horizontal Exchange

Strengthening movements through international solidarity, linking communities in the U.S. and Guatemala in the global movement for justice and self-determination.

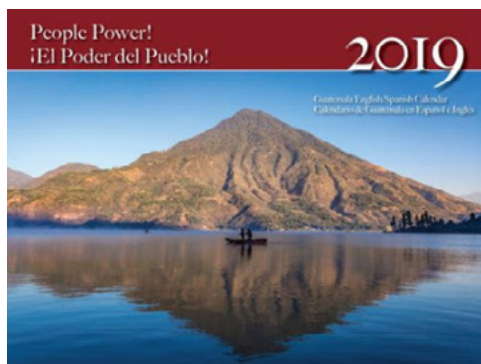
In 2018, we took steps towards deepening the political education that we offer our network through new programming and internal investment in our political and professional development.

This year we:

- Partnered with ACODET for a 14-day speaking tour, “How to Stop a Dam with Indigenous Resistance.” The tour visited Washington, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Sonora, Mexico, with a focus on facilitating direct exchange between Maya Mam leader José Gómez and Indigenous organizers in the U.S. Among other events, the tour included a 3-day symposium on Indigenous-led water protection in Las Cruces, NM featuring a multinational Indigenous panel discussion, a water protector strategy circle, a community mural and celebration, and a water ceremony in the Rio Grande.
- Supported a volunteer-organized exhibition of “[Defending Truth and Memory](#)” and a series of presentations and exchanges with Maya Kakchiquel documentary photographer and filmmaker, Rode Díaz, in Las Cruces, New Mexico. The 3-day series included an opening reception for the exhibition, a community mural and screen-printing celebration, and an exchange with Indigenous Guatemalan youth detained by ICE near El Paso, TX.
- Partnered with Skylight Pictures to facilitate grassroots screenings of the film 500 YEARS: Life in Resistance. We created an [Organizer Toolkit](#) to support local activists in using the film as a vehicle for education and action. Screenings were held in Oakland, CA and Duluth, MN, and more are expected across the U.S. later this year and into 2019.



“It started with a file of breathtaking photos that I wanted to share with my community. It transformed into three days of transnational Indigenous solidarity.” -- [Kayla Autumn Myers](#), on organizing a community exhibition of “Defending Truth and Memory”



To all of the donors, activists, and volunteers who made our work powerful in 2018, we say "mil gracias!"

And in particular: Ailene Richard, Alexandra Durbin, Alicia LeDuc, Amanda Kistler, Anne Aleshire, Cat Norris, Chris Hansen, Chris Sutton, Christie Keith, Claire Bransky, Clara Lincoln, Connie Vanderhyden, David Loeb, Gladys Garcia, Indigo Cochran, Jerry Kohler, Jillian Tuck, Joene Pike, Josué Revolorio, Kat Dechert, Kate Doyle, Katie Sharar, Kayla Autumn Myers, Laura Von Dohlen, Marianella Aguirre, Melinda Van Slyke, Meredith Wilkinson, Olivia Pandolfi, Paulina Hernandez, Paco de Onís, Pamela Yates, Phil Neff, Rebeca Zúniga-Hamlin, Rosemary Giron, Stewart R. Mott Foundation, Sue Ellen Kingsley, Tal Netter-Sweet, Todd Kolze, and Val Kistler.

Photo: Our 2019 calendar, “People Power,” lifts up the myriad ways that Guatemalan communities assert and defend their self-determination. Get your copy today at nigua.org/shop-with-nigua. Cover photo credit: Jennifer Ciplet Photography, Santiago Atitlán, Sololá.

About NISGUA

NISGUA builds mutually beneficial grassroots ties between the people of the U.S. and Guatemala and advocates for grassroots alternatives to challenge elite power structures and oppressive U.S. economic and foreign policy.