



| MACMUN 2023



# UNPFII

## Background Guide

## ***Welcome Letter***

Dear Delegates,

We welcome you to the 2023 McMaster Model United Nations Conference (MACMUN 2023), the eighth iteration of MACMUN! For starters, we acknowledge that we are on the land of the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. Our names are Muskaan and Natalia, and we will be chairing this committee this year. Muskaan is currently a first-year student in the Life Sciences Gateway. Her spare time is drowned away through a few niche outlets like reading, playing volleyball, trying out new sports recreationally, or going on random walks. Natalia is in her second year of political science specializing in judicial studies and public law at McMaster, and her passions include photography, reading, and art. It is a privilege to host the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) with all of you, we are beyond excited for our first in-person conference in 2 years!

At the forefront of our goals for this committee is the idea that delegates will be able to take away information that provides them with insight on current fractured educational institutions and outcomes that have arisen from colonialism. It is not our expectation that delegates come into committee all-knowing of current socio-economic situations faced by Indigenous communities. Instead, we wish for delegates to have the drive to want to learn the importance of knowing such things and the desire to learn and share these findings. We have spent a lot of time trying to create a background guide that gets all of you to critically think and generate novel approaches to current problems that have no cookie cutter answers today.

This background guide was designed to focus on three primary areas: history, historical implications, and future improvements. For future improvements, our aim is to put no bounds to your creativity, but for all of you to use traditional findings and research to lessen the current strain on education and the repercussions of the Guatemalan civil war. We will keep this brief, delegates read on and bring your curiosity, questions, and proposed solutions to the committee session because we look forward to hearing them! The UNPFII guide has been long in progress, and we are so excited to see it spring into action through debate and discussion. Committee session has now begun!

Sincerely,  
Muskaan Kharod & Natalia Mazhar  
Chairs, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
MACMUN 2023

## *Meet Your Committee Staff*



**Natalia Mazhar - Chair**  
she/her



**Muskaan Kharod - Chair**  
she/her

## Committee Mandate

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a body under the Economic and Social Council. It was created on 2000 July 28th through the resolution of 2000/22 to understand and combat issues related to economic and social development, culture, education, human rights, and health in Indigenous community affairs.<sup>1</sup> The forum was created to have expert advice provided on matters of the Indigenous community and individual rights and all peoples are accounted for. Hence the mandate for the UNPFII is to discuss Indigenous issues within the mandate of the Council relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights. Specifically, the forum is to:

1. Provide expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the Council, as well as implementing and managing the programs, funds, and agencies of the United Nations;
2. Raise awareness and create promotion of the integration and coordination of activities related to Indigenous issues within the UN system;
3. Additionally prepare and circulate information on Indigenous issues;
4. Promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and follows up the effectiveness of this declaration (Art. 42 UNDRIP).<sup>2</sup>

The UNPFII meets for 10 days each year at the UN headquarters in New York, where each session is focused on a specific issue relevant to that time. This forum is only one of three UN bodies that handle Indigenous community affairs. The committee consists of 16 experts on Indigenous issues who may serve for a term of three years and may be re-elected for an additional term. Eight of the members are chosen by governments and eight are directly nominated by Indigenous organizations in their regions. The nominated candidates by the governments are elected by the Economic and Social Council based on five regional groups: Africa; Asia; Eastern Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Western Europe and Other States. The latter nominees are approved by the president of the Economic and Social Committee after consultation to Indigenous organizations and represent seven socio cultural regions to give representation to all Indigenous peoples globally. It must be noted however, the eight members of this nomination are always chosen from one of the three regions with the largest Indigenous population, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America; these seats rotate between the three every three years. Currently from 2020 to 2022 the list of representatives comes from the states of Burundi, Nepal, Denmark, Ecuador, Chad, Russian Federation, Namibia, Australia, Colombia, Finland, Bolivia, USA, Mexico, Estonia, China. Overall, the UNPFII aims at discussing issues facing the Indigenous community around the world through expert feedback and representation to reach adequate solutions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Garcia-Alix, L. (2008). *The United Nations permanent forum on indigenous issues discusses climate change*. Indigenous affairs, 2, 1-23.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html> [accessed 18 January 2023]

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly, "Rights of Indigenous Peoples"

*This background guide will discuss sensitive subjects, including but not limited to genocide, residential schools and intergenerational trauma. If any of these topics are triggering in any manner, the Dais asks that delegates decide, based on their comfortability, about whether to partake in this committee. McMaster MUN is more than willing to accommodate and place you in another committee or address any concerns you may have. With that being said, the intention of this topic is to discuss prevalent issues that often become desensitized in mainstream media. While debate is encouraged, it is every delegate's responsibility to act with the utmost respect and remain in the confines of one's assigned party - if this means addressing controversial standpoints of said assigned parties remember to represent the assigned parties' opinions and not personal opinions or viewpoints.*

### ***Simulation Style and Composition of the Committee***

Two chairs will be present to moderate debate and ensure that a diplomatic environment is maintained. The chairs will have the authority to open and close committee sessions, will assist delegates with setting the agenda, and will manage the list of speakers. The dias will also recognize any points or motions made by delegates on the floor. Delegates must remember that the chairs have the final rule on any disputed points or motions, and that all draft resolutions must be approved by the dias before they are presented before the committee.

Pages will be present in the committee room to allow delegates to communicate with one another through the passing of notes. If used strategically, note passing can be used by delegates to work with others in the room to brainstorm ideas for potential draft resolutions. Delegates should be aware that all notes will be screened by the pages before they are delivered to the respective delegate.

Each delegate in this committee will represent a different member state of the UNPFII. Delegates will submit a position paper detailing their country-specific research on both topics prior to the conference. Individual research is important to ensure that delegates arrive to committee sessions prepared with sufficient knowledge that will allow them to actively engage in discussions.

Overall, delegates should remember to only raise points to the committee that agree with their country's foreign policy. This will ensure that the committee is best able to emulate potential real-world discussions.

## Topic #1: Tackling the Gaps Present in Education Relating to Indigenous Peoples

### ***Introduction***

The challenges faced by Indigenous communities are interconnected and problems have continued to persist and worsen because of ignored underlying factors. For instance, this can be understood when we discuss reasons as to why an Indigenous student may not wish to partake in educational institutions. Additionally, students remain hunger-ridden due to the lack of food in their household; this lack of food could come from inaccessibility to food resources or poverty; that poverty can be due to lack of funding from governmental institutions. All these reasons become determinants to the education that students will face. This example presents a layman's case study that touches on the one big takeaway from this topic: there exist multiple inequalities that must be addressed while thinking about how to improve the current educational situations in Indigenous communities.

Certain historical events pertaining to Indigenous communities will be outlined in this section while recognizing the wide diaspora of populations around the world and how they were similarly impacted. The forms of education that were active in Indigenous communities' pre-colonialism will be highlighted, leading into the discussion of the assimilative efforts that proceeded from religious institutions including the Crown.<sup>4</sup> A historical timeline of residential schools will be provided, but if delegates would like to formally bring up other events in debate that relate to the topic, they are more than welcome to so long as it is appropriate and pertains to the discussion.

The challenges faced by Indigenous communities are interconnected, problems can continue to persist and worsen because of ignored underlying factors. This can be understood when we discuss reasons as to why an Indigenous student may not want to attend school. Students remain hunger-ridden due to the lack of food in their household; this lack of food could come from inaccessibility to food resources or poverty; that poverty can be due to lack of funding from governmental institutions.<sup>5</sup> All these reasons become determinants to the education that students will face. This example presents a layman's case study that touches on the one big takeaway from this topic: there exist multiple inequalities that must be addressed while thinking about how to improve the current educational situations in Indigenous communities.

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<sup>4</sup> *Redefining how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis ...* (n.d.). Retrieved October 15, 2022, from [https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/5\\_2007\\_redefining\\_how\\_success\\_is\\_measured\\_en.pdf](https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/5_2007_redefining_how_success_is_measured_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Janz, T., Turner, A., & Seto, J. (2009). *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: An overview of the health of the Métis population*. Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division.

## History

The gaps in the education system of Indigenous peoples were not innate. There were not educational deficits in Indigenous communities' pre-colonization, moreover, Indigenous communities were burdened with educational uncertainties when their well-established systems were uprooted by settlers following imperialist efforts. These gaps were man-made, lodged, hammered, and forced into an already well-cemented educational system. The term Indigenous is representative of a large diaspora of populations around the world, defined as "produced, growing, living, or occurring natively or naturally in a particular region or environment."<sup>6</sup> The wide geographical distribution of Indigenous populations around the world means that there are an abundance of respective differences and historical happenings that are equally as important.

Long before the arrival of European colonizers, Indigenous peoples had established educational institutions where values of community were instilled through the natural environment, where taught skills were necessary for survival.<sup>7</sup> Elders within the community, through word of mouth, transmitted their teachings to the youth, teachings that would guide them through life and its many obstacles. This demonstrational mode of learning built lifelong skills including hunting, sewing, cooking, and participating in community ceremonies. For example, the Haida (who traditionally occupied the coastal bays and inlets of Haida Gwaii in British Columbia) intricate ceremonies that were dependent on artisans, who had to develop their skills over extended periods of time.<sup>8</sup>

These teachings have become strained and need to be taught so they do not become lost. After 350 years of colonial invasion, 350 years of the standard European style classroom education systems, it is important to create an education format that allows Indigenous students to thrive and feel safe.<sup>9</sup>

The arrival of European settlers globally, in their minds, warranted the eradication of Indigenous practices on the grounds that they were "uncivilized". Settlers were trying to fix something that was broken - "fixing" what they deemed to be problems in a system they did not understand. Residential schools are often exclusively discussed in relation to Canada, however, this style of "boarding schools" was common for Indigenous populations all around the world.<sup>10</sup> This section will focus on highlighting the effect residential schools had globally on the education system and what that means in the current day. By understanding the effects of residential schools, the failure of countries to meet sustainable development goals can be understood, and action plans on how to meet them can be created.

<sup>6</sup> Indigenous. 2011. In Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved January 18, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous>

<sup>7</sup> *Education of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. (n.d.). Retrieved October 7, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> "Haida." *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*. Retrieved January 16, 2023 from Encyclopedia.com: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/haida-0>

<sup>9</sup> *Education of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. (n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2014). *The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma*. Transcultural psychiatry, 51(3), 320-338.

In Canada, residential schools came about when the government moved Indigenous matters from the military to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Church institutions donated money to bring forth the implementation of their religious schooling. The churches that would run residential schools were of Roman Catholic and Anglican theologies. 139 residential schools came to being under the Indigenous Residential School (IRS) Settlement Agreement.<sup>11</sup> Being subject to high levels of trauma at residential schools, children that attended these schools without the culturally safe environment their parents provided led them to continue a similar cycle of abuse in many cases.

This is not an issue that is exclusive to Canada, in fact, is prevalent globally to this day, residential schools were operated in North America, Central and South America (including the Caribbean), Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Russia, Asia, Africa, and in the middle east. It is commonly taught that residential school survivors dealt with an onslaught of abuse including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, but the implications of this on the next generations are not as well understood. A 2006 survey found that the children of those that attended residential schools were far more likely to live in homes with low incomes and face food insecurity.<sup>12</sup> Due to residential school experiences faced by one generation, another was subjected to reduced success in their schooling. This is important to note, as past educational institutions have caused trauma to IRS survivors and those that did not attend, affecting the health, well-being, and financial circumstances of many succeeding generations.<sup>13</sup>

Another study looked at two groups in Canada, First Nations adults that attended residential schools and those who did not. Offspring with parents that attended residential schools reported “greater cumulative childhood abuse, neglect, and indices of household dysfunction (e.g., being raised in a household affected by domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal behaviour, and mental illness), which in turn partially accounted for their higher levels of depressive symptoms.”<sup>14</sup>

Today, there lies many difficulties in implementing culturally safe educational institutions for Indigenous students globally as there is a predisposal to negative health outcomes which in turn limited many from successful educational outcomes. To implement better education, there is a need for programs that acknowledge historical events, address SDOH, and then focus on a culturally safe curriculum.

## ***Current Situation***

In 2015, the United Nations had all its member parties sign on “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” a document that lists 17 goals needed for worldwide peace and

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<sup>11</sup> Bombay, Matheson & Anisman (2014). “*The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools*”

<sup>12</sup> Janz, Turner & Seto (2009). “*Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006*”

<sup>13</sup> Janz, Turner & Seto (2009). “*Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006*”

<sup>14</sup> Bombay, Matheson & Anisman (2014). “*The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools*”

stability in the future.<sup>15</sup> Many of these goals intertwine with one another by requiring similar courses of action for improvement in both goals. As reinforced in the history section, there is a vast distribution of Indigenous populations around the world requiring global partnership for solutions to some deeply embedded educational problems. Poor education outcomes can be the result of inadequate educational systems, not necessarily a lack of education systems.<sup>16</sup> While Canada and much of Latin America take pride in their improving accountability regarding Indigenous educational sectors, it is important to acknowledge that many of the attending populations live in poverty, face sanitation problems and will not fare well in schooling if these ground-level problems are not solved. Out of the 17 goals the UN provides, 2 goals are not met in Indigenous populations reduce education outcomes - “Goal #4: Quality Education.”<sup>17</sup> It is important to highlight underlying issues that influence education. This section focuses on a select few issues that can hinder educational capabilities:

1. Goal #1: No Poverty and Goal #2: Good Health and Wellbeing: 1/4 of Indigenous communities in urban Canada live in poverty, the vulnerability imposed by financial insecurity not only opens further socio-economic issues (including hindered resources for schooling) but limits capabilities to respond to challenges like those brought forward by COVID-19.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, 1/3 of these communities in urban areas also experienced food insecurity, which is known to pronounce poor mental and physical well-being which in turn can increase stress within families and reduce education rates.<sup>19</sup>
2. Goal #6: Clean Water and Sanitation: One water advisory can mean that there are 5000 people in that surrounding area who are not receiving adequate drinking water. There are currently 34 long-standing water advisories and reduced budgeting given to water system management on reserves. Not only this, but 73% of Canadian Indigenous water systems are at threat of contamination, with medium and high-risk facilities all around.<sup>20</sup> This sanitation burdens youth with many basic amenities problems that can distract one simply from the idea of education. It can become difficult for youth to focus on their schooling, when stresses like clean water and health concerns remain on their mind persistently.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>16</sup> Richmond, C. A., & Ross, N. A. (2009). *The determinants of First Nation and Inuit health: A critical population health approach*. *Health & place*, 15(2), 403-411.

<sup>17</sup> Richmond & Ross (2009). “First Nation and Inuit Health”

<sup>18</sup> Power, E. M. (2008). *Conceptualizing food security for Aboriginal people in Canada*. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 99(2), 95-97.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>20</sup> *Safe water for first nations*. The Council of Canadians. (2022, July 26). Retrieved October 14, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations.

## ***Bloc Analysis***

### ***Western Bloc (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and The United States of America)***

Western blocs tend to be the nations that have democratic values at the cores of their government. While these governments tend to hold more individualistic beliefs that steadfastly change, there remain remnants of oppressing laws and ideologies permeated through their systems. Histories covered in colonialism instilled in the Western forms of education that a vast majority of schooling in these countries have. Because of this, reestablishment of previously well-founded Indigenous educational institutions has been a lengthy process extenuated by the geographical barriers. In all listed regions, many Indigenous communities tend to be found in remote regions where there is inaccessibility to services (internet services, etc.) and goods (food, hygiene products, etc.). This can hinder health outcomes and thereby affect education.<sup>22</sup> OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) that has 38 member states from the UN involved, took on research in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada specifically, finding that improved ECEC (Educational Childhood Education and Care) yield better health and educational outcomes in the long term.<sup>23</sup> For rural regions to move forward with better ECEC systems, it is imperative that the government also aid in providing better internet services in remote regions to facilitate the different modes of learning necessary for ECEC.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Eastern Bloc and Latin America***

In the Eastern bloc, nations ranging from the Middle East, Central, East, South and Southeast Asia are all covered in this section. There are many ethnic minorities present in these countries that are subject to educational barriers and discrimination. Predisposition to ill health determinants in these regions also results in hindered educational outcomes like present in Canada. For example, Bangladesh does not recognize Indigenous parties as sovereign or existing, and even in nations that have adopted policies to aid Indigenous peoples there remains a lack of effort towards educational resources, like in Mexico.<sup>25</sup> In Nicaragua there has been improvement, with the dissemination of Indigenous knowledge through the nation, with one specific movement called EXCELENCIA that has the sponsorship of the UN and aims to promote better teaching services and communal efforts to gain student participation.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Non-State Parties***

Organizations outside of government regulated bodies, like Indspire, a charity that invests in education of Indigenous peoples by providing workshops and scholarship materials tend to support reestablishment of some current educational institutions.<sup>27</sup> Governmental bodies, like

<sup>22</sup> Tamsin McMahon. (2014, August 22). Why fixing first nations education remains so far out of reach. Macleans.ca. Retrieved October 14, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Bennett, J. (2008). Early Childhood Services in OECD Countries: Review of the literature and current policy in the early childhood field.

<sup>24</sup> Bennett, "Early Childhood Services"

<sup>25</sup> Burger, J. (1987). Report from the frontier: the state of the world's indigenous peoples. Cultural Survival Inc.

<sup>26</sup> Public Broadcasting Service. (2011, March 7). Timeline: Guatemala's Brutal Civil War. PBS. Retrieved October 7, 2022, from [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/latin\\_america-jan-june11-timeline\\_03-07](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/latin_america-jan-june11-timeline_03-07)

<sup>27</sup> Public Broadcasting Service. (2011). "Timeline: Guatemala's Brutal Civil War"

in Canada's case, took many years to apologize for the harm residential schools imposed and have taken a slow approach to tackling educational disparities in Indigenous communities whereas these bodies push for action quicker.

### ***Research and Preparation Questions***

*As all delegates are preparing for the conference these questions should help you move forward with your research and establish your position on the topic*

1. What support can be provided to IRS survivors and their children in through educational institutions?
2. What does adequate training for teachers and educational advisors look like? Should there be any requirements before being able to teach in an Indigenous classroom?
3. How can education be further implemented in remote Indigenous communities?
4. What initiatives are needed to address the SDOH of Indigenous communities so SDGs can be met?
5. Should there be SDGs specifically encompassing Indigenous communities? What would these goals look like?

## Topic #2 Addressing the Modern Impacts of the Guatemalan Civil War

### ***Introduction***

In all conflicts, genocide is defined by the United Nations as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.<sup>28</sup> The Guatemala Civil war was classified as not only an unjust conflict, but also a cultural genocide against Mayan Indigenous Peoples, with over 200,000 innocent civilian casualties committed in villages, on the streets, and in their homes. The conflict itself has various reasons as to why it started, but one major cause was the inequalities existing in the political and economic life of the Mayan people. While the protest started peacefully with Mayan people demanding more inclusivity of their culture and language, the government started seeing the threat of the Mayan people to their political position and began Operation Sophia, which aimed at guerilla warfare. mostly Mayan People faced the impact as the government targeted them with their military power.<sup>29</sup> Over the course of 36 years, over 100,000 went missing, were killed, or were harmed by different means. The two main parties involved and discussed in this guide are the Guatemalan Militaristic government and the Mayan Peoples.<sup>30</sup> However, the United States is also a key player, as they backed the military operation in Guatemala, justifying their actions prevention as from a communist regime from occurring. The groups that were specifically targeted during the militaristic operation were: the Ixil Mayans; the Q'anjob'al and Chuj Mayas; the K'iche' Mayas of Joyabaj, Zacualpa and Chiché; and the Achi Mayas.<sup>31</sup>

This background guide touches upon the historical aspect of the conflict itself, including causes and parties involved, alongside key events. It then, follows with a discussion of the current situation of the Guatemalan civil war and addresses the sustainable development goals 3 and 16. Further speaking on the solutions proposed by governments and other parties and other possible solutions. Finally, concluding with key questions to ask yourself as delegates when preparing for this debate.

### ***History***

The Guatemalan Civil War lasted 36 years in total and had 200,000 casualties. The conflict itself was fought between 1960 and 1996 and included two main parties: the government of Guatemala and the left-wing guerilla groups.<sup>32</sup> The conflict first started arising after 1951 when Jacobo Arbenz was elected as the Guatemalan president. He began implementing his leftist

<sup>28</sup> United Nations. (n.d.). United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the responsibility to protect. United Nations. Retrieved October 23, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide/>.

<sup>29</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2022, from <https://hmh.org/library/research/genocide-in-guatemala-guide/>

<sup>30</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

<sup>31</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

<sup>32</sup> Lawton, A. M. (2015). The right to health in indigenous Guatemala: Prevailing historical structures in the context of health care. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 21(Fall), 1-17.

agenda, including legalizing the communist party and attempting to nationalize fruit company plantations. These policies started disagreements within Guatemala between not only the elitist party and the current government, but also the Central Intelligence Agency, who say the communist reflecting agenda of the guerilla Warfare groups was a threat to democracy.<sup>33</sup> Hence, the coup d'etat of 1954 (Operation PBSuccess), led by the Central Intelligence Agency, opposed the elected Guatemalan President Jacobo.

The aftermath of the coup d'etat of 1954 made the political system of Guatemala inadequate with a militaristic government where violence and economic instability started to take a rise, and Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas was put into power.<sup>34</sup> In 1958 General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes replaced the former leader Armas, who was killed creating an autocratic rule. The Guatemalan civil war started on November 13th, 1960, when another military group attempted to overthrow Fuentes. This overthrowing attempt gave motivation to war between all military personnel and leftist groups. From 1957 to 1966, military infighting caused the country to move from the constitution and civilian rule until Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro came into presidency in 1966.<sup>35</sup> However, even with this presidency, militaristic groups still controlled the country and were fighting the leftist groups spread across the country. During this same time, Zacapa and Izabal, (areas that were home to leftist groups) were bombed by the military program designed by the United States (US), where 8,000 civilians were killed.<sup>36</sup>

In 1970 Colonel Carlos Arana was elected president and declared a state of siege, starting political kidnappings, mass arrests, and assassinations against intellectuals. During this year, the government kept fighting the guerrilla groups across the country whilst many peaceful opposition movements started forming by the Mayan people, like the National Front Against the Violence and the Committee for Peasant Unity. Additionally, the Indigenous protest called the Glorious March of the Minters of Ixtahuacan came to Guatemala City in 1977.<sup>37</sup> However, this social unrest was battled with violence in 1980, where Indigenous activists who occupied the Spanish Embassy with the aim of bringing attention to the Guatemala situation were killed by the police who burned 39 people alive. Afterwards, in 1982, General Efraín Ríos Montt was named the President of the Military, who was found to be guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. Between 1981 and 1983, a Guatemalan state genocide occurred against its own people where the death toll was estimated to be 150,000 citizens and over 440 villages were destroyed. It is important to note that during this time, many leftist rebel groups were formed by Mayan Indigenous peoples.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Eckhardt, I. (2005). The Guatemalan Civil War: The bipolarisation of an internal conflict. *Perspectives: Review of International Affairs*, (25), 23-42.

<sup>34</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

<sup>35</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

<sup>36</sup> del Valle Escalante, E. (2016). 24 State violence, history, and Maya literature in Guatemala. *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, 215.

<sup>37</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

<sup>38</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston

## ***Current Situation***

### ***SDG Goals:***

The United Nations Developmental goals, specifically goal three and sixteen, are applicable to the current topic of the Guatemalan Civil War. Goal three entails good health and well-being where the government is responsible to promote well-being at all ages and ensure healthy lives for all people, this is relevant to the Guatemalan Civil War as the Mayan Indigenous Peoples well-being and health were disregarded during the period of 1951 till 1996 where the Mayan people still face the repercussions today.<sup>39</sup> Their health was disregarded in various ways, one being the genocide against Mayan Indigenous peoples. The crimes committed by the Guatemalan government, backed by the US forces, were intentional and deliberate to remove the leftist groups constituting of Mayan people as they were against the government at the time. Specifically, in the 1970s when Mayan people were participating in protests to demand greater equality and inclusion of their culture however the government refusing to listen led to “Operation Sophia” which was aimed at destroying the civilian bases of what the government deemed Guerrilla warfare but were the Mayan people destroying over.<sup>40</sup>

A slightly more relevant goal would be goal sixteen which is about creating peace and inclusive society where justice is ensured for all. In this topic, the important aspect is justice where Guatemala during the war had no form of justice for Indigenous peoples displayed by the government's various actions. Specifically, there were policies made to secretly arrest and abduct Mayan people who were later buried in unmarked graves where over 200,000 people were either killed or “disappeared”.<sup>41</sup> The violence was most faced from 1978 to 1986 when the scorched earth policy was implemented, destroying buildings, crops, livestock, water supplies, and cultural symbols and locations, all of which were done by the militaristic government known locally as the Kaibiles that came into power through the help of the CIA and US-backed forces as they were supporting anti-Communist policies.<sup>42</sup> The main target of this goal is to have just institutions, but in the case of Guatemala, the government may believe that they are just the actions against the Mayan people, saying otherwise as the UN-backed commission placed the blame.

## ***Current Solutions***

Although there was a peace agreement signed between the URNG rebels and Guatemalan government which ended the Guatemalan Civil War. There are repercussions today of the Guatemalan Civil War starting with the fact that the General Rios Mott who had committed the genocide was only persecuted in 2013, where over 100 victims testified but after supposed technicalities the General was released and instead placed under house arrest instead of military

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<sup>39</sup> Wesley-Esquimaux, C. C., & Smolewski, M. (2004). *Historic trauma and Aboriginal healing*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Pricopi, M. (2016). Eu Military Operation Sophia-Analysing the Shortfalls. *Scientific Bulletin-Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy*, 21(2), 122.

<sup>41</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (2023, January 4). Guatemalan genocide. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 20:19, January 18, 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (2022, November 11). CIA activities in Guatemala. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 20:20, January 18, 2023.

prison. While under house arrest, the General passed away in 2018, but the injustice still stands in the eyes of the Mayan people.<sup>43</sup> As 90% of the Guatemala population lived under the poverty line after the 1980s and 10% of the population was displaced.<sup>44</sup> Overall, the trauma and the injustices are embedded in Mayan histories.

There was a national reconciliation law of 1996 that suppressed controversies amongst the people for overlooking the punishments for those who committed the injustices against the Mayan people.<sup>45</sup> The law itself had been a step for the URNG people to be reinstated into the Guatemalan community, but instead of creating a community, the law added a clause of extinguishing criminal responsibility of the militaristic crimes.<sup>46</sup> For example, cases involving forced disappearances and torture of people were not included as crimes and acts committed by government officials were considered political crimes and hence given less punishment. However, genocide was not given amnesty but there was proposed legislation by the Inter-American Court on March 12, 2019, that would grant amnesty for genocide that Guatemala had passed.<sup>47</sup> This would be an amendment to the current law that was approved on January 17th, 2019. This will place a setback on all the cases in court for human violations as it removed accountability for atrocities that were committed. There is worry that by passing this legislation there may be actions against those who are fighting currently for past injustices.<sup>48</sup>

## Bloc Analysis

### Western Bloc

Western countries have always represented democratic ideals where freedom, justice, and peace are preached. This block includes the countries of the European Union, the UK, Norway, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, in these countries there are many issues that follow Indigenous peoples not as drastic as the Guatemalan Civil war but still consistent with themes of oppression, exclusion, and violence. Such as in Canada who have around 1.8 million Indigenous peoples, have had issues with their Indigenous communities with health care, lower levels of education, lower income levels, higher unemployment, all which leave the Indigenous community to not be fully included in the Canadian community socially, economically, and politically.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the pattern is followed in Australia where the Indigenous community is smaller in scale but faces execution from the community in terms of health care, political inequality, and lack of economic freedom. These inequalities stem from conflicts in both countries like the Guatemalan civil war where most western countries due to colonization have repercussions on how their Indigenous communities are living unequally compared to the non-Indigenous communities.

<sup>43</sup> del Valle Escalante, “State violence”

<sup>44</sup> del Valle Escalante, “State violence”

<sup>45</sup> Seils, P. F. (2002). Reconciliation in Guatemala: the role of intelligent justice. *Race & class*, 44(1), 33-59.

<sup>46</sup> Seils, “Reconciliation in Guatemala”

<sup>47</sup> Reinold, T. (2020). Guatemala, the Question of Amnesties, and the Inter-American Human Rights System: Implications for the Fight against Impunity. *Die Friedens-Warte*, 93(1-2), 123-147.

<sup>48</sup> Reinold, “Guatemala”

<sup>49</sup> *Education of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.

### *Eastern Block*

The eastern bloc includes Central and East Asia, the Greater Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Technically two thirds of the world's Indigenous population live in Asia where different terms are used to reference them such as Hill tribes, Indigenous nationalities, tribal peoples, ethnic minorities etc.<sup>50</sup> In this region there has shown to be socioeconomic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous segments in this population. This is important to note when addressing the Guatemalan Civil war as states must recognize how their country stands on issues with Indigenous peoples in their region.<sup>51</sup> Specifically, in Bangladesh the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples has not been adopted and the political and economic rights of Indigenous peoples continue to be ignored alongside the government of Bangladesh refusing to recognize the Indigenous community excluding them socially and economically.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, in Mexico while there was an adoption of this declaration and the government recognizes itself as pluricultural the Indigenous community faces poverty, lack of access to health services, domestic violence, etc.<sup>53</sup> all which show commonalities of being excluded. The main issue for all Indigenous communities is the exclusion from the non-Indigenous communities and being treated not only as a separate entity but unequally in comparison to others. This exclusion creates landlessness, internal displacement, poverty, etc.

### *Research and Preparation Questions*

1. What responsibilities do member states have towards the civilians of Guatemala?
2. How should member states react to the civilian casualties of the Guatemalan Civil War?
3. What treaties are member states bound by in reference to the Guatemalan Civil War?
4. How were the member states involved during the Guatemalan Civil War? And what are the repercussions of the war today for the member states?
5. How do member states approach Indigenous people's issues?
6. Do member states see the Guatemalan Civil War as an Indigenous people's genocide?

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<sup>50</sup> Burger, "Report from the frontier"

<sup>51</sup> Burger, "Report from the frontier"

<sup>52</sup> Burger, "Report from the frontier"

<sup>53</sup> Gomes, S. C., & Esperidiao, M. A. (2017). Indigenous peoples' access to health services in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso State, Brazil. *Cadernos de Saude Publica*, 33(5), e00132215-e00132215.