

5 YEAR IMPACT REPORT

2020 - 2025

CIELO


QUIXAYÁ, SAN LUCAS TOLIMÁN; GUATEMALA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 FOREWORD

04 A MESSAGE FROM CEPC TOLIMÁN

05 MISSION

07 CEPC TOLIMÁN

09 PARTNERS

11 IMPACT

13 MILESTONES

17 LIVING MAYA DESTINY CARDS

19 TEAM

21 FINANCES

22 WAYS TO SUPPORT

FOREWORD

CIELO was born out of friendships made at the Institute of Mesoamerican Permaculture (IMAP), the oldest permaculture center in Latin America and one that continues to stand out from its peers because of its Indigenous leadership. In 2017, Marley and I were volunteers living at IMAP learning about permaculture, immersed in the Maya worldview and dreamy landscape of Lake Atitlán.

One morning as we were having breakfast, one of the facilitators, Ramiro Tzunún, walked in and began to share experiences from decades of practicing permaculture and his plans for liberating his community through ecological agriculture rooted in the Maya tradition. Ramiro always speaks from the heart, drawing you in as he paints big dreams with a certainty that makes even the boldest ideas feel attainable. After he left, Marley and I were buzzing with inspiration.

Years later, when Ramiro reached out to share that he was going to start his own permaculture center, we didn't hesitate to support. We started by reaching out to friends and family with a crowdfunding campaign. Then another. Inspired by their success, we formally registered CIELO as a nonprofit so we could deepen our support and access the resources Ramiro's vision deserved.



Ramiro and Mia at CEPC Tolimán, April 2025

Since then, we've raised over $62,000 from more than 200 individual donors, in addition to 2 grants and ongoing revenue from our Living Maya project (page 19). These resources have helped build out Ramiro's center, CEPC Tolimán, which now includes a community classroom and kitchen, a diverse food forest, interlocking aquaculture ponds, medicinal beehives, and more (page 09). We've also come full circle becoming the fiscal sponsor for IMAP, and have transferred more than $57,000 in grants to expand their work (page 11).

This April, I returned to Guatemala accompanied by members of our growing CIELO family, including our

board member, mariana, and three long-time supporters. While there, we attended IMAP's 25th anniversary—a beautiful day of ceremony, community, and celebration. We visited CEPC Tolimán and were blown away by what Ramiro and his team have created. Surrounded by the terraced hills of Quixayá and the lush river flowing by, CEPC Tolimán is a transformational educational space. Inspired by IMAP's model yet uniquely adapted to its local ecosystem, CEPC Tolimán provides a space for local farmers and their families to learn about sustainable practices that strengthen their independence as a community.

From the moment our hearts were first captured by this idea, we have been deeply grateful to share the journey with you all. Collectively, we've helped shepherd Ramiro's vision into the physical plane – it is now a growing oasis actively regenerating land, soil, and spirit.

This report is both a celebration of what we've accomplished together and an invitation into what comes next. Thank you for walking this path with us.

Thank you, gracias, maltiyox,

Mia Sakura Smith
Founder and President
CIELO



IMAP's 25th Anniversary celebration, April 2025

Terraced agriculture near CEPC Tolimán





Ronaldo Cuj and José Francisco in front of CEPC Tolimán's community kitchen, April 2025

MESSAGE FROM CEPC TOLIMÁN

Greetings from CEPC Tolimán,

May the Ajaw, the creator of the universe, bless each of you with energy, well-being, and prosperity.

We are a community with a vision for the future, striving to carry out our work with greater awareness and prosperity. Unity, democracy, and collective development are essential paths for transforming and improving our lives in a country where political power has corrupted education, democracy, and the economy of hardworking people.

We are a group of cultures with deep roots in the land. We live from it, care for it, and protect it. We believe in our own capacities, because within them grows a spirit, a strength, and a sense of purpose that motivates us to keep protecting ourselves and creating opportunities for the generations to come. We are very grateful to those who, in one way or another, have supported us in protecting and developing our communities and our planet.

Our educational activities play a vital role for young people, both women and men, as does the construction of key infrastructure such as our classroom, kitchen, aquaculture and chicken areas, and beekeeping systems. We are also completing a phase of forest regeneration and biodiversity restoration in wooded areas, with a focus on protecting local fauna and flora.

During our first five years, other communities have begun to see us as an example and a model of collective community development. Productive areas have doubled at both the household and community levels. We have received many international and local visitors, which encourages us and deepens our sense of purpose. Our technical capacities now extend not only to agriculture and production systems but also to supporting community authorities in a wide range of projects: irrigation systems, improvement of community roads, infrastructure, potable water systems, greywater management, training for small entrepreneurs, community clean-ups, and establishing waste management systems across the region.

With all of this, we have designed a future of economic, social, and cultural development. We have set a goal for 2030 for our community to achieve greater development and a system of self-sufficiency within a healthier environment, with the vision of becoming a model permaculture community and an ecological production system.

Ramiro Tzunún
Founder and Director
CEPC Tolimán
[translated from Spanish]

Ramiro showcasing the solar dehydrator at CEPC Tolimán





05

MISSION

About Us

CIELO means 'Sky' or 'Heavens' in Spanish and is an acronym for Colectivo de Iniciativas Ecologicas (Collective of Ecological Initiatives). Founded in May 2020, CIELO is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization registered in Honolulu. CIELO has a deep partnership with CEPC Tolimán, a community permaculture center in rural Guatemala run by indigenous Maya Kaqchikel people. CIELO supports CEPC Tolimán by amplifying their voice and reach outside of Guatemala. This includes connecting them with financial resources through crowdfunding, grants, and the Living Maya project, as well as supporting content creation, social media, and networking with international partners.

Our Values

Local Leadership

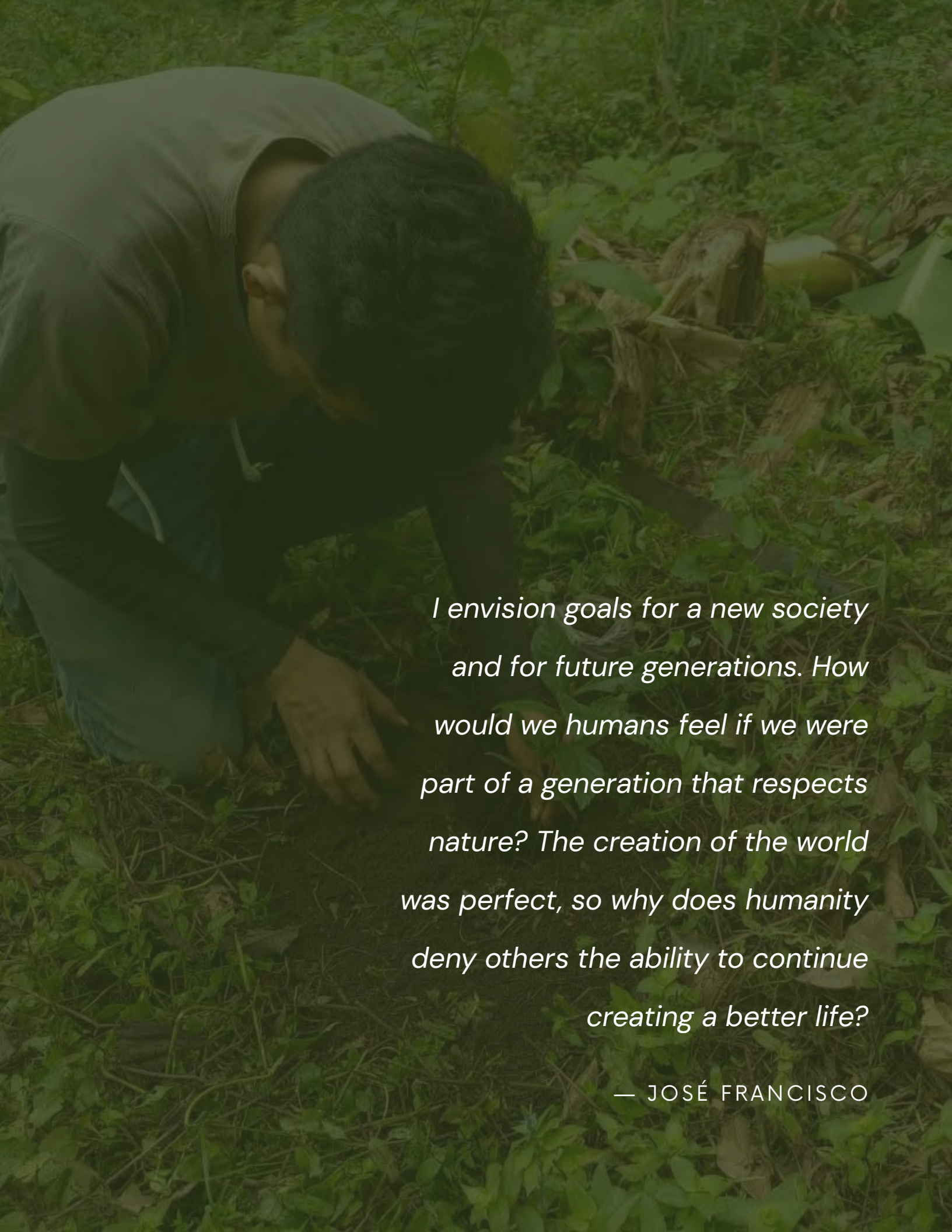
We're devoted to community-driven environmental work. We believe community leaders can make the best decisions for their local context. CIELO defers to CEPC's local leadership for all strategic planning and decisions, providing support where complementary, primarily through fundraising and communications.

Environment

We are dedicated to the regeneration of the planet. Nature is our wisest teacher. CEPC's projects strive to protect and enhance natural systems that maintain clean water and air, healthy soils, and thriving communities.

Diversity

We celebrate the diversity of our global family. We believe that modern science should be complemented with wisdom from traditional practices and Indigenous worldviews.



I envision goals for a new society and for future generations. How would we humans feel if we were part of a generation that respects nature? The creation of the world was perfect, so why does humanity deny others the ability to continue creating a better life?

— JOSÉ FRANCISCO



07

CEPC Tolimán

Since 2020, CIELO has partnered with CEPC (Center for Community Permaculture Education) Tolimán, a community-driven permaculture initiative in rural Guatemala, founded and led entirely by Indigenous Maya-Kaqchikel people. CEPC's mission is to protect the environment and strengthen their community through culturally-informed ecological agriculture and training. Located in the Quixayá valley near Lake Atitlan, CEPC combines values from the Maya Cosmovision with permaculture to restore balance with the land.

The community center includes aquaculture systems with tilapia and vegetables, community gardens and native crop farms, a food forest, and a classroom for ongoing workshops. Local farmers and their families learn practices such as soil building, composting, seed saving, and agroforestry, blending ancestral knowledge with ecological design.



Ramiro Tzunún

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

Ramiro is a Kaqchikel farmer from the community of Quixayá. He has over 20 years of experience in permaculture and the Maya worldview, including decades teaching at IMAP. In 2018, he founded CEPC Tolimán to strengthen local self-determination and food security in Quixayá. His vision is to create a community-based way of life in harmony with nature, emphasizing educational and economic development. He currently leads the design and implementation of ecological projects and manages courses and workshops.



José Francisco Tzunún Shalix

OPERATIONS LEAD

From a young age, José Francisco has gained hands-on experience in permaculture, aquaponics, and agroecology. His work with animals, plants, and diverse ecosystems has taught him the importance of collaborating with nature to meet community needs and promote self-sustainability. He is skilled in crop cultivation, species management, cooking, and community education, including guiding visitors.

THE STORY OF QUIXAYÁ

The village of Quixayá, where CEPC is based, embodies a powerful story of transformation.

In the 1980s, after reclaiming their ancestral land from an exploitative plantation owner, 63 Maya Kaqchikel families in the Quixayá valley came together to build a new vision for their future. Having spent generations laboring on an industrial monoculture farm, the community transformed the landscape into a lush, biodiverse permaculture system rooted in traditional Maya knowledge and collective stewardship. Families replaced the plantation with layered food forests, aquaculture ponds, native crops, and natural pools for eco-tourism—creating a resilient model of sustainable living.

Today, Quixayá functions as a network of independent family projects that support one another. CEPC Tolimán is one of these initiatives, co-existing alongside other family efforts that together sustain the community's landscape and way of life.

Photo credit: Danielle Maitrī Huffaker, March 2022



09

PARTNERS

Institute of Mesoamerican Permaculture

CIELO serves as fiscal sponsor for the Institute of Mesoamerican Permaculture, a Maya Kaqchikel–led organization in Guatemala focused on environmental education and food sovereignty. IMAP trains local producers, conserves native seeds, and works to combat malnutrition by making nutritious native crops like amaranth more accessible. With recent support from the Earth Rising Foundation, IMAP has distributed over 3,000 pounds of amaranth to malnourished children and lactating mothers, installed solar-powered irrigation systems for 13 family plots, and established a women's community garden for native and medicinal plants. Learn more at www.imapermacultura.org and follow @imapguatemala on Instagram.

Green Check Network

In 2023, CIELO was invited to be part of the inaugural cohort of the GreenCheck Network, a youth-led climate action platform based in Singapore that connects grassroots organizations in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. GreenCheck has supported CIELO through fundraising, matching us with volunteers through their internship program, and creating content for social media. The network also connects us with peer organizations, creating space for shared strategies across regions. Learn more at www.greencheck.earth and follow @greencheck.earth on Instagram.

Re-Earth Initiative

CIELO has received two years of grant support from the Re-Earth Initiative, a youth-led climate justice organization supporting community-based environmental action around the world. With Re-Earth's support, CEPC connected its community center to electricity, hired a full-time Indigenous youth Operations Manager, and expanded permaculture projects, establishing a cacao nursery, planting 150 cacao trees, and launching a melipona beekeeping initiative. Learn more at www.reearthin.org and follow @reearthin on Instagram.



Watercress aquaculture systems in Quixayá, April 2025.

IMPACT

Infrastructure

1 Community Kitchen

1 Tree Nursery

1 Classroom

1 Chicken Coop

Trainings + Employment

15+ Workshops

175+ Trainees

1 Indigenous Youth Hired

1 Scholarship for Cooking School

Plants

4,000+ Saplings planted

150 Cacao trees

∞ Native flowers



Animals

12 Bee Colonies

Plus Chickens, Goats, & Tilapia Aqua-culture Systems

Community Outreach

20
Families given emergency aid during COVID

64
Children aided in COVID nutrition program

3000+
Pounds of amaranth distributed via IMAP

13
Family plots powered by solar irrigation via IMAP



Financial Impact

$86,000
Sent to Community Initiatives

$24,000
Sales revenue from Living Maya

+ more details on page 17

MILESTONES

2020

CIELO's first year of work coincided with the onset of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and our immediate focus was supporting families through crisis. We provided emergency aid to 20 Kaqchikel families, ensuring access to food and essentials at a time of deep uncertainty. To combat childhood malnutrition, we launched a **three-week nutritional program** centered on amaranth, benefiting 64 children under the age of five. Later, we supported the construction of a **community kitchen** to host workshops on food processing and cooking with native ingredients like amaranth. We also established a **tree nursery** that grew more than 4,000 saplings, including soursop, avocado, citrus, cacao, yuca, passionfruit, morera, and quixtan, strengthening both reforestation and food security. Finally, the creation of a **community chicken coop** generated $600 in its first harvest, which was later reinvested into a smaller chicken coop for a family in need, demonstrating how cooperative models can ripple outward to build resilience.



2021

The pandemic continued to shape community needs in 2021, and CIELO responded by extending **emergency food aid and sanitary supplies** to Quixayá during one of the harshest waves of COVID-19. At the same time, our network of partnerships deepened when CIELO was selected to join the inaugural cohort of the **GreenCheck Network**, an international climate action initiative led by students from Yale-NUS University in Singapore. This affiliation provided valuable resources, volunteers, and opportunities for growth.

These are Maya numerals from one of the world's oldest and most advanced mathematical systems!



2022

By 2022, CIELO was able to shift more focus toward capacity-building and education. A significant milestone was sponsoring the **first paid staff position** at CEPC Tolimán, enabling José Francisco to oversee daily operations and care for the permaculture systems. This step gave the center a stronger organizational backbone and allowed projects to expand in scope and consistency. That same year, CEPC Tolimán hosted **youth workshops** on ancestral practices and community permaculture, drawing participants from multiple communities.

2023

In 2023, creative partnerships and new funding sources helped deepen CIELO's impact. The **Living Maya Destiny Cards** project was launched, soon sending its first payment of $1,500 to CEPC Tolimán, which was used to furnish the community center and provide a **scholarship**. The inaugural scholarship supported Mely, a young Kaqchikel woman who enrolled in a year-long culinary program. In exchange, she committed to return her knowledge to the community by leading nutrition and cooking workshops rooted in local ingredients. That same year, CIELO received its **first grant** from the Re:Earth Initiative, which funded the operations manager's salary at CEPC Tolimán and connected the community center to **electricity**, making night classes, food processing, and audiovisual learning possible. CIELO also began providing **fiscal sponsorship for IMAP**.





2024



The fruits of earlier investments became visible in 2024. Mely successfully graduated from cooking school and began sharing her skills with others, embodying the model of reinvestment in community knowledge. With electricity now fully functional at CEPC Tolimán, the center expanded its role as **a hub for events, workshops, and education**, increasing accessibility and reach. CIELO's partnership with IMAP came full circle this year, as we served as fiscal sponsor for an Earth Rising Foundation–funded project empowering Maya Kaqchikel women. CIELO also grew internally, welcoming **two interns** whose energy and skills bolstered our projects and operations. This year marked a turning point where foundational work (scholarships, infrastructure, and partnerships) began to generate visible cycles of return and renewal for the communities we serve.

This Year - **2025**

2025 has been a year of consolidation and expansion, with multiple projects reaching maturity while new collaborations flourished. CEPC Tolimán implemented a **meliponiculture project**, reclaiming ancestral stingless beekeeping practices. Twelve bee colonies were established, new pollen-producing flowers were planted, and three workshops were hosted, certifying participants as beekeepers. The center also supported producers in improving fish ponds with aquatic palms, hosted **24 producers** to share knowledge on food forests and aquaculture, and planted **150 cacao trees in community plots**. Continued support from the Re:Earth Initiative ensured CEPC Tolimán's staff and programs remain strong into the future. Alongside this, CIELO participated in diaspora-centered dialogues with Chiltepes Chilerxs. Finally, the Living Maya Cards reached new audiences with a bilingual edition, to be distributed in Guatemala and Mexico, grounding the project back in its cultural home.



I believe that supporting rematriation and land-based projects is another way to tend the human relationships that make climate and social transformation possible. For me, our work is about weaving reciprocity—uplifting local leadership, honoring the land, and imagining how solidarity can flourish across borders.

— mariana



mariana moscoso at IMAP's ceremonial space, April 2025

LIVING MAYA DESTINY CARDS



In 2023, CIELO launched the Living Maya Destiny Cards, a project that shares insight from Maya culture through a set of daily reflection cards. This project aims to share educational content about the Maya Cosmovision, while simultaneously fundraising for Indigneous-led initiatives in Guatemala.

Each card is based on one of the 20 nawales (sacred energies) that are central to the Maya worldview and are part of the Cholq'ij, the Maya day-count. For centuries, the Cholq'ij has guided daily life, offering direction on how to live in balance with self, community, and the natural world.

The deck includes 20 illustrated cards, an accompanying guidebook with original poetry, historical context, and descriptions of each nawal, and a keepsake box featuring the Maya symbol Ch'umil (Star), which represents guidance and illumination.

All proceeds from the Living Maya Destiny Cards go directly toward Indigenous-led initiatives in Guatemala, including the work of CEPC Tolimán and other Maya collaborators.

630
Decks sold to date

$24,000
Sales revenue generated

COLLABORATORS

The cards were created by a collective of Maya cultural practitioners under the guidance of Nan Ajq'ij Rosario Tuyuc, a daykeeper dedicated to carrying forward ancestral knowledge of the day-count. Their collaboration ensures that the project reflects both traditional teachings and contemporary Maya voices.



Rosario Tuyuc

AJQ'IJ, DAYKEEPER



José Flores Chamalé

ARTIST



Pablo Sigüenza Ramírez

POET & WRITER



Santiago Lucas

GRAPHIC DESIGNER



Aurora Nohemí Chaj Haz

DESIGNER



To learn more and purchase a deck, visit
www.livingmayacards.com

TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mia Sakura Smith

FOUNDER, PRESIDENT

Raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i, Mia is an Environmental Engineer with a Master's from MIT. She is currently the Program Manager for Forest Trends' Global Water Initiative, where she works on scaling ecosystem conservation and restoration for water security. She also co-founded a regenerative agroforestry farm in coastal Ecuador and is currently based in Mexico City.



Marlin Najera-Gonzalez

FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER, VICE PRESIDENT

Marley (she/her) is a daughter of migrants and of Maya, Xinca, and Spanish descent. Marley is a registered nurse, herbalist, and birth doula. Within her healthcare practice, she works to incorporate traditional knowledge and practices. Marley is passionate about the outdoors, environmental regeneration, food sovereignty, migrant solidarity, and Indigenous rights.



mariana Aq'ab'al moscoso

BOARD MEMBER

mariana Aq'ab'al moscoso (ja'/elle/they) is a nonbinary reconnecting Indigenous queer of Achi (Maya), Nicānāhuac, and Afro-Indigenous roots, living on Nisenan, Maidu, Miwok, and Pawtin lands. A cultural practitioner, narrative strategist, digital artist, and emerging weaver, their work centers Maya cosmology and ancestral knowledge. mariana is the founder of Ceiba Futures, co-visionary of Toj + Tijax: The Ritual of Myth Making, and Senior Program Officer at California Humanities. Their writing and art appear in Terra:Soul, Crushing Colonialism Magazine, Mujeres de Maíz en Movimiento, SNAG Magazine, and Weaving Our Stories: Return to Belonging.

OPERATIONS TEAM



Liz Flores

COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

Based on Muwekma Ohlone land, Liz (she/her/ella/rija') (Maya Kaqchikel pa Chi Jay) is a land steward, gardener, cook, and weaver studying Indigenous Environmental Science at Brown University. She serves as garden caretaker at the Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, focusing on the relationships between plants, land, memory, and cultural resurgence. She also leads Of The Land Collective, which creates land care opportunities for Indigenous environmental professionals.



Javier Lopez

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, LIVING MAYA

Javier is a Maya-American with paternal Maya Achi roots from Rabinal, Baja Verapaz and maternal roots from Caserta, Italy. Javier grew up in the United States and is now based full-time Guatemala, connecting with the place he was born in and with his familial ties. He is passionate about learning about Maya history, language and cosmovision.



Charlie Maradiaga

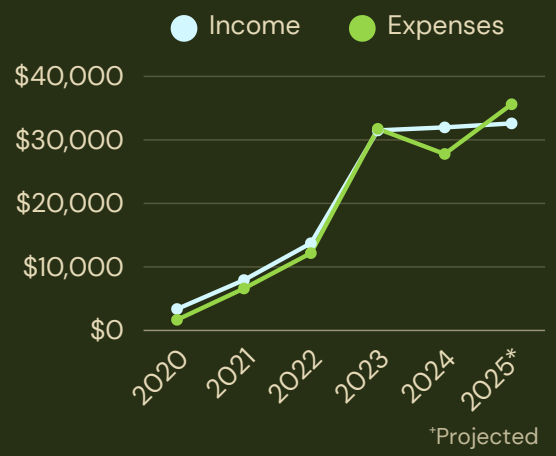
COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

Carlos Maradiaga (he/him), is a college student from Honduras, he is pursuing a degree in mechatronics engineering. He hopes to find a way to encourage climate action in everyone, as a community, not just by themselves. He loves to listen to music in his free time and travel anywhere the wind takes him (California has a special place in his heart though!), as well as joking around with his friends.

FINANCES

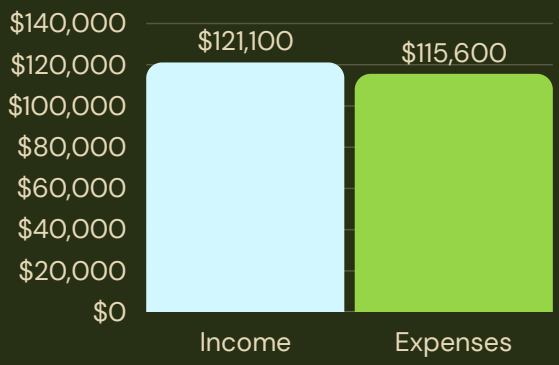
All values are reported in U.S. dollars

ANNUAL REVENUE AND EXPENSES

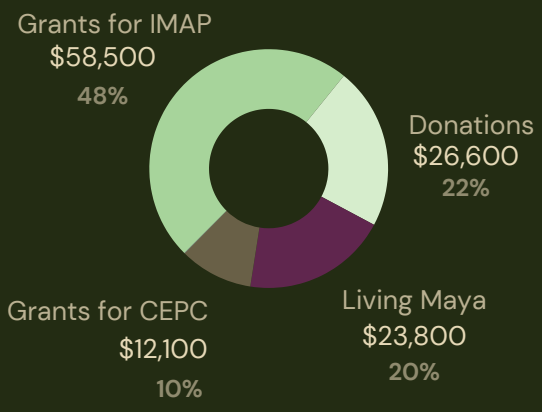


*Projected

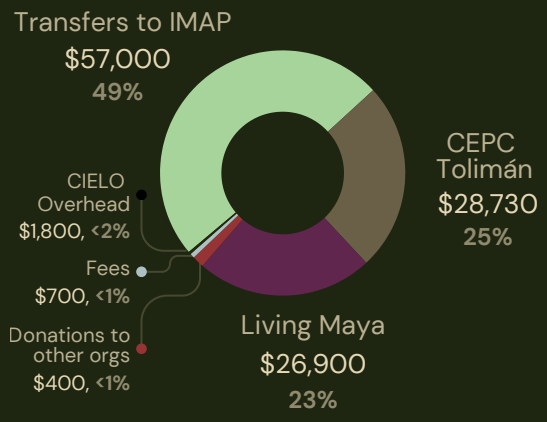
TOTAL (2020-2025*)



INCOME BY SOURCE



EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



Notes: (1) CEPC Tolimán expenses include costs to build infrastructure, pay salaries, provide scholarships, and distribute COVID-19 aid. (2) Living Maya costs include production, marketing, advertising, website hosting, and shipping. We recently ordered 1,000 new decks, and we expect the project to generate net profit once they are sold. (3) CIELO takes a 2.5% administrative fee from IMAP's grants before transferring.

Make a Contribution



We are able to do this work because of the support of compassionate individuals around the world.
Thank you!

Donate at:

WEBSITE cieloglobal.org/#donate

VENMO @cielo-global

Front cover: *Youth workshops at CEPC Tolimán, 2022*
Front cover and this page: *Slender Sheartail Hummingbird* by Andrés Tzunún Shalix
Back cover: *Diverse terraced agriculture along river near CEPC Tolimán*

Follow Quixayá-based photographer, Andrés Tzunún Shalix:
@andrewtzunun5

THANK YOU



CIELO

mia@cieloglobal.org
www.cieloglobal.org
CIELOglobal