Winter 11-2016

Maya Conference Report - PDF in English

Alan LeBaron
Kennesaw State University, mhcp@kennesaw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/mayaprojecttexts

Part of the Chicana/o Studies Commons, Education Commons, Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons, Indigenous Studies Commons, Latin American History Commons, Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, Latin American Studies Commons, Latina/o Studies Commons, and the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation
LeBaron, Alan, "Maya Conference Report - PDF in English" (2016). Maya Heritage Community Project Texts. 3.
http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/mayaprojecttexts/3

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Maya Heritage Community Project at DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maya Heritage Community Project Texts by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.
Who We Are

On November 19, 2016, Pastoral Maya took another step forward toward greater significance and national organization. For the first time, we assembled a truly cohesive and National Consejo Network that will guide the projects and the mission of Pastoral Maya.

What is Pastoral Maya? Unfortunately, the truth is always under threat from misunderstandings and misinformation. Pastoral Maya is a category of pastoral care under the wing of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Washington D.C. Pastoral Maya is directly connected to the USCCB, and it is national, not local.
Why are we Catholics?

“Being Catholic means being united with others, to help one another in the case of need, to learn by that which is good in other, and to share generously one’s own good, it means trying to become acquainted with one another and accepting each other’s differences” Joseph Ratzinger
“The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality”

HISTORY OF PASTORAL MAYA

As we started arriving in the United States seeking refuge, we realized that there was something that no one could take away from us, something that no one could destroy. That was, our faith and belief in God.

In the 1980’s we made Los Angeles, California, our home. We started gathering in our small apartments to continue practicing our Catholic faith. We formed our own choirs and sang in our own Mayan languages.

As we started growing in number, with the help of some culturally sensitive Roman Catholic priests, we started assimilating into the Spanish-speaking community. However, since Spanish is
not our first language, most of us still gathered in our small apartments to pray in our own Mayan languages.

Years later, with the help of Reverend David Lopez and Sister Nancy Wellmeier, SDN, the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees (PCMR) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops took us under its umbrella.

Originally, the primary mission of the Pastoral Maya Ministry was the provision of pastoral care in the indigenous languages of Maya Catholics living and serving in more than 30 Catholic (arch) dioceses in the United States.

In 1991, Father David Lopez, pastor of Santa Eulalia and San Sebastian Coatan, visited Los Angeles for the first time. Two Maya Catholic communities were formed as a result of this visit, La Caridad de Coateneques and Ewulense and the Fraternidad Ewulense Maya Qanjobal (FEMAQ). The following year, Hijos de Maria was formed in Mesa, AZ. Fr. David visited Homestead and Indiantown in Florida where he met Sister Nancy Wellmeir, an anthropologist, who has been responding to the needs of migrants and worked in solidarity with them. A letter was sent to the bishops of the United States asking for pastoral assistance. This request began the Pastoral Maya Ministry in 1997.

Sr. Nancy Wellmeir, SNDdeN, coordinated the Pastoral Maya Ministry in collaboration with the USCCB Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees (PCMR). Based in the Diocese of Phoenix, she invited priests and bishops from Guatemala to make periodic pastoral visits with the hundreds of thousands of + Maya Catholics living in various cities in the USA. Fr. David Lopez offered pastoral leadership formation courses to assist Maya lay Catholics learn how to work within the ecclesial structures of the Catholic Church in the United States and also serve as pastoral leaders for their own Maya communities.

After Sr. Nancy Wellmeir was elected to her congregational leadership, the national coordination of Maya Pastoral Ministry passed on to Fr. David Lopez for two years. In 2005, Sr. Charlotte Hobelman, SND, under the umbrella of the USCCB MRS/PCMR, took the coordination until it was passed on to Ms. Cecile Motus under the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity, PCMRT. Mr. Juanatano Cano was appointed in 2005 to be the National Advisor/Consultant to the USCCB. In 2009, Pastoral Maya members voted to leave the PCMRT in order to become part of the USSCB Department of Native American Affairs.

Our USCCB administrative leaders under the Department of Native American Affairs have been Father Henry Sands (until last year—2015) and currently Father Michael Carson. The official liaison between Pastoral Maya and the USSCB, Department of Native American Affairs is Juanatano Cano.
Encuentros

National gatherings of Maya pastoral leaders have provided relevant and important leadership formation. The first National Maya Catholic Encuentro was held in Los Angeles, California in 1999, and the second conference was held in 2001 in Phoenix, Arizona. The third conference was held at Kennesaw State University in 2004, and annual conferences have been held annually from that year onward. These have successfully gathered Maya leaders for continuing education on such topics as – being a faithful Catholic, changing immigration policies and rules, maintaining Maya identity, cultural values and spirituality, health and safety, and responding to the needs of Maya families in the USA and in Guatemala. Since 2004, special sessions with youth and young adult Maya pastoral leaders were added to the national conference program and the urgency of high school and higher education.

In 2013, Father Mat Xun became the Spiritual Director of Pastoral Maya ministry and continued doing the work of Father David Lopez.
Maya Nacional Conferences

Mazo 5-7, 1999 Los Angeles, California
Julio 27-29, 2001 Phoenix, Arizona
Mayo 1-2, 2004 Kennesaw State University, Georgia
Agosto 27-28, 2005 Kennesaw State University, Georgia
Feb 12-13, 2006 Los Angeles, California
Feb 18-19, 2006 Kennesaw State University, Georgia
2007 Kennesaw State University, Georgia
Octubre 2008 Villa Maria, Pennsylvania
Octubre 3-4, 2009 Omaha, Nebraska
Julio 16-18,2010 Omaha, Nebraska
Julio 15 -17,2011 Portland, Oregon
Julio, 27-28,2012 Alamosa, Colorado
Julio, 27-28,2013 Belfair, Washington
Julio, 18-19, 2014 Los Angeles, California
Junio, 26-27, 2015 Greenville, South Carolina
June, 17-18, 2016 Greenville, South Carolina
July, 7-8, 2017 Cookeville, Tennessee

Visits by Guatemalan Roman Catholic Priests

Pastoral visits by Guatemalan priests and bishops are also foundational activities to energize Maya Catholics to serve as bridges between the Maya communities and the U.S. local churches. Approximately 40 communities are associated with the Pastoral Maya Ministry. A National Board of Directors in collaboration with USCCB and Fr. David Lopez guided the implementation of pastoral programs by Maya communities in local parishes and dioceses up to 2012. Then Father Mat Xun continued working with the board of directors. In 2014, Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini understood the work of Pastoral Maya and become a blessing not only to the Maya Communities but also to the American Catholic Church.
Funding

Pastoral Maya never collects dues or charges money for services, if money is charged it is NOT part of Pastoral Maya. Grants and contracts have been received from the Catholic Church for specific purposes, like holding the Pastoral Conferences each year and producing the National Health Care Toolkit. These monies are carefully guided by the rules and regulations of the USCCB and the Federal Government. Please do not listen to rumors or misinformation about Pastoral Maya. Our legal administrative leaders in the USCCB have been Sister Charlotte Hobelman and Cecile Motus, until Pastoral Maya left Migration and Refugee Services and became under the wing of the USCCB Native American pastoral organization. Our USCCB administrative leaders under the Native American council have been Father Henry Sands (until last year, 2015) and currently Father Michael Carson. The official liaison between Pastoral Maya and the USSCB Native American Affairs is Juanatano Cano. No other person who has claimed to speak for Pastoral Maya in recent years has been authentic.

Second Generation Maya (born in the United States) have become an important part of the Pastoral Maya Ministry

In 1990 some of the children of the Maya people born in Guatemala were attending public schools in Los Angeles.

“By 1994 there were a few Mayan people attending college while simultaneously working to support their parents.” (Robert Harman, Professor of Anthropology at Cal State University Long Beach.)

In the year 2000, there were already a small number of Mayan students attending the UC (University of California) and CSU (California State University) of California.

In the year of 2004-2005, Robert Harman, professor of Anthropology at California State University Long Beach, surveyed a small group of Mayan college students. 10 of the 13 participants said that their parents encouraged them from a young age to get an education. However, due to problems such as lack of motivation, no place to do homework or for quiet reading, drugs, early pregnancy, etc., not all our students graduated from high school. This is where Kennesaw State University Maya Heritage Community Project (KSU MHCP) became a true partner.
In 2001, KSU began working with local Maya in north Georgia and South Carolina, under the program called the Maya Heritage Community Project. The Maya Project creates academic learning opportunities for students and service learning internships that prepare students for employment in such fields as health, law, and human services. The Maya Project endeavors to educate Maya about United States’ law, health, and customs; and to educate faculty and students about the ancient and modern culture of the Maya. By working side-by-side with Maya, KSU students and faculty have a rich educational experience. Various programs of the Maya Project have included a series of health clinics, law seminars, English classes, and seminars on highway safety. In return, the Maya have spoken to classes at university and participated in various university programs.

First Regional youth Conference, 2006 at Immaculate Conception Church in Los Angeles

We had the opportunity to have students from Arizona, Colorado, Washington, and students from the areas of San Diego. Most of the students who attended this first conference were sons and daughters of Pastoral Maya members from these states mentioned above. Even though these students were familiar with the work of their parents with Pastoral Maya, not all the teenagers were engaged with parish life.

Before we ended the workshop, we asked the teenagers what kind of help or support they needed from Pastoral Maya; they listed these three topics. 1) How to keep our Maya identity, 2) how to preserve our Maya culture, and 3) we want to know about the history of the Mayas.
Youth from Colorado, Arizona, Illinois, California, in Los Angeles after a long-day workshop in 2006 at Immaculate Conception Church

Maya Youth Conference 2007 at Immaculate Conception Church in Los Angeles

Struggles for Cultural Identity – On August 25, 2007, many young Maya participants expressed that they were struggling to define themselves and their sense of identity to the broader community. In the multicultural environment of Los Angeles, many Maya youths identified themselves as “Chicano” or “Latino” or “Guatemalan” or even “Hispanic.” Some Mayas deny their indigenous identity because of painful experiences in racism and social stigma attached to being indigenous. They have experienced racial slurs and “harsh demeaning references to indigenous people.

During the discussion of preservation of a Mayan cultural identity, which took place in English, a number of the students expressed a desire for classes in their native languages. Although some stated that they spoke their language or at least understood some of it passively, with their parents, the students agreed that language was an important part of cultural heritage and stated that they would attend classes if offered.
Maya Ceremony introduced for the first time at a Pastoral Maya National Conference in Omaha, NE, 2009.

When we speak about Maya Cosmo vision the youth asked questions about Maya Ceremonies. Some members of Pastoral Maya, if not most, know of Maya Ceremonies from their Maya hometowns in Guatemala. Millions of Maya Catholics still practice some forms of Maya spirituality. However, parents felt uncomfortable to speak about Maya Ceremonies or Maya Spirituality to their kids because of negative connotations attached to it. Therefore, the board of directors introduced the Maya Ceremony for the first time in Omaha, NE with an effort to minimize stigmas.

Karin Ventura became the National Coordinator of Maya youth on the National level at the Pastoral Maya Conference in Omaha, NE in 2009

Karin Ventura addressing the audience in 2015 in Greenville, SC

Pastoral Maya National Conference in Omaha, NE, in 2010

At this Conference, there was a strong presence of different young people from different states. Each delegate returned to their home state with the idea of organizing a youth group. As a result, Karin Ventura, like other young leaders in different states, created a youth group in their respective states.
In July of 2010, Pastoral Maya disconnected with PCMRT (Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers) and become connected to the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs

During the IX National Pastoral Maya Leadership Conference held in Omaha, Nebraska on October 2-4, 2009, the leaders of the Maya Catholic communities from different parts of the United States made an important and historic decision that our great grandparents dreamed about and our U.S.-born children have been wishing for – that we proudly identify ourselves to be natives of the Americas – North, Central and South. We have more identity than just being immigrants or migrants. As Maya, we share so much in common with our sisters and brothers of the Native American communities in the United States. We have our own Mayan languages. We have great respect for Mother Nature and we see the Spirit of God in all his Creation. Our Mayan spirituality is more akin to Native American spirituality. Because of these factors, we respectfully requested a change in the subcommittee of bishops who takes responsibility for the pastoral care of the Maya communities in the United States – from the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT) to the Subcommittee on Native Americans. We believed that together with our Native American brothers and sisters, we will retain and more vibrantly nurture our Catholic faith.

Juanatano Cano and Archbishop Chaput in Rome. Archbishop Chaput welcomed the Maya Ministry under the umbrella of the Department of Native American Affairs, USCCB

Thanks to the Second Vatican Council

53. Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature. Wherever human life is involved, therefore, nature and culture are quite intimately connected one with the other (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* promulgated by his holiness, pope paul vi on december 7, 1965, Chapter II: The Proper Development Of Culture).
According to an article by the Los Angeles Times on September 14, 1987, “The Papal Visit: John Paul’s Meeting with Indians Will Emphasize Newly Won Rights”, the Pope had declared his concern for native peoples in several speeches. For example, the Pope urged Australian aborigines to continue protecting their lives and culture, and to pass down what is valued to the children. “Share them with each other and teach them to your children,” the Pope said. “Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages, must never be lost.”

**XI Conferencia Nacional 2012, Alamosa, Colorado**

“A new dawn has come”.

*Let the sun of the new horizon illuminate our pathway*

A day, a month, a year, a millennium begins, a new Bak’tun; This is the way it is and who we are as Maya. A dawn where we are called to give life to the world - Salt and Light of the World -. It is time to make this new dawn possible: "Here came the word, Tepeu and Gucumatz came together in the darkness and at night, and Tepeu and Gucumatz spoke among themselves, and they talked and consulted and meditated. They agreed, gathered their words and their thoughts. Then it became clear, while they meditated, that when the sun was to appear to man. Then they set up the creation and growth of trees and vines and the birth of life and the creation of man. " Pop Wuj, Part One, Chapter I

"*We are protagonists of history*”

We are history, because we are the fruit of the life and effort of our ancestors. We are a creative event in response to the deep love we experience for life in the world, in history, in time, and in space. We are history, we are creativity, we are responsibility, yesterday, today and tomorrow. We believe in our creative capacity which is the heritage of our millennial peoples and a response to the life of today and tomorrow. " (National Plan of Indigenous Pastoral, Episcopal Conference of Guatemala, second part 2.1).

**Our hope:** The cycle we closed was marked by darkness. But the time has come for the light, a new dawn has arrived - It is time to bloom. We are convinced that only those who live in harmony, peace, and love will overcome individualism, selfishness, and overcome all negative energy that seeks to unbalance our personal, family, community life and that of the whole of humanity.
Religious aspect of Pastoral Maya

While attention to Maya youth has become a part of Pastoral Maya, the Pastoral Ministry became stronger with a new vision—see themselves as Maya and Catholics. Maya Catholics became more visible within parishes and on dioceses/archdiocesan level without any shame of being Maya. Father Mat Xun did a great job at journeying under this new vision. Under his guidance, Pastoral Maya has grown in numbers and he has helped connect the Maya communities to their local parishes and dioceses.

Also, we have an ordained Deacon and more are lay people are aspiring to become Deacons in their home states.

Top: Father Mat Xun addressing the Maya community in Greenville, SC, in 2016. Bottom: Misa Maya at the Religious Congress in Anaheim, CA, 2014
Bishop Ramazzini of the Diocese of Huehuetenango, Guatemala has taken Pastoral Maya in the United State to a different level.

"... The Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep, he seeks them, he assembles them and shares with them ..." Bishop Ramazzini
In an effort to reach out to the generation of Maya American youth, Bishop Ramazzini, Diocese of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, visited a small group of Maya American Youth at the Maya National Conference held in Los Angeles, CA, on July 18-19, 2014. The youth panelists were composed of delegates from Washington, Nebraska, Colorado, and California. They shared their stories of growing up as Catholics but with limited knowledge of their Maya culture and history. After listening to their stories, Bishop Ramazzini shared a little bit of his parents’ immigrant experience as they arrived in the Americans.

Where do we go from here?
Most significant achievement of this year 2016:

- The presence of Maya Children and Youth at national conferences increases every year. In part this is due to the presence of Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini and of our partnership with Maya Heritage Community Project at Kennesaw State University.
- Bishop Ramazzini reached out to a new Maya Catholic Community in Bremerton, Washington. Also, the Maya Community in Belfair will have an active role in the Archdiocese of Seattle.
- The Religious Education of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles opened a program to Maya leaders to become Certified Catechists. 40 Maya leaders were certified as catechists this year and a few of them are enrolled in the Advanced Catechetical Master Program.
- Maya leaders convened this year in Meza, Arizona, on Saturday, November 19, 2016. The leaders evaluated 25 years of Maya presence in the Catholic Church.

What we are looking forward to most in the next year, 2017.

The National Board members who were elected in Mesa, AZ, will convene in 2017 to form subcommittees

A strategy to keep young Mayas in the Catholic Community is by encouraging the Maya language and culture. This focus began in Los Angeles in 2007, which has done well in developing Maya language classes and marimba playing, and women and children being taught catechism in Maya language. The focus on youth has been growing nationally. This initiative of nurturing the Catholic faith and Maya identity of youth and young adults is crucial to the future of Maya Catholics in the United States.
Highlights of the Mesa, AZ Conference

November 19, 2016

Delegates of communities present: 1) Mesa, AZ, 2) Cookeville, TN, 3) Greenville, SC, (4 communities), 4) Omaha, NE, 5) Portland, OR, 6) Belfair, WA, 7) Alamosa, CO, 8) Los Angeles, CA, (and Eterna Juventud Maya) 9), and Canton, GA.

INTRODUCTION

On November 19, 2016, Pastoral Maya took another step forward toward greater significance and national organization. For the first time, we assembled a truly cohesive and national consejo network that will guide the projects and the mission of Pastoral Maya.

What is Pastoral Maya? Unfortunately, the truth is always under threat from misunderstandings and misinformation. Pastoral Maya is a category of pastoral care under the wing of the United States Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Washington D.C. Pastoral Maya is directly connected to the USCCB, and it is national, not local. Pastoral Maya never collects dues or charges money for services, if money is charged it is NOT part of Pastoral Maya. Grants and contracts have been received from the Catholic Church for specific purposes, like holding the Pastoral Conferences each year and producing the National Health Care Toolkit. These monies are carefully guided by the rules and regulations of the USCCB and the Federal Government. Please do not listen to rumors or misinformation about Pastoral Maya. Our legal administrative leaders in the USCCB have been Sister Charlotte Hobleman and Cecile Motus, until Pastoral Maya left Migration and Refugee Services and became under the wing of the USCCB Native American pastoral organization. Our USCCB administrative leaders under the Native American council have been Father Henry Sands (until last year) and currently Father Michael Carson. The official liaison between Pastoral Maya and the USCCB Native American council is Juanatano Cano. No other person who has claimed to speak for Pastoral Maya in recent years has been authentic.
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Sister Nancy Wellmeier gave an outline of her early role in the history of the foundation of Pastoral Maya.

History of Pastoral Maya by Sr. Nancy

In the mid-80's I became aware of the genocide taking place in Central America. I was able to join a human rights tour and visited Guatemala for the first time. Then I began to see how many Guatemalan Maya people were arriving in the orange groves in the East Valley of Mesa, on their way to other states. I was involved with the Sanctuary Movement and we took a hot meal to the 200 plus people several nights a week. Then I hosted a young woman, Juana, who came from San Rafael La Independencia, and needed shelter. I began to learn about the culture of Huehuetenango, and decided that someone in the Catholic Church had to know more about these new refugees coming across our border. I returned to Arizona State to continue my studies in Cultural Anthropology and got a PhD in 1994. My fieldwork was done in Indiantown, Florida, a sanctuary town. I lived there for a year, learning how to process work permit renewals, defend asylum cases, etc. I met Padre David who came from L.A. where he was visiting the communities there--Santa Eulalia and San Sebastian. As part of my study, I stayed in Santa Eulalia and observed life in the Cuchumatanes.

Seeing that it was unjust that the refugee communities, which were already formed and carrying out their weekly prayers and saints' celebrations, had to pay for the travel of priests to come and provide religious services, especially confession in the Maya languages, I thought that the US should take care of that. I also envisioned that the communities would be stronger if they were united, and that the leaders could benefit from support and training. I also realized that other Latinos were not welcoming to the indigenous Maya, and that in many cases, the pastors of the
parishes where the Maya were, did not understand any of the complex story. So I wrote a proposal to the USCCB, who invited me to visit and talk about my idea. At that time, Sr. Suzanne Hall was in charge of MRS (Migrant and Refugee Services) and told me the idea was great, but there was no money. With her help I was able to get grants from the Extension Society, and later, from the Hilton Fund for Sisters. With this money, I was able to finance several trips by Padre David, also other priests and a bishop of Huehuetenango. I traveled around to all the communities in the US, meeting with leaders and pastors, living in the homes of the community members. We began a monthly newsletter to unite the communities across the US, we made video Bible courses to send to each community, and we had annual meetings of leaders and delegates. I went 5 or 6 times to Huehuetenango, at one period working there for several months preparing course material for the animadores.

When, in 2002, I was elected to be part of my congregation's leadership in Rome, I felt that the Maya groups were ready to take over the national leadership themselves. At that point Juanatano Cano was chosen and began to work with Sister Charlotte at the USCCB. I left for Rome from Atlanta, where I had a great send-off from the Canton, Georgia community.

From left to right: Jose Martin, Francisco Lucas, Domingo Martin, Sister Nancy, Roberto Jaime, Domingo Felipe, Antonio Marcos, and Mateo Juan Diego

Homage to Sister Nancy Wellmeier

The original leaders of each community spoke of the beginnings of their communities and gave a special homage to Sister Nancy Welmeier.

General Consul of Guatemala in Phoenix

The Consul General of Guatemala in Phoenix welcomed the attendees, and gave some advice regarding the threats with the new US administration: keep calm, have your documents in order, get your children registered as Guatemalan citizens, open a bank account in the US to be able to transfer money.
Juanatano Cano’s Presentation

Juanatano Cano told of his involvement in Pastoral Maya beginning in about 2004. Rev. David Lopez connected him with the Maya communities in California and on the National Level. Even though Juanatano had a focus on education and youth, he was attracted by his own people’s spirituality, religiosity, culture, and Maya Cosmo vision. He became the official consultant for the Maya people with the US Bishops' conference. Prior to becoming a consultant, Juanatano had been working with Latino community.

In 2009, the Pastoral Maya Leaders chose to switch to the USCCB department of Native American ministries, rather than Migrants and Refugees. During the IX National Pastoral Maya Leadership Conference held in Omaha, Nebraska on October 2-4, 2009, the leaders of the Maya Catholic communities from different parts of the United States made an important and historic decision that our great grandparents dreamed about and our U.S.-born children have been wishing for – that we proudly identify ourselves to be natives of the Americas – North, Central and South -- more than immigrants to this country. As Maya, we share so much in common with our sisters and brothers of the Native American communities in the United States. We have our own Mayan languages. We have great respect for Mother Nature and we see the Spirit of God in all his Creation. Our Mayan spirituality is more akin to Native American spirituality. Because of these factors, we respectfully requested a change in the subcommittee of bishops who takes responsibility for the pastoral care of the Maya communities in the United States – from the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT) to the Subcommittee on Native Americans. We believe that together with our Native American brothers and sisters, we will retain and more vibrantly nurture our Catholic faith.

Lucía Nicolas of Alamosa, Colorado gave her point of view of that meeting and her reaction to the change. Lucia said in Q'anjobal that the change was something the Maya Peoples have been waiting for; and her words and wisdom became a powerful inspiration for everyone at the conference.

Dr. Alan LeBaron introduced himself

Professor LeBaron proposed a subcommittee for education, to promote education of Maya children and youth, but also this subcommittee could explore and seek methods for promoting adult education. [Adult education is widely accepted in the United States, under the belief that education should be lifelong.]

NOTE: Dr. Alan LeBaron is Professor of History and Director of the Maya Heritage Community Project at Kennesaw State University. The Maya Project is a university educational, research, and service learning project. The Pastoral Maya national conference of 2004 was completely paid for and hosted by the Maya Project at Kennesaw State University, and the university continued to host and promote the conferences in 2005, 6 and 7. Dr. LeBaron has worked closely with Padre David, Juanatano Cano, and other leaders over the years. Pastoral Maya does not pay his expenses, he is employed by the university.

Francisco Lucas of Alamosa, CO, read a letter from David Lopez

Greetings were conveyed by Francisco Lucas from Padre David Lopez, of Guatemala.
Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini’s Observations

Monsignor Alvaro Ramazzini spoke of his observations after listening. All is connected in time and place. He told of his own entrance into the world of the pueblos indígenas. He spoke of the challenges facing Pastoral Maya. For example, Pastoral Maya has largely been populated by Huehuetecos at this time, and that Huehuetecos have maintained strong organizations. He advised Pastoral Maya to reach out to other groups such Mams, Kicheis, and Garifunas. He asked us to consider a number of questions as Pastoral Maya continues to develop. How to pass on the heritage to the 2nd and 3rd generation? How to be open to a new culture and still conserve and strengthen our own? He advised us not to fall into “culturalismo” that becomes folklore--where all that is kept are some customs. What about the interior, in the religious realm, in addition to the social, cultural and political arenas? Cf. the Bishops’ document, “500 Years” where pardon is asked for the error of trying to abolish the cosmovision and spiritual beliefs that the missionaries found on their arrival. In order to evangelize a culture—we must look for convergences. How to do that here? How to enlarge the focus to pastoral care of the pueblos indígenas de Centro America? Each person has to find his/her identity, and presence here. Are you Guatemalans? How can you manage the question of your civil identity as an indigenous people in this country?

Also, there needs to be communication between the two Bishops’ Conferences. Juanatano or someone needs to explain to the Bishops of Guatemala what is happening in the US. People also need to relate to the parish and diocese where they live. He has been able to talk directly with the Bishop of Omaha. What about relations with other Mayan native groups? Why are there several communities in some cities? Do they relate with each other or divide? One cause of division is the charismatic movement, now suspended in Huehuetenango. We need to unite with all the ethnic groups.

Group Discussion in Mesa, AZ, November 19, 2016

20
Group discussion: Conference participants were divided into focus groups, which allowed for smaller discussions at each table. Each group was asked to discuss the following questions; and present an oral report.

a) Where will be our children/youth 25, 50 years from now?

b) How do we want our children to remember our legacy?

c) Just as the children/youth are receiving their catechetical formation (First communion, confirmation, etc.) how are they fully developing as human beings in a diverse multicultural society?

d) As leaders, how are we going to accomplish these long-term goals?

e) What kind of leadership structure do we want?

Group Discussion Results:

Each focus group realized that questions “a” through “d” were going to be long-term and continuing discussions and projects, and each group confirmed the value and importance of these concerns. In question “e”, concerning the leadership structure, several points of view were expressed. Several groups had specific suggestions for a leadership structure arranged around a president and council, but a consensus developed that a larger “consejo” network would be established with representatives from each community around the United States. The consensus to develop the Consejo was confirmed by majority vote. Community representatives to the Consejo will have the responsibility to keep in constant contact with the national body, and to help guide the direction of Pastoral Maya, and to take complete information back to the individual communities. Consejo members should be expected to pay their own expenses.

Following the vote to establish the Consejo, conference participants selected representatives from each community from among the members who were present.

Subcommittees

One concept that some of the focus groups discussed was the desire to establish well-defined subcommittees that would promote understanding and programs concerning the spiritual, the cultural, and education.

Religious Committee:

- Prepare new catechists
- Other than Spanish or English, the liturgies should be in the different Mayan languages.
- Find new ways to evangelize
Cultural Committee:

- Preserve our Mayan languages
- Preserve our culture
- Teach our indigenous core values that have been passed on from generation to generation e.g. respect for the elders

Education Committee

- Make sure that our children have success in the American schools without losing their Maya identity

At another point in the day, Monsignor spoke to the results of group discussions:

1. It is impossible to send a full-time priest to attend to the Maya people in the US. They are attending thousands of people in Guatemala.

2. Juanatano represents you before the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. How does this work? A more representative structure is needed. Bishop Ramazzini is responsible for emigrants in his own Bishops' conference. Connection is needed between the two conferences.

3. As far as a leadership structure, he advises a consejo, where consensus can be found. Should it be by states or by etnias/language groups? Monsignor Ramazzini Pastoral Maya to be open to other language groups. A good investigation is needed, to find out who invites their pastors, where the groups are, how many people? The US conference of Bishops has to know the numbers and the presence.

4. Mexico has a committee to investigate indigenous theology and its values. Guatemala does not. There is a need to go deeper into Maya Spirituality, and Catholic formation.

5. "Pastoral" means accompaniment, defend, get to know; understand. It is more than cultural.
New board members of the Consejo formed in Mesa, Arizona on November 19, 2016

**Name and home state of each elected board members**

Greenville, SC (San Sebastian Mission Community)

1) Arturo Miguel  
2) Juan Pascual  
3) Roberto Jaime

Community of Santa Eulalia (Greenville, SC)

4) Antonio Marcos  
5) Juana Gaspar

Maya community (Greenville, SC)

6) Domingo Martin  
7) Juana Martin  
   Omaha, Nebraska

8) Lorenzo Pedro Lucas  
9) Rolando Lorenzo Nicolas

Mesa, AZ (Community Semilla Maya)

10) Miguel Angel Sebastian
11) Diego Felipe

Los Angeles, CA (Community Hombre Nuevo, San Miguel)

12) Jose Martin

13) Matilde Martinez

Los Angeles, CA (Eterna Juventud Maya)

14) Juan Martin

15) Karin Ventura

Los Angeles, CA (Community of Santa Eulalia)

16) Marcos Byron Mateo

17) Anacleto Francisco

Los Angeles, CA (Community of San Pedro Soloma)

18) Virgilio Juan

Alamosa, CO (Community Espiritu Maya)

19) Francisco Lucas

20) Juan Francisco

Belfair, WA

21) Mateo Santiago

Portland, OR

22) Deacon Romeo Jimenez will appoint someone

**Urgent priorities for the new Consejo:**

- Formation
- Roles, form sub committees, elect someone who can assist the Consultant or select an alternate
- Fundraising
- Reach out to new members
- Plan National conferences and increase the number of attendees

Event ended with the Celebration of the Eucharist. Then social gathering with marimba!

Report By:

Juanatano Cano