



Center for Thriving
Communities

*A YEAR OF—
ACTION*



The Guatemalan-Maya Center

» About Our Community



Tell Us About Your Community!

Our Guatemalan-Maya community is part of a larger diaspora of Maya people who fled to the United States during the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996) also known as the Silent Holocaust. Thanks to the work of Father Frank, Lake Worth Beach became a welcoming hub for displaced Maya families. With the support of the Guatemalan-Maya Center, Maya families have formed close-knit communities enhancing the cultural landscape of Lake Worth Beach. Our community is rich in cultural traditions, heritage, and customs, with various Mayan languages spoken alongside Spanish and English such as Popti, M'am, Akateko, Q'anjob'al, and Ixil.

What Do You Take Pride In?

We take pride in our collaborative work. With a legacy of over 30 years, Father Frank and the Guatemalan-Maya Center have been advocating for the rights of immigrants and addressing the challenges faced by many indigenous Maya migrants. Through our work, the Guatemalan-Maya Center has become a pillar for the community, playing a crucial role in fostering understanding and support for migrant Maya families.

» Our Equity Action Lab Design Team and Leadership Team



Mariana Blanco



Micaela Martin



Maria Carolina Ordoñez



Danna Torres

The Need

Historical trauma and ongoing systemic violence, such as genocides, cultural destruction, and severed connections to ancestral lands, have left Maya people grappling with complex psychological, emotional, and social outcomes, often without fully understanding the roots of their distress.

Unresolved trauma can lead to cycles of violence. Indigenous migrant women face significantly higher rates of violence due to intersecting factors such as poverty, racial and gender discrimination, lack of legal protections, and barriers to reporting violence such as language access.

Your Design Day

We identified team members in our Outreach and Clinical team who frequently engage with the community, and community champions who have fostered genuine connections with the community based on trust, respect, and shared purpose.

We spent significant amounts of time planning our engagement of external partners as we knew our AIM was contingent on higher levels of trust between all stakeholders involved.

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» Your Driver Diagram

Pre/Post well-being survey of
Maya participants. 50% decrease
in DV by May 1st 2025

Creation of empowerment support
group (1 per week for women)
(mental and physical health equity)

P- Recruit for a men's group using Ixil leaders
D- Engaged men to join a "support" group similar to the women
S- Realized that focusing on alcoholism and support was not generating engagement
A- Separate Alcoholism and DV, partner with Duluth



1. Ixil leaders
2. Husbands of women leaders

P- Register 5 women
D- Engaged people with lived experience (PLE) to personally invite women
S- Outdoor experience will draw more participants
A- 7 women attended initial event



Trusted women with
lived experience

Implementing activities that
restore our connection to the land
(social and spiritual well-being)

P- Hold Community Days in nature
D- Find locations that meet needs of family
S- Will families feel more safe to share
A- Succeeded with women and children. Need to create space for men



1. Various nonprofit organizations
2. Religious groups

Create a messaging campaign around
stronger families without using
language regarding abuse/neglect
(community vital conditions)

P- Train men leaders as connectors
D- Requested men who were already connected to invite other men to help increase engagement
S- Men inviting men increased participation
A- Began to see more men join



1. Local soccer clubs
2. Local Police
3. Local Businesses

Create community coed
champion/advocate team for
the program (root causes)

P- Create a "Train the Trainer" model with women leaders
D- In progress



Women leaders in project

» What Was Your Equity Action Lab?

What Was the AIM for the Equity Action Lab?

Healthy relationships are best realized in the context of community. Using the framework of community building, we co-created a support group as a powerful antidote against gender-based violence. This approach took into account the victim, the abuser, generational trauma, and our relationship to the land.

What Were Your Data Sources?

We relied on our community. These personal stories provided us with qualitative insight that is often excluded from research lacking diverse experiences from migrant people of color. We also used the Palm Beach Health Needs Assessment.



How Did You Measure and Track Progress Toward Your Goal?

We used a combination of methods like increased attendance, surveys, participation, and formation of extended support networks.

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»» What Did You Learn?

- » Smaller is better. As the women's group grew, we noticed increased attendance reduced the quality of engagement. It was harder for everyone to have a chance to speak, or to give each person meaningful attention. Some voices became more dominant drowning out quieter ones. To avoid power dynamics, we began sitting in a traditional "circulo" to promote equality and inclusivity, and co-created community guidelines to remind ourselves of what we need to feel seen and heard
- » The impacts of working with people who have lived experience. It's as healing as it is emotionally triggering, and retraumatizing. It's important to ensure there are resources and tools available when recruiting people with lived experience. This will ensure the well-being of people with lived experience who may have barriers in accessing mental health care. In our case, we engaged a mental health therapist to join the group and help us navigate conversations. Through this collaboration, we were able to offer some of the women 1-on-1 therapy

Change Ourselves

»» What Would You Do Differently?

- » Language access for our community partners
- » Explain the efficacy of our lab and how it will affect different partners
- » Separate the Coalition vs. Agency on internal assessments
- » Have more community leaders on strategy calls
- » Introduce surveys earlier with greater explanation of how we plan to use information and why we need that particular information

»» What's Next?

Continue what we started:

- » Address historical trauma by promoting regenerative relationships where both community and land thrive together
- » Challenge ongoing systemic violence and discrimination
- » Continue co-creating community-led healing efforts that are culturally specific and language accessible
- » Explore ways to share these traditions with future generations

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