



# PWSDevelopments

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## PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE

*...in the ground, in the mind*

“I recently had the privilege of traveling to Guatemala with a group representing the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS). As part of the WMS *Together We Can!* project—which is providing support to indigenous women and their families in Guatemala—we visited PWS&D projects that are making an incredible difference for families and communities.”

– KAREN BOKMA (COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR)

Theresa  
Díaz



**W**E MET THERESA DIAZ IN THE community of Tuixcajchis, up in the western highlands of Guatemala. The scenery around her community is vibrant and dramatic—filled with panoramic views of mountains and trees. It's beautiful, but a difficult place to sustain yourself and support a family. It's in this setting though that Theresa is starting to thrive.

Theresa lost her husband several years ago. Her life was difficult when her husband was alive and became even more of a struggle after his death. Theresa works hard to support the five of her seven children that still live with her.

Tuixcajchis is one of the communities where Presbyterian World Service & Development partners with AMMID (the Maya-Mam Association for Research and Development) to empower women, increase food security and nutrition, and ensure access to land.

In indigenous communities like Theresa's, people face deep-rooted discrimination and poverty borne out of decades of civil war. A lack of economic opportunity and environmental concerns, such as climate change, encroaching mining operations, and deforestation make it difficult for families to break the cycle of poverty.

The work that PWS&D is supporting is addressing these issues.

Local partner AMMID is working to ensure that families eat more and better food by improving agricultural practices so that the soil produces abundantly. Not only do participants learn how to grow more food, but also how to use it to improve family nutrition. As Theresa shares, "We have been trained in



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many things—learning about seeds and ideas in how to improve our work and the way we plant. We learned how to prepare the land, but also how to prepare the food we grow."

Theresa didn't learn these activities in isolation, but with a group of women from her community. They form a support system and encourage each other to carry on the work. This is especially important for Theresa's group, as there are many single mothers and widows supporting their families.

Economically, families are faring better as they grow and prepare their own food, rather than buying it from others. The women also come together to form cooperative groups where they might make artisanal products

or sell surplus produce for extra income.

More important even than growing opportunities for the communities is the way the women's attitudes towards themselves have changed. "I learned that I have to prepare my mind as well as the soil. I learned how to take care of myself, as well as my family. And I have learned I have the right to take care of myself," explains Theresa. This growth in self-esteem and pride is evident in every member of the group.

Through PWS&D, indigenous women in Guatemala are learning new ideas, being empowered to care for their families and encouraged to use their creativity to provide hope and opportunity for the future. ■

Guatemalan and Canadian women meet to learn about each other's lives



## TEACHING GARDENS

School gardens in Guatemala are helping students learn about nutrition, responsible consumption and environmental stewardship. Learning how to cultivate and cook the organic vegetables they grow means that boys and girls gain knowledge and skills for the future. Advocacy for food security and environmental protection also ensures students learn to raise their voices to protect their rights.



*“I now have new ideas and in every training we improve our lives more. I’m grateful for all I have learned.”*



# Presbyterians IN ACTION

PRESBYTERIANS ACROSS CANADA—THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS AND GENEROSITY—ARE HELPING COMMUNITIES BUILD MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURES.



## ▲ DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDE

Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, ON hosted an afternoon of musical performances, prayer and fellowship to raise funds for Syrian refugees. The Inshallah choir from the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary performed songs originating from Palestine, Nigeria and Argentina, illustrating the theme—draw the circle wide—as a way to embrace our brothers and sisters across the globe. PHOTO: MARK CULP



## ◀ SERVING UP SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

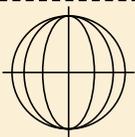
Knox Presbyterian Church in Victoria, BC held a dinner to raise funds for PWS&D programs. Over plates of pasta, guests at each table pooled their donations and chose the projects they wanted to support together. “Total money raised was \$742 which far exceeded our expectations,” shares Laura Kavanagh, minister at Knox.

## GARDEN PARTY GOT YOUR GOAT? ▼▶

At their 150th anniversary garden party celebration, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, BC held a hotdog sale, with funds going towards purchasing a goat for a family in Malawi. “Enough funds were raised to purchase eight goats!” shares Leslie Smith, chair of the anniversary committee. The hotdog sale was a success, but the main attraction was a visit from a surprise guest—a goat!



Sometimes we wonder if our actions, gestures or small gifts really have an impact in a world filled with need. In response to God’s call to act, Presbyterians are making a difference—thank you!



## Presbyterian World Service & Development

The development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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