

The Native Women's Association of Canada



DATES: SEPTEMBER 24 TO 30, 2023

MISSION REPORT TO GUATEMALA



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OVERVIEW

During the week of September 24 to 30, NWAC travelled to Guatemala as part of a series of missions across the Americas relationship-building to develop new connections with both government representatives and entrepreneurs to foster economic growth for Indigenous Peoples across both countries.

Participants:

- Ms. Lynne Groulx, CEO, Native Women Association of Canada (NWAC).
- Ms. Tania Molina, Senior International Director, Native Women Association of Canada (NWAC).
- Ms. Guisela Godinez Sazo, the Ambassador of Guatemala to Canada.

Objectives:

- Establish joint work mechanisms by engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the area to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experiences between Guatemala and Canada. This will involve holding government meetings, particularly with organizations dedicated to Women and Gender Equality.
- Create trade prospects and stimulate economic growth by facilitating commercial opportunities for entrepreneurs, and female small business owners involved in handicrafts and handmade products.
- Purchase artisan products to establish a market for these items in Canada and contribute to improving the quality of life for our sisters in Guatemala.

Guisela Atalida Godinez Sazo, the Ambassador of Guatemala to Canada



Guisela Godinez Sazo, the Ambassador of Guatemala to Canada accompanied NWAC representatives throughout this mission. Ambassador Godinez Sazo was the former Ambassador to Russia, Kazakhstan, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, Spain, and Panama. She speaks English, Italian, French, and Spanish.

BACKGROUND

This six-day visit to Guatemala comes after previous visits to El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama, and will be succeeded by upcoming missions to Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic in the coming months. These eight nations make up The Central American Integration System (Spanish: Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, or SICA).

SICA's eight member states include more than 60 different Indigenous groups comprising approximately 20 per cent of the total population of Central America.

Guatemala has a population of 14.9 million people, of which 6.5 million (43.75 per cent) are Indigenous, comprised of members of the Mayan Peoples (Achi', Akateco, Awakateco, Chalchiteco, Ch'orti', Chuj, Itza', Ixil, Jacalteco, Kaqchikel, K'iche', Mam, Mopan, Poqomam, Poqomchi', Q'anjob'al, Q'eqchi', Sakapulteco, Sipakapense, Tektiteko, Tz'utujil and Uspanteko), as well as the Garifuna, Xinka, and Creole or Afro-descendant Peoples.

Indigenous people represent 15 per cent of members of parliament or high-ranking public officials in Guatemala and the country has ratified The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Guatemala has acceded to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

This visit along with those to the other SICA nations form NWACs Going Global Missions which aim to strengthen international connections to better represent the needs and voices of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people across the Americas.



ITINERARY OVERVIEW

SUNDAY 24 SEPTEMBER

- Arrival in Guatemala.

MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

- Presentation of the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan by Don Nicholls.
- Meeting with The Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala, Ambassador Maria Luisa Ramirez.
- Lunch with the Director General of Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT), Amador Carballido.
- Meeting with Monica Valesska Iglesias Pérez, Presidential Deputy Secretary of Women at The Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM).
- Meeting with the President of The Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations of Guatemala (CACIF), Ignacio Lejarraga Estrada.

TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

- Meeting at ANACAFÉ - Asociación Nacional del Café (National Coffee Alliance, Guatemala).
- Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Economy for the Development of Micro and Small Enterprises, Rodolfo de Leon.
- Official Reception held at the Embassy of Canada in Guatemala.

WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

- The signing of the letter of understanding at the Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT).
- Showcase of crafts from different regions of the country at AGEXPORT.
- Departure to Antigua, Guatemala.

THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

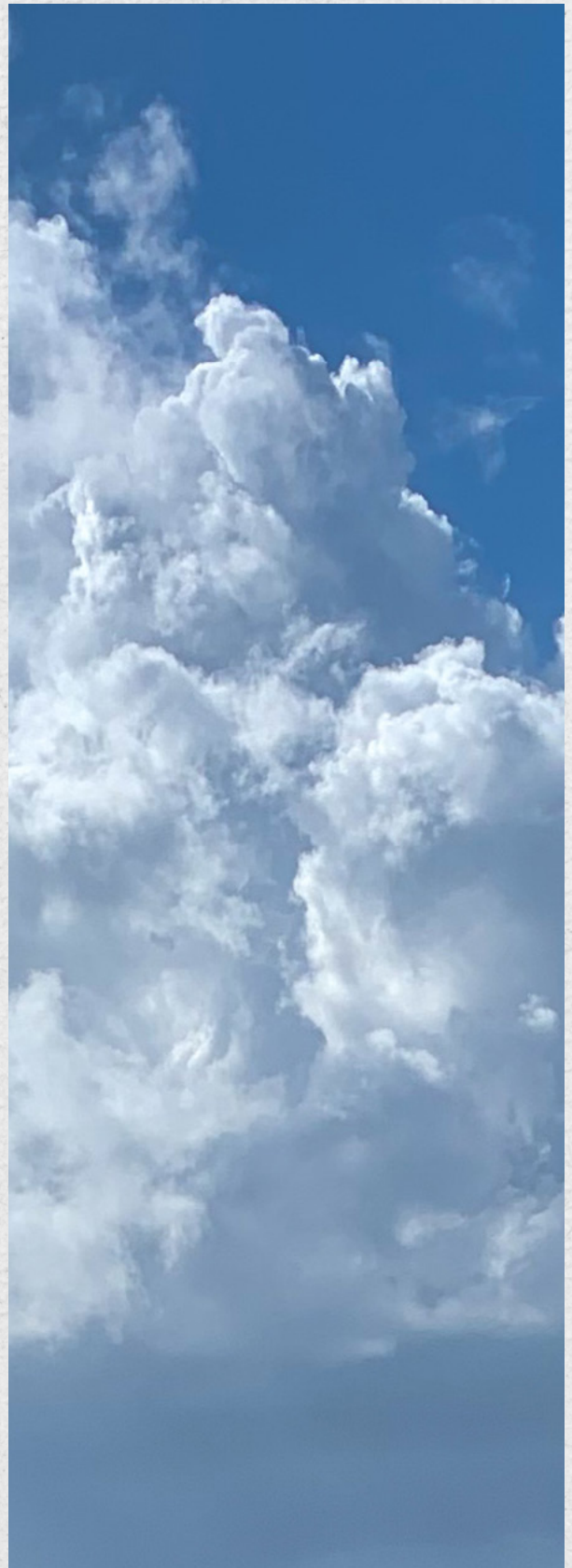
- Cultural visit and craft centres in Antigua, Guatemala.
- Visit to the Handicraft Market Antigua, Guatemala.
- Visit to Wakami, a social enterprise.

FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

- Departure from Antigua, Guatemala to Chimaltenango.
- Visit to Craft Centres in Chimaltenango, received by Maria Tuyuc, President of The Global Network of Indigenous Entrepreneurs (REI).
- Return to Guatemala City.

SATURDAY 30 SEPTEMBER

- Return to Canada.



MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

PRESENTATION OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN BY DON NICHOLLS



Don Nicholls

NWAC was invited to a presentation by the Embassy of Canada in Guatemala on the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This event was part of a series of activities scheduled for the week of September 25 to 29 to commemorate the reconciliation process with Indigenous Peoples.

Don Nicholls, the Director of the Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services made the presentation.

Prior to becoming Director, Mr. Nicholls was the Interim Director where he assisted with preparatory work for the establishment of the Department and was an inaugural Member of the Cree-Quebec Judicial Advisory Committee.

Previously, from 2005 to 2009, Mr. Nicholls worked as Political Attaché with the Executive Office of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government.

During the presentation, Don Nicholls discussed the process of reconciliation in Canada, emphasizing that genuine reconciliation hinges on people first confronting the truth: The truth pertaining to the history of residential schools and the coerced abandonment of Indigenous cultures among communities. His presentation included the following points.

To enable reconciliation to take place in Canada:

- The constitutional and human rights of Indigenous Peoples must be recognized and respected.
- Healing should occur through public dialogue about truth, apologies, commemoration, and acknowledgment/repair of past wrongs.
- Constructive action should be taken to address colonial legacies that harmed languages, knowledge, livelihoods, and Indigenous traditions, among other things.

What is healing?

- Healing begins with the acknowledgment of the harm caused and the injustices of policies and actions taken.
- Progressing towards an understanding and apologies from governments, societies, organizations, etc., that caused the harm.
- Creating new relationships based on trust and good faith to reconcile and restore the dignity, respect, and affirmation of the human rights of individuals who were discriminated against.

Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC asked about the reconciliation process in Guatemala concerning Indigenous communities and discussed how the issue of MMIWG2S+ is still an unfinished process in Canada.

The Ambassador of Canada to Guatemala, Rajani Alexander, and The Director General for Central America and the Caribbean, Sylvie Bédard, were also in attendance.

Rosalina Tuyuc, a representative of "La Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala" (CONAVIGUA- The National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala- in English) was also present. This organization brings together more than 5,000 women who lost their families during the armed conflict in Guatemala.







THE AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO GUATEMALA, RAJANI ALEXANDER

Rajani Alexander was a researcher, a university instructor in Pacific, Asian, and Gender Studies, an independent consultant, and a manager of cooperative education programs before joining the public service of Canada in 1994. At the Canadian International Development Agency, Ms. Alexander was a senior adviser in the Gender Equality Division, a senior analyst in the Caribbean Program, and the director of results and accountability in the Geographic Programs Branch. At Global Affairs Canada's Headquarters, she was senior director for the Pan-Africa Regional program.

Abroad, Ms. Alexander served in Santiago, Dhaka, Tegucigalpa, and Chandigarh, India. Most recently, she was senior director and minister-counsellor (development) in Addis Ababa.



SYLVIE BÉDARD

Sylvie Bédard was appointed General Director Government of Canada in August 2022 after postings as Ambassador to the Republic of Ecuador and various diplomatic positions. She studied at the Sorbonne after receiving her M.B.A. from Laval University. She speaks English, French, and Spanish.

MEETING WITH THE VICE MINISTER OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA, AMBASSADOR MARIA LUISA RAMIREZ

Lynne Groulx CEO of NWAC and the Vice Minister, Maria Luisa Ramirez, talked about NWAC's social innovation project and how NWAC wants to approach Latin America and Indigenous sisters to work on entrepreneurship. The Vice Minister talked about a project they are promoting called the "White Seal." This project involves providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises looking to market and internationalize their products. It focuses on marginalized communities, and Indigenous women are already experiencing its positive effects.

Later in the week, Lynne Groulx met with artisans and communities that are accredited with the White Seal, to discuss methods for collaborating and promoting their products.



AMBASSADOR MARIA LUISA RAMIREZ, THE VICE MINISTER OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

Maria Luisa Ramirez holds a degree in Pedagogy and a master's degree in Leadership and Strategy in the Directorate. She has extensive experience in different institutions of the executive body with education and public administration knowledge.





WHITE SEAL (SELLO BLANCO)

The White Seal or Sello Blanco program of the Ministry of Economy focuses on promoting entrepreneurship and elevating the products available from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), associations, or organized groups that produce products or services of Guatemalan origin and quality.

MEETING WITH MONICA VALESSKA IGLESIAS PÉREZ, PRESIDENTIAL DEPUTY SECRETARY OF WOMEN AT THE PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT FOR WOMEN (SEPREM)

Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC met with the Presidential Deputy Secretary of Women from The Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), Monica Valesska Iglesias Perez. They discussed SEPREM's mission to institutionalize equality between men and women in Guatemala as well as various public policies to support women. They also talked about the importance of entrepreneurship and social innovation projects to support and facilitate women and Indigenous communities on their journey toward self-sustainability.

They discussed a potential collaboration between SEPREM and NWAC and the possibility of scheduling a future meeting to obtain an updated directory of Guatemalan entrepreneurs in order to create economic partnerships. These entrepreneurs specialize in creams, salsas, coffee, and textiles.



MONICA VALESSKA IGLESIAS PEREZ

Monica Valesska Iglesias Perez holds a degree in Business Administration, consults on economic issues, and lectures as a professor at the university level. She has also participated as a speaker in the Association of Managers of Guatemala on issues related to women and has participated in the different Congresses of Women Leaders in Guatemala, she is currently an active member of the Chamber of Industry and Chamber of Tourism.

SEPREM

The Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) is the advisory and coordinating entity for public policies to promote the comprehensive development of Guatemalan women.

The Presidential Secretariat for Women is the highest-level mechanism of the Executive Branch for the advancement of women and the product of the demand for women's equality in the country, following the commitments derived from the signing of the Peace Agreements and the adoption and ratification of international instruments by the State of Guatemala, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Global Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action.

It is the government institution responsible for advising and coordinating public policy actions to institutionalize equality in accordance with the principles of ethics, inclusion, solidarity, tolerance, and transparency.



MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND FINANCIAL ASSOCIATIONS OF GUATEMALA (CACIF), IGNACIO LEJARRAGA ESTRADA, AND THE COORDINATOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE, MARCO A. SOLARES

During this meeting, Lynne Groulx explained the three main objectives of her missions:

- Establish joint work mechanisms by engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the country.
- Create trade prospects and stimulate economic growth by facilitating commercial opportunities for entrepreneurs.
- Purchase artisan goods as part of our Social Innovation projects.

They explored the possibility of establishing long-term relationships with this organization for product procurement.

CACIF

The Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF) brings together trade associations that work to build a better country based on productivity and citizen participation. Their mission includes coordinating proposals to promote free enterprise and create a positive environment for entrepreneurship and the development of the country.



LUNCH WITH THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF AGEXPORT, AMADOR CARBALLIDO

Lynne Groulx CEO of NWAC and the Director General of AGEXPORT, Amador Carballido spoke about their shared goals and supporting entrepreneurship. They also talked about the letter of understanding that is scheduled to be signed between the two organizations later in the week.



DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GUATEMALAN EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (AGEXPORT), AMADOR CARBALLIDO

Amador Carballido has excelled for more than 20 years in commercial, financial, and customer service activities, mainly in the Central American banking sector. He also has experience in product launches, marketing, business development (start-ups), and management of massive organizational change initiatives.

GUATEMALAN EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (AGEXPORT)

AGEXPORT is a private non-profit institution with more than 30 years of experience growing and promoting Guatemalan exports. They provide entrepreneurs with the tools needed for innovation, including specialized training, and facilitating access to new markets, to help Guatemala become an exporting country.

TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

MEETING AT ANACAFÉ - ASOCIACIÓN NACIONAL DEL CAFÉ (NATIONAL COFFEE ALLIANCE, GUATEMALA)

Representatives from ANACAFÉ in attendance were:

1. Organizational Strengthening Coordinator, Mario David Recinos Espana.
2. Comprehensive Development Specialist, Magdali Martinez Leiva.
3. Project Specialist, Marta Villagran.

The meeting included a discussion about establishing a partnership for coffee procurement. Guatemala boasts 125,000 coffee-producing families, with 90 per cent classified as small-scale entrepreneurs, including 40 per cent women. Anacafé also has a coffee school, and NWAC, in conjunction with Anacafé, is actively exploring avenues for knowledge exchange in coffee procurement and roasting within Canada, aiming to enhance and expand NWAC's coffee offerings.

Additionally, they were introduced to 'Funcafe', a coffee foundation that administers programs supporting childhood education through the training of specialized technicians in this field. The potential for a future collaborative agreement with Anacafé was also under consideration.

ANACAFÉ - ASOCIACIÓN NACIONAL DEL CAFÉ (NATIONAL COFFEE ALLIANCE, GUATEMALA)

The National Coffee Alliance – ANACAFÉ, is a private, public service, autonomous institution, with its own assets and private funds founded by the Coffee Law in 1960. Its main objective is to strengthen the national economy through the production, export, and promotion of coffee.





MEETING WITH DEPUTY MINISTER OF ECONOMY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES, RODOLFO DE LEON.

NWAC representatives met with Deputy Minister of Economy for the Development of Micro and Small Enterprises, Rodolfo de Leon. At this meeting, a presentation on Guatemala's White Seal Program was delivered.

RODOLFO DE LEON

Deputy Minister Rodolfo de Leon has extensive experience in the field of law within the public sector, where he has held various advisory positions. Additionally, he has worked as an advisor in other government entities such as the Institute of Insured Mortgages and the Judicial Body.

WHITE SEAL ACCREDITATION

Microenterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises, associations, or organized groups that are established and registered, with products or services of Guatemalan origin and quality can apply for the White Seal. It aims to support entrepreneurs by:

- Improving economic stability and prospects for families and communities.
- Creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship.
- Enhancing the quality of life for Guatemalans.



OFFICIAL RECEPTION - EMBASSY OF CANADA IN GUATEMALA

NWAC representatives were invited to an official reception at the Embassy of Canada in Guatemala, hosted by The Ambassador of Canada to Guatemala, Rajani Alexander. Other attendees from the international community, civil society, and public and private sectors joined this reception in commemoration of the Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

The Director General for Central America and the Caribbean, Sylvie Bédard, was also in attendance and shared remarks in honour of the 60-year diplomatic connection between Canada and Guatemala. She also expressed gratitude to the NWAC delegation for their collaborative efforts with the SICA countries and Indigenous populations. She underscored Canada's commitment to maintaining robust ties with Guatemala and highlighted the commonalities between Indigenous communities in the Americas and Canada, emphasizing the bonds that unite them. Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC was also able to meet with women from The Association of Weavers of Guatemala and talk about their traditional crafts.





WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNING ACT WITH THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF AGEXPORT, AMADOR CARBALLIDO

At this meeting, Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC delivered a speech after a letter of understanding was signed between AGEXPORT and The Native Women's Association of Canada.

Lynne Groulx said that she was pleased to join together with the shared aims of promoting and encouraging the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous Peoples, especially women, girls, people with gender diversity, and their respective communities. She stated these objectives would be met through establishing mechanisms to implement and strengthen cooperation between the Parties, to facilitate the exchange of experiences, good practices, and support for projects that have common goals.



SHOWCASE OF CRAFTS FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY AT AGEXPORT

NWAC representatives were able to view a variety of different handmade crafts from artisans and entrepreneurs across the country. AGEXPORT supports Guatemalan entrepreneurs to promote and export their products and services.

Handmade products from MayaWorks and Ixoqi including textiles, clothing and accessories, weaving, pottery, and crafts were on display. MayaWorks partners with over 125 Indigenous artisans in Guatemala who create striking fair-trade products. The organization helps women transform their skills into a means of financial support for their families by creating a market for the traditional arts of Mayan artisans.

Focusing on accessories, home textiles, and décor, Ixoqi aims to provide comprehensive technical and entrepreneurial training so that women, especially in rural areas, act as agents of change, and promote the sustainability of their family and community development through empowerment, leadership, and productivity. Ixoqi in the Kaqchiquel language means “women.”





DEPARTURE TO ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

The team travelled on to Antigua Guatemala to continue their mission.

THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

CULTURAL VISIT AND CRAFT CENTRES

[Antigua Guatemala](#) is the capital of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala and was founded in the early 16th century. It was largely destroyed by an earthquake in 1773 but its principal monuments are still preserved as ruins. After the earthquake, authorities ordered the relocation of the capital to a safer region, which became Guatemala City, the country's modern capital. Most of the surviving civil, religious, and civic buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries and constitute magnificent examples of architecture in the Americas.

NWAC delegates were able to view a variety of handmade crafts and Guatemalan products and speak with the artisans about their traditional handicrafts.

"FROM THE MAYAN PEOPLE TO YOU"

The importance of the role of women in Mayan handicrafts is undeniable as traditional skills like backstrap weaving, foot-treadle loom weaving, woodcarving, pottery-making, and embroidery were handed down from woman to woman across generations.

The most popular Mayan handicrafts to purchase are huipils, traditional hand-woven and embroidered Mayan blouses, hammocks, pit-fired pottery, jade jewellery, and traditional textiles featuring intricate designs and bold colours.

NWAC representatives were able to view traditional worry dolls, textiles, and more, all created by Mayan people living in the highlands of Guatemala and represented by "From the Mayan People to You" organization. Mayan handicrafts play a vital role in preserving Mayan culture and help to communicate the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Mayan people to future generations.



MERCADO DE ARTESANIAS (HANDICRAFT MARKET)

NWAC visited the Municipal Handicrafts Market in Antigua Guatemala, which showcases traditional ceramics, jewellery, and textiles.

Many of the products on offer are inspired by nature and influenced by ancestral Mayan culture. Handicrafts generate a sustainable industry for Guatemala and for Indigenous entrepreneurs and small business owners. Possibly the most well-known Guatemalan artisanal products are the hand-woven textiles produced by Indigenous women using traditional methods including the back-strap loom with wooden sticks. Each intricate design on clothing or fabric identifies a particular region or Mayan cultural influence. Traditional ceramics and baskets are also popular handicrafts available in Guatemalan markets.



VISIT TO WAKAMI SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Wakami works in partnership with women from rural areas of Guatemala to create economic development opportunities. In collaboration with Indigenous artisans Wakami co-designs jewellery, textiles, home furnishings, and accessories which they then sell online or in stores. They distribute the materials directly to Indigenous communities allowing women to make a living creating handmade products while still being close to home and communities.

Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC met with Wakami founder Maria Pacheco to visit the store and learn more about the social enterprise foundation of the business.



FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

VISIT TO CRAFT CENTRES IN CHIMALTENANGO

NWAC representatives continued their Guatemalan mission into Chimaltenango. Located in southwestern Guatemala, Chimaltenango City is in the central highlands at an elevation of 1,786 metres above sea level. It was founded in 1526, just south of an old Mayan fortress, and today is a market centre and transportation hub for the surrounding Indigenous villages. Communities make their living here through farming grains, sugarcane, and livestock.

Lynne Groulx, CEO of NWAC was received by Maria Tuyuc, the president of La Red Global De Empresarios Indígenas (Global Network of Indigenous Entrepreneurs). The team were able to visit craft centres and view products of Guatemalan origin, created by local craftspeople.



MARIA TUYUC

Maria Tuyuc originally from San Juan Comalapa, in Chimaltenango, comes from a family of entrepreneurs, street vendors, and traders which inspires her interest in creating opportunities for herself and others. She holds a law degree and is the president of The Global Network of Indigenous Entrepreneurs (REI) which also launched the Mayan Business School. The aims of the school include fostering and promoting the development of entrepreneurs in Indigenous communities throughout the country.

THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS (REI)

The Global Network of Indigenous Entrepreneurs (REI) is the Guatemalan chapter of the Global Network of Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurs created in 2014. They work to attract investment and generate opportunities to meet basic development needs in families and communities focusing on Indigenous Women and Youth, and leaders of Indigenous enterprises and companies.

The REI seeks to promote entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities in order to achieve sustainable and intercultural economic development, aiming to overcome poverty, exclusion, and marginalization through the generation of income, opportunities and employment.

The NWAC team then made the return journey back to Guatemala City and onwards back to Canada the following day.



CONCLUSION

NWAC CEO, Lynne Groulx, and Tania Molina, Senior International Director of NWAC, were joined on this international mission by the Ambassador of Guatemala to Canada, Guisela Godinez Sazo.

Over the course of six days, the group met with government representatives, Indigenous leaders and artisans and were able to strengthen ties and share commonalities between Indigenous Peoples and their interests in both Canada and Guatemala.

This visit to Guatemala continued NWAC's important Going Global Missions across the Americas, visiting countries that make up the eight SICA member states (The Central American Integration System -Spanish: Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, or SICA). These countries include more than 60 different Indigenous groups which total 20 per cent of the total population of Central America.

During the week of September 24 to 30, NWAC representatives were able to commemorate the Day of Truth and Reconciliation and participate in a series of activities scheduled to honour and reflect on the reconciliation process with Indigenous Peoples.

They were also able to view artisan products made by Indigenous craftspeople, recognizing the beauty and skill of traditional art forms, and created future trade prospects to stimulate economic growth with commercial opportunities for entrepreneurs, and female small business owners.

This visit represents another successful Going Global Mission for NWAC as we boost our international reputation advocating for the rights of Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and their communities globally.



SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS





The Native Women's Association of Canada



MISSION REPORT TO GUATEMALA

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