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GUATEMALA

February 13 to February 21, 2027

Faculty Leader: Linda Darwish (Senior Research RELS)

Fee: \$3800

Guatemala, a country of breathtaking splendor and diversity, is situated in central America between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Twenty-one Mayan ethnic-linguistic groups comprise fifty percent of Guatemala's population of fifteen million, and include indigenous Maya, Xinca, Chorti and Garifuna communities. Historically, a small elite has concentrated wealth, land and political power in its hands. Over four decades up to the 1990's, efforts on the part of non-governmental organizations to promote fair land distribution and the rights of the poor were met with repressive measures favouring the political and economic elites. Conflicts between guerilla movements and the Guatemalan army had brutal consequences for human rights activists and people in rural communities. Since 1996 and the signing of peace accords, communities, non-governmental organizations, human rights groups, and churches have been hard at work on the challenging process of reconstruction and peace-building.

Join us for the ISL Guatemala experience coordinated by the Maritimes Guatemala Breaking the Silence (BTS) Network. You will have the opportunity to build international solidarity and learn from BTS partners in Rabinal: the New Hope Foundation's (FNE) culturally relevant, bilingual Maya Achí-Spanish high school and the Rabinal Community Legal Clinic (ABJP) that seeks justice for cases related to genocide and other crimes committed against communities in the Rabinal area during the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC). A meaningful part of the delegation will be an overnight visit to the community of Río Negro to learn about the area's history and how it has rebuilt following a campaign of destruction during the 1980s. You will also have the chance to spend time with communities resisting Canadian extractive projects in their territories.

Transportation

Participants fly to and from Guatemala City. A tourist van will transport participants to Rabinal and other sites. Local or public transportation may also be used by the group.

Housing and Meals

The group will stay in Casa san Benito and other dorm facilities. Meals are generally eaten as a group, with a preset menu. The menu is mostly local foods, as part of the immersion experience. Students typically will NOT have a choice of foods.

Service Placements and Group Sessions

In Rabinal, participants will experience a cultural exchange with New Hope Foundation, a high school for Mayan students who normally are not able to continue their education. This week provides students with an opportunity to gain an understanding of the hopes, efforts, and obstacles Mayan communities face - in land distribution, sustainable environmental and economic development, education, health, and fair trade; learning of human rights challenges community groups have faced in the past and are facing today and gaining an understanding of the role development organizations play in building rural communities.

*Immersion participants **do not need to speak Spanish** as a translator accompanies the group.*

February 13th

Arrival and overnight in Guatemala City

February 14th

Introduction to current Guatemala and history, Travel to Rabinal

February 15th

Fire ceremony and memorial walk. Community museum, church and market visit

February 16th

Visit to New Hope Foundation school and historic memory walking tour

February 17

Travel to Rio Negro. Museum tour

February 18th

Travel to Pak'oxom tragedy site. Visit to historic caves

February 19th

Boat tour of the hydroelectric dam, travel to Guatemala City

February 20th

Visit Xinka territory and a resistance/human rights organization

February 21st

Flight to Canada

ISL bursaries, and ISL endowment funds are available.



Please note this schedule is a guideline for typical activities and is subject to change based on a number of factors. Flight delays, available space and staff at facilities, to name a few factors, all play a role in the scheduling process. Students should be prepared to be flexible.