



■ 30 Years of Building Better Futures

Dear Friends

When together with co-founders Jon Carr and Stephen Morgan, I joined forces with local community leaders to begin developing Ak' Tenamit, we could never have imagined the scope and impact the organization would have 30 years later. In 1991 it was unheard of for village boys to continue their education beyond 6th grade and girls were expected to marry and have their first child soon after reaching puberty. It was unusual for the indigenous women in villages to be invited to community meetings and spaces where decisions were being made and the nearest clinic was too far away for most sick villagers to reach.



We opened our boarding school with only 12 students and this year we celebrate our largest graduating class yet, 182 students will graduate with vocational high school degrees in Sustainable Tourism and Community Development. We've achieved the highest post-graduation employment rate in the country, with graduates working as waiters and cooks at some of Guatemala's finest restaurants, as teachers and health-care workers, managing municipal programs supporting women's empowerment and environmental protection, growing organic cacao, as park guards in national forests, managing educational programs, as reforestation specialists and helping communities to grow nutritious food and to become more resilient to a rapidly changing climate and to increase their level of self-sufficiency.

Ak' Tenamit is recognized nationally and internationally for the impact of its innovative and highly effective programs. It's board of directors, led by strong indigenous women and made up of local Mayan indigenous and Afro-Caribbean leaders, continuously strives to develop innovative solutions before the multiple challenges we face in Guatemala. It's demand-driven work-based learning approach helps at-risk indigenous youth secure good jobs in Guatemala, thus avoiding young men making a risky journey to the United States in search of work, leaving their culture and a broken family behind. Instead of girls marrying as young as 14, they are able to graduate from high school, get good jobs and reach their goals. Our graduates tend to continue their education at a tertiary level, are leaders in their communities, they maintain a strong sense of cultural identity, being proud of their Mayan language and culture, and they are committed to lifting their families and communities out of poverty.

Your faithful support over the years has made all of this possible. Without your standing by the students and families we serve, providing much needed resources to purchase food and medicine for our students, cover the salaries of our hard-working teachers and support staff and to help with operating expenses, we could never have achieved the level of success we see today. It's very challenging to work in Guatemala, between recurrent natural disasters, a dysfunctional government, widespread corruption and drug smuggling, but knowing we can count on your continued support gives us the courage and strength to continue our work against all odds, to help the students and families we serve to build a bright and sustainable future.



[Signature]
**Steve
Dudenhofer**
Founder and
Chief Technical
Advisor

I'm Staying Campaign #YOMEQUEDO

Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund Talks to CBS & Launches #YOMEQUEDO (#ImStaying) Campaign in Response to Border Crisis



Association Ak' Tenamit has developed a new intervention called #YOMEQUEDO (#ImStaying) which will provide returned (deported) migrant youth with the skills they need to secure gainful remote and digital employment in Guatemala (with Guatemalan or international employers), allowing them to achieve upward social mobility and gradually receive tertiary education without leaving the country. The campaign was launched based on the highly successful 30-year track record of Ak' Tenamit, and in response to an increase in attempts at risky irregular migration by Unaccompanied Migrant Youth, and at the request of the Guatemalan government. Our founder Steve Dudenhoefer recently spoke to the local CBS affiliate in South Florida to share the 30-year track record of success and share why he believes Ak' Tenamit is a model solution to the youth migration crisis.

Ak' Tenamit's 74 experienced full-time staff members, working with national and international leaders in digital employment, will ensure that youth graduate with the hard and soft skills needed to enter a rapidly evolving digital employment

market. A key player in the #YOMEQUEDO fast-track initiative is Carlos Arguello, an innovative and award-winning Guatemalan digital and graphic design expert whose "Studio C" has developed digital animation and special effects for major movie studios and production houses. His "Fundación C" has trained at-risk youth in several Latin American countries for high paying jobs creating digital special effects and digital animation. While Ak' Tenamit's core staff will focus on the reduction of critical barriers, accredited academics and psychosocial support, Carlos's team will ensure that youth participating in the #YOMEQUEDO mechanism acquire the skills needed to enter a competitive and highly rewarding job market.

The #YOMEQUEDO (#ImStaying) Campaign includes showcasing students on social media and personalizing their experience, goals, and mission:



The #YOMEQUEDO fast-track mechanism for the accelerated technical education, robust apprenticeships, and gainful employment of internally displaced and returned migrant youth provides a cost-effective, highly scalable solution before the current youth migration crisis.

To learn more or to support the #YOMEQUEDO program, visit thetfund.org.

Donor Spotlight - Monsignor Tom Skindeleski celebrates 50-year Jubilee



Monsignor Tom first visited Guatemala with his cousin, a nun, in November of 1972. Including that trip, Monsignor Tom has traveled to Guatemala a total of 19 times. After meeting Steve in 1999, he was impressed by the mission of the Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund and decided to organize a group to travel to Guatemala as a service trip. As a member of the clergy for 50 years and a Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus, he has dedicated his life to service and improving the lives of others.



Monsignor Thomas Skindeleski first felt the calling towards priesthood as a young child. Even in grade school, Monsignor Tom "played" mass at home, using his bureau as a makeshift altar. It was only his

junior year of high school that Monsignor Tom committed to dedicating his life to religious service. This decision brought

him to leave his hometown of Philadelphia for Orchard Lake, Michigan where he finished his high school education and continued to complete his college education at St. Mary's.



Shortly after completing his college education, Monsignor Tom met the late Pope John Paul II, who he views in the highest regard. One of the qualities that Monsignor Tom admires about the former Pope was his ability to connect with all sorts of people through their native language. He estimates that the Pope could speak approximately twelve different languages. Monsignor Tom has not quite caught up with the former Pope, but his language acquisition skills are nothing to sneeze at: Monsignor Tom speaks an impressive eight languages. He sees language as a way to connect with people, making them feel seen and heard.

The language skills and the willingness to learn stands out to the Monsignor about the students at the Ak' Tenamit school. At the school, the Monsignor teaches some of the students English. He noted that for many of the students, English is their third language. Singing Do-Re-Mi from the Sound of

Music with the students is one language learning method used by the Monsignor. He sees music as a valuable tool for language acquisition, as listening to the radio proved to be helpful in his acquisition of the Spanish language. Monsignor Tom comically juxtaposed his singing with the children to the hard labor of the men he brought down to Guatemala with him.

Monsignor Tom brings groups of volunteers with him for service trips yearly, barring years of extreme circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, he brought youth groups on these service trips. In more recent years, Monsignor Tom brings his fellow Knights of Columbus, along with some of their sons. He describes these trips as deeply spiritual experiences; the men feel renewed upon returning home and anticipate traveling back to Guatemala. While they bring their hard work and service, the lessons learned



and people met in Guatemala are a valuable return. After a day of hard work, the men like to unwind by playing cards where the mission is simple: beat Monsignor Tom.

Monsignor Tom's life of service is especially impressive because, in times of so much unrest and disorder, he remains hopeful and perseveres. When asked how he maintains such optimism, Monsignor Tom remarked that he gets it from the students at Ak' Tenamit. He gets inspiration from their drive to better themselves and their homes. They are aspirational and want to serve their people. He is impressed at how, although these people are cultured, intelligent, hardworking, and persevering, they maintain simplicity and humility. We should all be striving for these qualities in a world that can sometimes feel dark, and we can use their example to create hope for the future.

“Studying at Ak' Tenamit opened many doors for me”



Mirza Shol graduated from Ak' Tenamit's vocational high school 12 years ago with a degree in sustainable tourism. She has a job she loves, coordinating ecotourism programs for local environmental organization FUNDAECO. On top of administering two visitors' centers located in national forests, where she supervises the work of seven park guards and coordinates groups of local indigenous women that prepare food for groups visiting the sites and ecolodge, she arranges tours for visitors to see the area's wildlife, wild orchids, caves and the “chicle” trees, whose sap has been harvested and sold by generations of jungle dwellers to make chewing gum.

In addition to her work promoting sustainable tourism, Mirza accompanies rural indigenous communities through the bureaucratic maze of paperwork and meetings with Guatemalan government officials to register community conservation areas so that they can receive forest incentives, wherein the Guatemalan Department of Forestry pays communities to reforest and preserve forest cover. Fundaeco also helps communities obtain legal title to their ancestral lands and Mirza plays a key role in this process by helping community-members, especially indigenous women, to obtain their legal identification documents, and to meet with government officials, often times serving as translator, as many villagers only speak their native Mayan language, Q'eqchi'. Mirza says studying at Ak' Tenamit opened many doors for her and has enabled her to fulfill her dream of becoming a leader capable of helping rural indigenous communities reduce poverty while preserving the region's tropical rainforests.

“As a professional indigenous woman, I value and use my traditional indigenous clothing and language in my work and I know that I am helping to break gender stereotypes, showing parents and village girls that it is possible for indigenous women to serve as professionals and to play a vital role in the sustainable development of the region.”

Before Ak' Tenamit opened its doors, forced marriages and early child-birth were very common in the region, but now, after 30 years of educating and graduating girls, it's expected that girls have the opportunity to continue their education and to have a right to decide what path they would like to follow in life. It's common for girls and boys that graduate from Ak' Tenamit to eventually marry each other, and most of these families only have one or two children, bringing about a big cultural shift in an area where families traditionally had many children and struggled tremendously to provide for them.



Four years after graduating, Mirza married Walter, another Ak' Tenamit alumni, who works as a student counselor at Ak' Tenamit's Fr. Moran Vocational High School. They have an 8-year-old daughter, Estrella Ixmucané (named after a Mayan Goddess), who plans to study at Ak' Tenamit's high school when she's older. “As Walter is an Ak' Tenamit graduate, he knows how to cook and wash his own clothes and he shares fully in the work related to caring for and educating our daughter, breaking from the traditional community gender roles where only women were expected to help at home”, says Mirza, “This enables me to work full-time serving rural communities, and every month I send part of my earnings to my parents to help support them”. “Studying at Ak' Tenamit we learned about financial and business management, so we have been able to invest part of our income in starting several small businesses such as raising livestock and developing a Cacao plantation to produce organic chocolate”. Mirza is gradually earning a law degree, studying intermittently on weekends, and wants to focus on environmental law. In addition to Q'eqchi' and Spanish, they want their daughter to learn to speak English, to maintain her cultural identity, to be free to define and reach her own goals in life and to have the opportunity to become a leader like her mother.

■ Ak' Tenamit Receives NowLights from T.I.E.S.



The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund has formed a new alliance with a Canadian Nonprofit: Technology in Education Society or T.I.E.S. In addition to future sponsorship of Ak' Tenamit students, the organization recently coordinated the shipment of 10 NowLights to Guatemala from the United Kingdom.

The DeciWatt NowLight is a human or solar powered generator that provides light and USB charging. The self-contained light and manual generator are ideally suited to illuminate spaces that are not connected to the grid. DeciWatt (also the inventors of the GravityLight) explain "Pull the NowLight

cord for just one minute to create up to 2 hours of light or 15 minutes of talk time on a mobile phone."

In early 2020 T.I.E.S. took delivery of two of the first release of the NowLight, planning to send them (or take them on a field visit) to one of the areas where they provide support. But the pandemic hit making travel impossible and also slowing down their charity registration process by several months. Impatient to get a field trial going, in early 2021 they submitted a proposal to Viaduct Foundation to buy and donate 10 NowLight kits (generator with integrated light, battery and USB charging port, satellite light, and solar panel) to students in the Sarstun area of Guatemala. The Sarstun jungle is home to the Ak' Tenamit school. T.I.E.S. arranged for delivery and monitoring of this field test through the



S.H.A.R.E. Agriculture Foundation) who shared their story about the plight of Ak' Tenamit students forced to study from their village home using tablets during the pandemic.

■ Donor Advised Funds

Please include The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund (EIN# 65-305897) in your estate plan by naming our organization as a beneficiary of your donor advised fund, retirement plan, IRA, or life insurance policy. You can also have your annual IRA distribution, or a portion thereof, donated to GTF without tax implication. Choosing any of these options is as simple as filling out a beneficiary designation form from your plan provider or administrator. Talk with your financial advisor today about the best option for you. With a planned gift you ensure that we are here to support our students and that your legacy lives on!

■ Sponsor A Student **Transform** A Life!

Ak' Tenamit's practical, vocational education, 3,000 hours of job experience, and personal motivation prepare graduates to succeed in their rural environment, and inspire them to help their families and their communities. For just one dollar per day (\$365 per year), you can transform the life of a young person who would otherwise be trapped in poverty.

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WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law and processed through a PCI Compliant Data Security Company. The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund is the US based, non-profit, non-denominational fund raising arm of Ak' Tenamit.



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