



MARITIMES-GUATEMALA BREAKING THE SILENCE NETWORK

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025





CONTENTS

- About us
- Reflection from the Community Council
- Guatemala: A brief year in review
- BTS partner updates
- Annual Partner Gathering
- 2025 Delegation to Guatemala
- Guatemala Coordinator visits the Maritimes
- IMAP visit to the Maritimes
- 2025 Annual Gathering and Maritimes
Speaking Tour: Xinka Delegation
- Cooperants, Interns, and Summer Students
- BTS Local Committee reports
- BTS Coffee report
- Fun!raising update
- Thank you
- In loving memory

ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network (BTS) is a grassroots network in Canada's Maritimes provinces, the ancestral and unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoq, and Passamaquoddy peoples. The network is composed of local committees and people in the Maritimes, along with individuals across the country who are committed to supporting the struggle for justice in Guatemala, as well as on Turtle Island.

WHAT WE DO

Since 1988, BTS has organized in support of Guatemalans struggling for political, social, and economic justice. Today, BTS accompanies Guatemalan partner organizations and communities engaged in:

- **Defense of Territory** (including food sovereignty; land access and defense; and free, prior, and informed consent with respect to Canadian mining and other extractive projects)
- **Truth, Justice and Impunity** (including justice for genocide and crimes against humanity, gender justice, culturally relevant education, and historical memory)
- **Human Security** (including basic human rights, and opposition to militarization and criminalization)

This commitment to solidarity is expressed through:

- An ongoing presence in Guatemala;
- Advocacy, including urgent actions, meetings with international authorities and coalition work;
- Delegations to Guatemala and awareness raising in our own communities, including through speaking tours featuring community leaders from Guatemala;
- Human rights and community development cooperants;
- Sharing information with the BTS network regarding our partners' work and areas of concern; and
- Support and amplification of our partners' work.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Injustice is the result of structural inequalities both within and between countries, and BTS is committed to supporting structural transformation both in Guatemala and in Canada. Moreover, we recognize the interconnectedness of these two contexts.

We strive to engage in solidarity with and build bridges between the Indigenous organizations and communities with whom we work in Guatemala, and the Indigenous communities in whose territories we are situated in the Maritimes (Mi'kma'ki). We recognize the ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous communities in both these contexts.

Our work is guided by a commitment to equity and opposing systemic oppression, as well as building long-term relationships based on solidarity and mutuality. We respond to partner needs and as such, we respond jointly with our organizational partners in Guatemala. Our relationships are built on friendship, sharing, and dialogue as we work, learn, unlearn, and grow together.

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

—ABORIGINAL ACTIVISTS GROUP, QUEENSLAND, 1970s

BTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Dear friends,

To BTS's hosts on Wabanaki territory, the Mi'kmaq, Passemaquoddy, and Wolostiquiyik, thank you for sustaining us, teaching us, and participating with us as a grassroots network undertaking Guatemala solidarity work on your lands.

To all Breaking the Silence (BTS) members, partners, sister organizations, and friends, thank you for your continued solidarity and passion for justice. We look back on 2025 with gratitude for your renewed strength and commitment. We also look forward to 2026 with determination to keep learning as we do our part in the parallel struggles in the North and South, in solidarity!

In 2025, our Guatemalan partners navigated through rough waters: the (still) new government and its uneasy stance under the shadow of Attorney General Consuelo Porras and the Pact of the Corrupt; continued criminalization of grassroots community organizers, including longtime BTS partner Leocadio Juracán of the CCDA; justice denied and justice continually delayed (e.g. in the transitional justice case of the 36 Maya A'chi women); Trump's domestic and international policies which

resulted in the deportation of three children of survivors from Rabinal from the US; changes in the cybersphere, and more. The BTS Community Council (CC) noted at our April 2025 meeting that this profound situation for our partners is the context for our "busywork."

Our "busywork" this year included visits to the Maritimes/Wabanaki by our new Guatemala Coordinator, Javier López, as well as Inés Cuj and Patrik Mucía from IMAP, and the Annual Gathering with keynote guests, Marisol Guerra and Marta Muñoz from the Xinka Parliament. All of these new and renewed connections are the lifeblood of BTS, each adding their unique energy and insights to the whole.

In Mi'kma'ki, the Nova Scotia government passed legislation within an omnibus bill that criminalizes Indigenous land defenders and water protectors, a direct violation of the right of Mi'kmaq to protect the land. BTS members supported the Mi'kmaw encampment on Hunters Mountain in Unamaki with visits, donations, submissions to the provincial government, and attendance at the "Shoulder to Shoulder" rally in Kjipuktuk.

The year ended with some uncertainty about the future of the Tatamagouche Centre, which has provided a home for

BTS and supported the network in innumerable ways for decades. Countless BTS members can look back on much laughter and learning in the Program Room, special times in the chapel, lively meals in the kitchen and party nights in Campbell House!

Huge thanks is due to Tatamagouche Centre's past and present Board and staff. BTS is responding to possible changes with a resounding commitment to forge on.

In December, we learned the deeply saddening news of the passing of Sutik (Judy) Googoo of Wagmatcook First Nation. Judy was a BTS member, who with her partner, Joe, welcomed IMAP staff Inés Cuj and Patrik Mucía into their home and garden in the spring, and in turn visited IMAP in the fall, making deep connections and plans to return. With love and respect, we dedicate this annual report to the memory of Sutik.

¡Sutik Googoo, Presente!

In solidarity,
BTS Community Council

Kathryn Anderson
Arturo Ezquerro-Cañete
Maritza Farina
Janette Fecteau (on hiatus in 2026)
Janelle Frail
Sabrina Jeria
Javier López
Rebecca MacDonald
Ann Manicom
Moira Peters
Martha Schmitz
Scott Smith

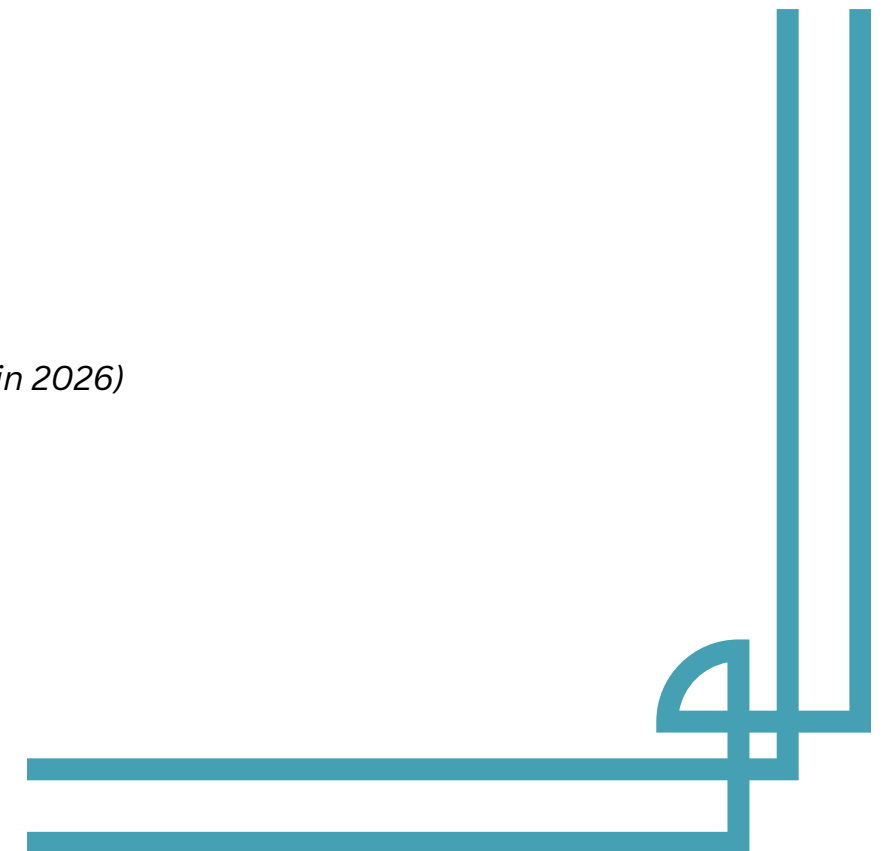




Photo of Guatemalan President, Bernardo Arévalo.

GUATEMALA: A BRIEF YEAR IN REVIEW

2025 was a difficult year for Guatemala. As the Arévalo administration entered its second year after a long, hard-fought battle to defend Guatemalan democracy, the expectations that things would change drastically have rapidly dwindled. Though there are many reasons for disappointment and disillusionment, one of the main obstacles for implementing progressive changes in Guatemala is the fact that the Judicial Branch remains co-opted by corrupt Attorney General, Consuelo Porras, who works at the behest of the country's oligarchic regimes. As we have mentioned, Arévalo is considered *tibio* or lukewarm in his approach to implementing more robust changes in the country. Despite good intentions at the start of his administration, he has failed to take a strong stand on many key issues.

An important example is the fact that after Leocadio Juracán's arrest in August 2025, the President's private secretary met with Indigenous leaders who were there to affirm the Executive Branch's support for Indigenous social movements and for Leocadio. Yet at Leocadio's trial, the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation (PGN), i.e., the lawyer appointed by the President himself to represent the state in legal issues, was the most fervent voice in highlighting and pursuing the accusations against Leocadio! This two-faced attitude from the Executive Branch has been particularly worrisome and disappointing for BTS as a network and especially for the Guatemalan people.

This ambiguity is worrisome due to the fact that the Judicial Branch has been so ardent in its pursuit to criminalize, displace, and incarcerate Indigenous, *campesino*, and social movement leaders. The 2025 arrests of former Indigenous authorities, Luis Pacheco, Hector Chaclán, and Esteban Toc Tzay, as well as Leocadio Juracán, are some notable examples of high-level social movement leaders being pursued by the judicial system. However, they represent a small percentage of social movement leaders and everyday people who are facing attacks from the justice system.

Further, violent evictions and eviction attempts in Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, and Izabal, have continued to terrorize communities this year too. While ongoing criminalization and dispossession have raised alarms, the transitional justice process continues to move slowly, often hampered by delays and procedural irregularities. Historical racism and violence continue to play out both in the criminalization of Indigenous communities and leaders, and in the efforts to delay and deny justice to communities plundered by state violence during the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC). Meanwhile, as rural and Indigenous communities face the effects of poverty, corruption, and cycles of state abandonment and violence, Guatemalan congress members passed a motion to increase their own salaries. Such "priorities" represent a slap in the face to the

Guatemalan people, particularly in the face of ongoing evictions, deportations, and criminalizations this past year. A co-opted judicial system and a corrupt Congress continue to play a key role in this legacy of systemic violence, working in favour of corporations, oligarchs, and the elite, at the expense of communities.

Despite these challenges, communities and organizations across Guatemala have effected real change in their work toward a more just and pluricultural society. In April, mining-affected Xinka communities in Santa Rosa, Jalapa, and Jutiapa delivered a resounding no to the Canadian-owned Escobal mine in their territories, which they say ["has meant imposition, conflict, criminalization, and a direct threat to our territories, our water sources and our spirituality."](#) Two Xinka women leaders, Marta Muñoz and Marisol Guerra, were able to participate in a tour around Canada, including in the Maritimes, building connections with Indigenous leaders, sharing their committed struggle against mining in their territories, and inviting Canadians to take action in solidarity with them.

Meanwhile, an international arbitration body threw out a suit from Kappes, Cassidy & Associates, a US mining company that sought to punish and impoverish the Guatemalan state after more than a decade of community resistance in La Puya led to the closure of the El Tambor mine.

In May, [the Maya Achí women achieved a second sentence against the ex-civil defense patrollers \(PAC\) guilty of crimes against humanity and sexual violence](#). In August, more than eight years after the Guatemalan state burned 41 girls in a state-run facility to death and gravely injured another 15, the survivors and the victims' families in the *Hogar Seguro* case achieved a guilty verdict against six of those responsible. The verdict also called for an investigation into former President Jimmy Morales for his role in the mass femicide.

Grassroots organizations also celebrated the creation of a Public Policy on Human Rights Defenders, a tool designed to better protect activists, Indigenous authorities, judges and prosecutors, and journalists from the specific threats they face as human rights defenders. The policy had been in the making for more than a decade, following a 2014 ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR).

Indigenous and *campesino* leaders, including the CCDA and some of the Achí women from Rabinal also participated in the historic Tribunal of Conscience Against Racism, the first of its kind in more than 23 years. There, witnesses and experts spoke directly to the government about their experiences of criminalization, intersectional discrimination, dispossession, forced migration, and

the imposed mega-projects that threaten their lands, lives, and cultures. Furthermore, ancestral authorities in Santiago Atitlán, and tens of thousands of Atitecos who they represent, set an important precedent by ousting a corrupt mayor through committed community organizing.

Moreover, as many of our incredible BTS volunteers and network participants know, we were able to receive two important delegations to the Maritimes, including our partners at IMAP and two women from the Xinka Parliament (PAPXIGUA). These visits were so impactful because they offered an opportunity for our network to get caught up on the work that these two organizations do in Guatemala, but also offered the chance for our partners to connect with Indigenous communities in Canada as well. These cross-cultural connections proved to be highly beneficial for our partners as they were able to draw inspiration from other Indigenous peoples and the ways they have approached their particular struggles in Canada. These were important points that each of our partners expressed to us as staff and is something we will carry into 2026, especially with future delegations both in Canada and in Guatemala.

These are but a handful of the important gains made by communities across Guatemala who continue to collectively struggle in defence of their lands, cultures, languages, and spirituality.

Overall, the Guatemalan context has been complex, but with changes coming up in 2026 with the judicial system, there is some level of curiosity as to how that may come to bring about changes in these difficult and worrisome dynamics.

Some of the changes include the renewal of authorities in the Supreme Court of Elections, the Constitutional Court, and the Public Ministry's office: three of the most important judicial bodies that have the power to shape how the Guatemalan state approaches human rights – something that has proved severely damaging to local communities.

As the new year starts, there are already a few promising signs, at least in the commissions that ultimately decide who occupies these judicial bodies. As things develop, we will proceed with cautious optimism and continue to keep the BTS Network informed.

The Xinka People collectively denied their consent for the Canadian-owned Escobal mine. Photo credit: PAPXIGUA.





The Mujeres Achí travelled to Guatemala City to denounce three additional ex-civil defence patrollers in court.

NEW HOPE FOUNDATION (FNE)

The FNE had another successful school year with strong indicators of student learning and high retention rates. The FNE emphasized that the support they received from their most recent BTS intern, Meara Donovan was both incredibly helpful and impressive. Staff mentioned that Meara was easily able to integrate into the school's community and culture, supporting both students and staff. They are especially excited that she will be rejoining them as a BTS Cooperant for the entire 2026 school year.

Additionally, the FNE has been able to build connections with other educational institutions in Guatemala, including in Sololá and Guatemala City, deepening its professional network and enabling collective strategies for approaching shared challenges faced by alternative schools in the country.

The biggest challenge the FNE is facing is the building of a new facility after the Ministry of Education indicated that their current facilities are not apt for student learning. As such, they have worked together with a US-based architectural non-profit organization to design a new school, but now need to fundraise to pay for this costly overhaul. FNE staff are still waiting on exact financial estimates for the project and once received, BTS will share details related to their fundraising goals with our network.

Former BTS Intern, Meara with students and staff during a Maya ceremony at the FNE.



PARTNER UPDATES

RABINAL COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINIC (ABJP)

The ABJP had both a difficult and memorable year. On the one hand, the historic *Mujeres Achí* case received another sentence in favour of the Achí women who once again came forward to denounce three additional ex-civil defence patrollers (PAC) who committed sexual violence and other crimes against humanity against them in the early 1980s during the height of Guatemala's genocidal violence against Indigenous communities. This important case has proved to be a vital step forward in the transitional justice process in Guatemala, particularly in the midst of a worrisome and challenging context within the judicial system that prioritizes persecuting social movement leaders, while delaying or dismissing transitional justice cases altogether. The case was [profiled in the New York Times](#) in July.

Despite this tremendous achievement, the ABJP has also been facing serious financial difficulties as a result of USAID funding cuts that have directly affected their day-to-day operations, forcing them to make staffing cuts. The ABJP team organized a [fundraiser](#) to ensure they can continue working to support and honour the victims of State-sponsored atrocities, including through the recent construction of a chapel at Los Encuentros.



The Xinka People overwhelmingly said NO to the continuation of the Escobal mine in their territories.

DICESAN COMMISSION FOR THE DEFENSE OF NATURE (CODIDENA)

CODIDENA was highly active this year in coordinating efforts to deliver the results of the community consultation process for the Escobal mine, and working closely with community leaders on environmental initiatives. This included expanding the number of nurseries available to local communities, expanding the participation of young people monitoring water quality in Xinka territories into a committee that is working towards proposing a water law to protect Guatemala's water sources.

This past year, BTS also had the chance to visit Xinka leader, Moisés Divas regularly during his ongoing incarceration at the Pavón Prison. In general, he is in good spirits, though the environmental conditions of the prison remain a challenge. While Moisés and his legal team were originally planning to apply for a condition to serve the remainder of his sentence at home, that option is unfortunately no longer possible. For this reason, Moisés will wait out his sentence until next year, when he will be released without conditions.

CODIDENA coordinator, Shenny Lemus also participated in a speaking tour in North Carolina that was especially well received in local communities and on university campuses. Similar to Marta and Marisol's speaking tour, Shenny was able to share the voices and struggles of the Xinka People with audiences in the United States.

CODIDENA youth undertook research and monitoring on local water quality related to the Escobal mine.



THE XINKA PARLIAMENT (PAPXIGUA)

This was a historic year for PAPXIGUA and the Xinka People. The biggest milestone they celebrated was delivering the results of their years-long community consultation process for the Escobal mine. The Xinka People overwhelmingly said NO to the continuation of mining activities in their territories. On May 8, 2025, thousands of people traveled to the capital city to deliver the consultation results directly to the President and to the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM). Until now, Pan American Silver, the Canadian company that owns and operates the Escobal mine, has yet to publicly acknowledge the Xinka People's decision.

In order to draw attention to the results of the community consultation, PAPXIGUA sent two local Xinka women leaders, Marta Muñoz and Marisol Guerra, to Canada on two separate occasions to share the ongoing struggles of the Xinka People and raise awareness of Pan American Silver's illegal actions on their lands. These speaking tours, organized by a coalition of organizations including BTS, proved to be highly successful, creating opportunities for international solidarity in the face of Canadian extractivism. Marta and Marisol also built important connections with Indigenous leaders in Canada, including the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and Wolastoq Grand Chief Ron Tremblay.



IMAP staff members, Ines and Patrik during their visit to the Maritimes.

CAMPESINO COMMITTEE OF THE HIGHLANDS (CCDA)

2025 was a challenging year for the CCDA who continued to rapidly respond to incidents of judicial and extrajudicial evictions, criminalization, and political persecution of their member communities across the country. CCDA members at all levels were targeted by a co-opted Public Prosecutor's (MP) office that operates at the disposition of oligarchs and land-owning elites. Despite growing numbers of evictions, arrests, and assassinations, the CCDA continued their advocacy, bringing these issues to light in high-level spaces, including frequent meetings with President and his executive, and during in-country visits from three UN Special Rapporteurs, including the right to housing who published a scathing report documenting abuses from large-scale landowners and [calling for an urgent moratorium on evictions](#).

CCDA staff were also criminalized. In August, agrarian reform coordinator, [Leocadio Juracán was arrested](#) on false charges of usurpation, while general coordinator, Neydi Juracán faced continued persecution related to [the USAC case](#). The CCDA maintains that this strategy of pursuing high-level social movement leaders represents a deepening of the judicial system's criminalization tactics, following years of targeting local and regional activists. Despite this, the CCDA continues to work towards a collective approach that will guarantee land access and dignified livings for all campesinos, as well as free all political prisoners that are currently incarcerated for their activism.

CCDA members hold a press conference denouncing ongoing community evictions and criminalization.



MESOAMERICAN PERMACULTURE INSTITUTE (IMAP)

IMAP staff engaged in building solidarity with Indigenous communities in Canada this past year. In the Spring, they traveled to Alberta and the Maritimes to exchange knowledge on permaculture with Blackfoot and Mi'kmaw communities, including Joe and the late Sutik (Judy) Googoo. In the Fall, Joe and Sutik traveled to Guatemala with the BTS Delegation to visit IMAP and the CCDA for a special trip focused on agricultural practices.

IMAP also hosted workshops in their community gardens and advanced several projects working directly with local schools, women's groups, and community members, including growing their "super atol" initiative aimed at addressing high local rates of child malnutrition. To support this work, BTS connected IMAP to [Sombrilla](#), an Edmonton-based organization (whose president is BTS member, Lenora Yarkie!) that supports Latin American communities with funding. The news of the funding came in just as IMAP was celebrating its 25th anniversary!

Later in the year, IMAP faced a serious digital security incident where their website and social media channels were hacked. BTS was able to respond, connecting IMAP to digital security specialists and funders who helped resolve the issue and improve their overall digital security.



BTS staff brought partners together for an annual gathering in Guatemala City.

ANNUAL PARTNER GATHERING

On August 20th, BTS staff members, Martha Schmitz and Javier López, gathered with our partners in Guatemala City to discuss some of the biggest triumphs and challenges they had faced that year, and identify ways BTS can continue supporting their efforts. This year's gathering offered an opportunity for BTS partners to remind staff of the ways BTS had historically worked to support their goals, while also providing partner organizations a rare chance to connect with one another in meaningful ways.

Our partners noted many shared challenges, particularly regarding criminalization, political persecution, environmental challenges, and issues related to cyber security. Based on these four themes, BTS worked to organize tailored initiatives to support them, including a Digital Security Meeting in mid-November that was led by Front Line Defenders (FLD). Our partners learned about various ways they can work with FLD directly to protect their digital communications from surveillance and attacks.

Partners also emphasized that they want more opportunities to connect with each other and build shared strategies and networks of support to continue facing these overlapping challenges. Partners also suggested that future gatherings be held in their respective territories to provide the opportunity to learn from one another's initiatives in person, which is a goal BTS will pursue in 2026.

2025 DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA

The 2025 BTS Delegation to Guatemala, “Sowing Seeds of Justice in San Lucas Tolimán” gave 10 delegates the opportunity to participate in hands-on, agro-ecological learning with IMAP and better understand the CCDA’s community-based resistance to the threat of dispossession and criminalization. Led by dedicated BTS volunteer (and expert on his hometown of San Lucas) Juan Tun and BTS staff members, Martha Schmitz and Javier López, the delegation focused on San Lucas Tolimán-based partners’ work to support small-scale producers in using bio-intensive farming to promote food sovereignty and biodiversity, recuperating Kaqchikel spiritual and cultural practices, and protecting their lands against extractivist monoculture farming.

Delegates spent several days learning from IMAP staff about food forests, bio-intensive plots, native seed saving and community seed banks, and using amaranth and other nutritious, native plants in the kitchen. They participated in Kaqchikel and Mi’kmaq ceremonies, reminding participants of our connection and responsibility to Mother Earth. They also built and planted a diverse garden in just an hour!

Later, they met with the CCDA to learn about how their cooperative model, agroecology trainings, locally-led documentation of land claims, and grassroots political education and organizing, serve as an antidote to an extractivist model that enriches the few and dispossesses the many.

Delegates worked together to build and plant a garden on the grounds of IMAP.



DELEGATION CONTINUED

Delegates also enjoyed cultural celebrations like Day of the Dead, built and flew kites, boated along the San Lucas waterfront, and learned about the cultural and spiritual significance of weaving and Rilaj Mam from a weaving collective and a local spiritual guide in Santiago Atitlán.

BTS partners shared their excitement about spending more time with delegates and getting to know one another better during this special thematic delegation, while delegates expressed their excitement to get home and continue their solidarity (as well as get their hands in the ground to apply their learnings come spring!).

ON OUR BLOG

Read about [the experiences of the 2025 Delegates](#)



(left) Delegates work together to build kites. / (right) Delegation co-lead, Juan Tun in the gardens at IMAP.

(clockwise from top left): Delegate Maria with the CCDA's Neydi and Leocadio; Juan and the delegates enjoy avocados in the rain; loading into the pick-up to get to the CCDA's coffee beneficio; enjoying a cup of *Cafe Justicia* together.





BTS Network members in Fredericton, NB welcomed Javier (far left) during his tour.

JAVIER'S FIRST VISIT TO THE MARITIMES

At the end of April, I had the pleasure of traveling to Ottawa and the Maritimes to meet the BTS community in Canada. Thanks to Arturo's hard work and organization, I had the chance to meet many of you and learn more about your involvement in BTS. I want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who hosted us and joined us in Halifax, Antigonish, Tatamagouche, Fredericton, and Moncton. It was a true pleasure to get to know you all!

Prior to arriving in the Maritimes, I had the opportunity to attend the America's Policy Group (APG) annual meeting in Ottawa, where I met Arturo and staff from organizations throughout Canada working in international solidarity efforts. At the APG meeting, we discussed the roles that each organization holds within the coalition and how we can best collaborate. We learned from each other but also from guest speakers who contextualized the work we do through their analyses of the current Latin American context. This included understanding the "New Far Right" and current on-the-ground circumstances in Cuba. We also heard directly from representatives from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), who answered our questions and got our perspective on the international work we do.

Following two days in Ottawa for this meeting, we traveled to Halifax where we had the chance to visit the BTS coffee stand at the Forum Farmers' Market.

We had a great event with BTS members and I got to meet members of the BTS Community Council in Halifax, as well.

We stopped in Wolfville to check out the Just Us! Coffee facility, where we had the chance to see the roasting and packaging process. After having a cup of coffee, we continued to Antigonish where we had a potluck dinner event. That same night, I learned more about how the Canadian political system and democratic process works by watching the election results start to trickle in. The following day I had the chance to meet with a representative from St FX University prior to visiting the Mi'kmaq community health clinic. The experience in Antigonish culminated in learning more about the lobster fishing industry by visiting a local facility.

Our next stop was Tatamagouche, a place I had heard so much about through my father. We had a community event in the Tata Centre on the evening we arrived,

where we shared with local committee members and learned more about Mi'kmaq history and identity.

In Fredericton, we had the chance to meet with Chief Tremblay and Jeremias Tecú ahead of the community event that evening. The next day, I took a small work break to go on a bike ride for a few hours with Brian Atkinson before catching up on emails for a few hours.

Our last stop was Moncton where I met Lynne and Dave Duffy before heading out the next day.

Overall, the experience in the Maritimes was a delight because I got to see new places and meet the greater BTS community. I appreciate everyone who was willing to receive us in their homes and who hosted us in their communities.

—Words by Javier López

(left to right) BTS Maritimes Coordinator, Arturo with Guatemala Coordinator, Javier.





The BTS Antigonish Committee welcomes Patrik and Inés from IMAP.

Back in Halifax, Inés, Patrik, and Arturo then participated in a panel discussion titled “International Advocacy in a Time of Crisis: The Role of Civil Society” at the [Atlantic Council for International Cooperation \(ACIC\) 50th anniversary symposium](#), held at Saint Mary’s University. Speaking on the theme of international solidarity in the face of global challenges, the panel addressed urgent questions about shrinking civic space, rising authoritarianism, and compounding global crises—and how civil society continues to organize and build power across borders. The session was a highlight of the symposium, offering deep insight into how frontline organizations like IMAP and BTS sustain long-term international solidarity grounded in mutual learning, trust, and reciprocity.

Inés and Patrik wrapped up their visit with a stroll through downtown Halifax and a ferry ride across the harbour to Dartmouth, before attending a farewell potluck (despedida) hosted by Yvette Michaud. The gathering brought together BTS members from the Halifax Local Committee and friends, including Ben MacMillan, Maria José, Lisa Rankin, Lisa Roberts, Beth Abbott, Jen, and Susanne Litke—offering a warm and heartfelt send-off.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the Googos for their generous welcome, and the many members of the Antigonish and Halifax Committees who opened their homes, shared meals, organized gatherings, and more. Thanks also to the ACIC who provided financial support and former BTS Intern, Cristi Jerez who supported with translations and interpretation throughout the visit.

The late Sutik (Judy) Googoo (far left) shared insights on cultivating crops and medicinal plants with Ines (centre).



IMAP VISIT TO NOVA SCOTIA

In June, we were thrilled to host our partners from IMAP, María Inés Cuj Chopén and Patrik Evelio Mucía Poz for a rich week of learning, sharing, and connection across Mi’kma’ki (Nova Scotia). IMAP’s work focuses on agroecology, food sovereignty, the preservation of native seeds, and the revitalization of Indigenous ancestral knowledge. Their vision is rooted in ecological and cultural resilience, and in working with Maya Kaqchikel communities to build regenerative futures grounded in permaculture principles and traditional land stewardship.

Inés and Patrik began their journey by visiting the BTS Antigonish Local Committee. A warm potluck hosted by Julie and Aaron brought together longtime members—including past BTS interns who had visited IMAP in Guatemala.

The group then traveled to Wagmatcook First Nation on Cape Breton Island, where they were warmly welcomed by the late Judy (Sutik) and Joe Googoo. Along the way, they were joined by Estelle Levangie and Juan Tun, who helped facilitate the visit and deepen the conversations. The day included a Mi’kmaq feast of grilled eel, a tour of the community and memorial gardens, and a hands-on experience with oyster farming in the Bras d’Or Lakes. These shared moments opened space for meaningful dialogue about traditional Mi’kmaq livelihoods and the central role of Indigenous knowledge in land and water stewardship.



BTS Network members and the SMU community came out to hear from Marta and Marisol in Halifax.

XINKA DELEGATION TOURS THE MARITIMES

After months of planning and coordination with multiple organizations (including [Earthworks](#), [MiningWatch Canada](#), and [the Institute for Policy Studies](#)), BTS had the honour of hosting two Xinka matriarchs for a Maritimes Speaking Tour. Marta Julia Muñoz and Aura Marisol Guerra traveled to Halifax to kick start their speaking tour in eastern Canada following their tour stops in western Canada earlier in the year.

Marta and Marisol spoke about their years-long resistance to the Canadian-owned Escobal mine and their experiences defending their ancestral homelands following the recent conclusion of the Court-ordered community consultation process, where the [Xinka People called for the permanent closure of the mine](#).

The first event was held at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax, NS after a wonderful potluck dinner organized by local BTS members. The event at SMU was well attended by more than 40 people, including faculty and students, as well as BTS Network members. Many thought-provoking questions were asked and attendees also shared messages of support and solidarity with Marta and Marisol.

We left Halifax and made our way to Tatamagouche, NS to host Marta and Marisol at the 2025 BTS Annual Gathering at Tatamagouche Centre that brought together BTS members from across Canada. Marta and Marisol's presence provided a vital

contribution to the experience as it put names and faces to the lived experiences of our partners in Guatemala.

More than anything, it offered us an opportunity to feel directly connected to our partners and served as an important follow-up to the words and experiences that Don Amilvar of the Xinka Parliament (PAPXIGUA) shared with us at last year's Annual Gathering in Tatamagouche.

Following an energizing weekend of solidarity and connection, we traveled to Fredericton, NB where Marta and Marisol had the opportunity to connect with members of the Wolastoq Indigenous community, including Grand Chief, Ron Trembley. We also held a potluck dinner where Marta and Marisol had the opportunity to connect with other BTS members, including local activists involved in immigration and refugee-related struggles and efforts to free Palestine. We greatly appreciated the warm welcome and closing song from Chief Trembley who generously opened and closed the communal space for all of us.

Our final stop on the Maritimes Speaking Tour was in Charlottetown, PE. Marta and Marisol were really impressed by the length of the bridge onto the island and were excited to get to see another province in Canada! The event that evening had an attentive audience that included several university professors who asked important and meaningful questions that led to a rich discussion.

BTS Network members traveled from across Canada to connect with Marta and Marisol at the Annual Gathering.



XINKA DELEGATION CONTINUED

We headed back to Halifax for one more night to enjoy a goodbye dinner with Maria José and her family, who offered us a space to send off our guests in high spirits and with much gratitude for their visit. Overall, the speaking tour was a huge success with several meaningful presentations that led to new connections and thoughtful conversations throughout the Maritimes.

We express our deepest gratitude to those who received us in their homes, welcomed us into their communities, and took the time to make this tour possible. More than anything, thank you for carrying the voices and the experiences of the Xinka People in your hearts.

IN THE MEDIA

Read [CBC Radio-Canada's Spanish-language feature on Marta and Marisol](#), and [watch their Ottawa press conference](#) in collaboration with MiningWatch Canada

(clockwise from top left): Marta and Marisol met with Chief Tremblay; hanging out with Martha and Javier before the Halifax event; visiting Canada's Parliament before the press conference; meeting BTS members in Charlottetown; and in Fredericton.





BTS Cooperant Coordinator, Martha Schmitz (back row, centre) with recent Interns in Guatemala.

COOPERANTS, INTERNS & SUMMER STUDENTS

Interns, cooperants, and summer students played a huge role in BTS’s work with partners in 2025!

Through a collaboration with ACIC, BTS selected, trained, and placed seven interns with IMAP, FNE, ABJP, and CCDA over the course of this year, as well as supported a summer cooperant’s placement with the ABJP. During their placements, interns and cooperants built relationships, tended gardens, wrote visa and grant applications, prepared historical reports on the legacy of racism and dispossession against campesino communities, taught English and math classes, supported agroecology workshops, prepared legal documentation for compliance reports to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, sold coffee, accompanied the Achí women to trial dates, designed websites, and so much more.

Two interns even continued their solidarity journey, working with BTS as summer students and cooperants. Immediately following her placement with the ABJP from February to May 2025, Cristi Jerez worked as a 2025 summer student in Halifax, where she supported BTS coffee sales at the Halifax Forum Farmers’ Market, and accompanied and interpreted for IMAP guests, Inés Cuj and Patrik Mucia during their tour of the Maritimes. Meanwhile, following a meaningful internship at the FNE from August to December 2025, Meara Donovan decided to once again work in support of the Foundation’s educational and fundraising goals through her role as a cooperant starting in January 2026.

Meanwhile, we’re thrilled that so many of our other past interns and cooperants have continued to play active roles as staff, committee members, volunteers selling coffee, and community fundraisers, demonstrating the enduring commitment so many past interns and cooperants have made to building lasting solidarity across borders.

We offer our huge thanks to the 2025 interns, cooperants, and summer students for their work and commitment this year. We look forward to seeing how they will continue to stay involved in solidarity efforts with BTS partners in Guatemala for years to come!

“I’m so privileged to say that BTS, the ABJP, and volunteers in the Maritimes are continuing to shape the person I’m becoming.”

—Cristi Jerez

(left to right) Martha (centre) with BTS Interns, Georgia and Cristi; BTS Cooperant, Marina with ABJP lawyer, María Dolores.



“My experience as a BTS intern allowed me to flourish personally and professionally, and I have emerged as my most confident, value-aligned self.”

—Meara Donovan

BTS Interns

- ABJP: **Cristi Jerez** (Feb-May), **Nitya Ramírez** (Aug-Nov)
- IMAP: **Georgia Sachs** (Feb-May), **Hannah Frazer** (Aug-Nov)
- CCDA: **Kylie Verlinden-Kitchen** (Aug-Nov), **Lydia Canales** (Aug-Nov)
- FNE: **Meara Donovan** (Aug-Nov)

Cooperant:

- ABJP: **Marina Luro** (Jun-Aug)

Summer Student:

- **Cristi Jerez** (Jun-Aug)





(left to right) Pre-Bue Nose: Sue, Sheena, Janette, Karen, Stephen, and Aaron. (photo credit: Nancy Peters)

LOCAL COMMITTEE UPDATES

BTS ANTIGONISH COMMITTEE

Here in Antigonish/Nalikitquniejik (hear Trevor Gould pronounce and talk about the Mi'kmaw place name [here](#)), the local BTS Committee looks back at another busy year of Guatemala solidarity in action in a small town and county in the Pik'tuk district of Mi'kma'ki.

In the Winter, StFX student Maya Bergeron brought her warmth, energy and knowledge to the local committee as our Service Learning placement for the term. Maya worked on coffee and crafts promotion at events such as Seedy Sunday, and ended up sticking with BTS as a regular member. Supported by Sheena Cameron, Kathryn Anderson, and Santo Dodaro (StFX Dept of Economics) she is currently working on a research project, "Solidarity Pathways," about the long-term effects of BTS on Antigonish members' community and social justice work generally.

In April, members had the pleasure of meeting Javier for the first time when he and Arturo made a "flying visit" on their Maritimes tour. They met with StFX Service Learning, and then Wyanne Sandler accompanied them to visit Juliana Julian at the Paqtnkek First Nation Health Centre. (Juliana has since been elected Chief of Paqtnkek FN.) This was a great opportunity for relationship building and for sharing experiences about the importance and power of community-led projects in Indigenous communities, particularly in health equity, food security, and education.

In May, we formed a robust team for the Blue Nose Marathon, taking a page from the PEI Committee's book and walking or running locally for the first time. This made participation more accessible for many who would not have made the trip to Halifax. Sue Adams, Diane Walsh, and Nancy Peters hosted us at the beautiful Keppoch Mountain trails, home of the indomitable blackfly.

It took a team of seven BTSers to beat out (just narrowly) Kathryn Anderson, who walked in Kjiptuk, for the coveted BTS Blue Nose trophy for the most funds raised. A huge shout out to our team leader, Janette Fecteau, who really kept us motivated and provided very important fundraising suggestions!

In June, we hosted Inés and Patrik from IMAP, accompanied by Arturo and Cristi. At a potluck hosted by Julie Stinson and Aaron Bates, Patrik became an expert at cracking lobsters. Wyanne and Inés made

excellent lobster rolls! (Sorry, Javier. Next time!!) Patrik and Inés shared thoughts on the current context in Guatemala and its impact on their work, and how seed saving and sharing ancestral knowledge is more important than ever. Julie was able to give a little tour of her willow patch and basketry making process to the IMAP guests, sharing how willow can fit into a permaculture system in our climate. She was inspired and motivated by the visit, sharing that "Patrik really motivated me to put some garden dreams into action using the materials I had around."

In July and August, we sold crafts and coffee at the Highland Games Street Fair and the "Taste 'n' Tunes" event which was sponsored by the local visitors' centre. We find that these local public events are opportunities to have more intimate conversations with both locals and visitors about Guatemala, our partners, and the work BTS does.

(left to right) Patrik cracking lobsters; Bob Zecker manning the coffee stand at Taste n' Tunes. (photo credit: Janette Fecteau)



ANTIGONISH CONTINUED

In September, these conversations continued with new members of the Antigonish community at Antigonight: Art After Dark Festival. Our project was organized by Karen Fish and Eve Rosenberg. Partnering with DESGUA (Sustainable Development for Guatemala), they welcomed Antigonight attendees to share where they are from in a beautiful mural that reflects personal stories of migration. The installation was a popular destination at the event, with many people staying around to chat and meet with others who had landed in Antigonish recently from another country. At the end of the evening, the map was full of pins and the mural was lively and beautiful,” writes Karen.

On the advocacy front, we wrote letters in support of Leocadio Juracán after his arrest and to support PAPXIGUA’s decision to close the Escobal Mine. We also made submissions to the Nova Scotia government in support of Indigenous land defenders and water protectors when their rights and inherent role were threatened by provincial legislation. Throughout the Fall, local committee members supported the Mi’kmaw encampment on Hunters Mountain in Unamaki with visits, donations, submissions to the provincial government and attendance at the “Shoulder to Shoulder” rally in Kijipuktuk.

Nicole Roberts of L’Arche Antigonish adds to the BTS mural at Antigonight. (photo credit: Janette Fecteau)



The BTS Antigonish Committee selling crafts and coffee at Antigonight 2025.

Kathryn Anderson also spearheaded the successful Garnet Rogers BTS fundraiser concert in October, with an enthusiastic crowd of fans, some new to BTS and some old hands. Kathryn is already hobnobbing with local musicians and making plans for a different type musical event to benefit BTS next year!

The Antigonish local committee has had a boost with the addition of new members this year. Welcome, Sheila and Maya! Although after a full year Kathryn Anderson can be considered “new-ish” to the local committee, her passion for moneymaking led to unprecedented craft sales!! In November and December, she made sure our local committee sold crafts and coffee at just about every small community Christmas craft fair in the county and beyond!

On a more serious note, in many ways, 2025 has been a challenging year, with the urgency of climate change, many global conflicts, and repression of Indigenous land protectors both in Mi’kma’ki and Guatemala. It’s heartening to end the year knowing that our small Committee’s work spanned all twelve months and that our dedication in this context doesn’t wane. Into 2026, *¡la lucha continúa!*



Members of the BTS Fredericton Committee organized a 10km walk to fundraise for BTS.

BTS FREDERICTON COMMITTEE

The Fredericton Committee had a full and energized year, filled with community gatherings, advocacy, and solidarity-building.

On May 1st, we hosted a well-attended potluck to welcome and get to know the new BTS Guatemala Coordinator, Javier López. The evening offered a warm introduction to his role, a chance for local supporters to hear directly about the work happening in Guatemala, and for Javier to learn about our roots and work in Fredericton.

On June 8th, we laced up our sneakers for the Blue Nose Marathon—determined not to be outdone by our friends in Nova Scotia and PEI. Four participants completed a walk/run of a little over 10 km, taking a well-earned lunch break at the experimental farm. While the exact fundraising total remains unknown, spirits were high and the support was heartfelt.

On July 5th, some of our committed members attended a meeting of the Peace and Friendship Alliance with New Brunswick's Minister of Natural Resources, John Herron, to discuss the proposed Sisson mine. The minister faced pointed questions about safety concerns and the lack of Indigenous consent, and BTS was strongly represented in the room.

From September 12th–14th, two of our Committee members joined the BTS Annual Gathering in Tatamagouche. As always, the gathering served as a meaningful space to reconnect and re-energize for the months ahead.

Just one day later, on September 15th, we hosted another vibrant potluck—this time welcoming Xinka Delegates, Marta and Marisol, who were joined again by Javier. Their presentations on the Xinka People's resistance to the Canadian-owned Escobal mine and other destructive projects were powerful, timely, and deeply appreciated by all who attended.

On December 18, the BTS Fredericton Committee co-presented a film screening of "My Friend Omar" with the NFU (National Farmers Union) about the treatment of temporary farm workers.

Finally, we participated in a Peace and Friendship Alliance meeting focused on developing an action plan to stop the Sisson mining project. Around 70 people from eight or nine organizations—including BTS—came together to collaborate on next steps.

BTS staff and Fredericton Committee members joined the Peace and Friendship Alliance meeting on the Sisson mine.





Members of the BTS PEI Committee came together to walk and raise funds in support of BTS.

BTS PEI COMMITTEE

The PEI Committee engaged in two main activities during 2025. While we did not welcome any new members, we reached out to new friends and allies through both of these events.

In May, we organized a team to walk 10k on the Confederation Trail in central PEI as part of BTS's Blue Nose Marathon fundraising drive. We had 15 walkers including some who were learning about BTS for the first time. It was fun and ended with a communal lunch at a restaurant at the end of our trail section. We improved on our previous fundraising efforts - with over \$,2000!

In September, we hosted Marisol and Marta in Charlottetown as part of their "Canada must respect Indigenous Self-determination in Guatemala" Maritimes Speaking Tour. We organized a community event at the local community centre at which Marisol and Marta presented. It wasn't large - approximately 12 to 15 people attended. However, those who were there became pretty engaged. They included community allies, interested individuals, university professors, and students. We have followed up with them all regarding letters and petitions to MPs.

Thanks to Javier who did a wonderful job of translating and representing BTS with such skill and gentleness.

We look forward to 2026!

BTS NORTH SHORE COMMITTEE

The North Shore Committee formed many years ago, with founding BTS members Susan Sellers, Mary Corbett, and Kathryn Anderson as core members. Many of our members are primarily seniors, with three members having moved to Antigonish in the past two years, so we aren't able to be very active. Though we are primarily older folks with less energy, our solidarity with Guatemala continues!

We sell BTS crafts from the wonderful UPAVIM Women's Cooperative in Guatemala City at the Tatamagouche Farmers Market at Christmas and Easter, along with BTS Coffee, of course! Our community education on the importance of BTS coffee has paid off, as Foodland in Tatamagouche is one of the best sellers. Three of our members also serve on other BTS Committees: Lydia Jenkinson, Ann Manicom and Kathryn Anderson. Anne MacDonald Martin continues to coordinate a North Shore annual contribution to the New Hope Foundation (FNE) Bursary Fund. We're delighted that a financial contribution from BTS members in our area enabled the drilling of a well and installation of a solar pump at the FNE School, which has enabled the expansion of the school gardening program.

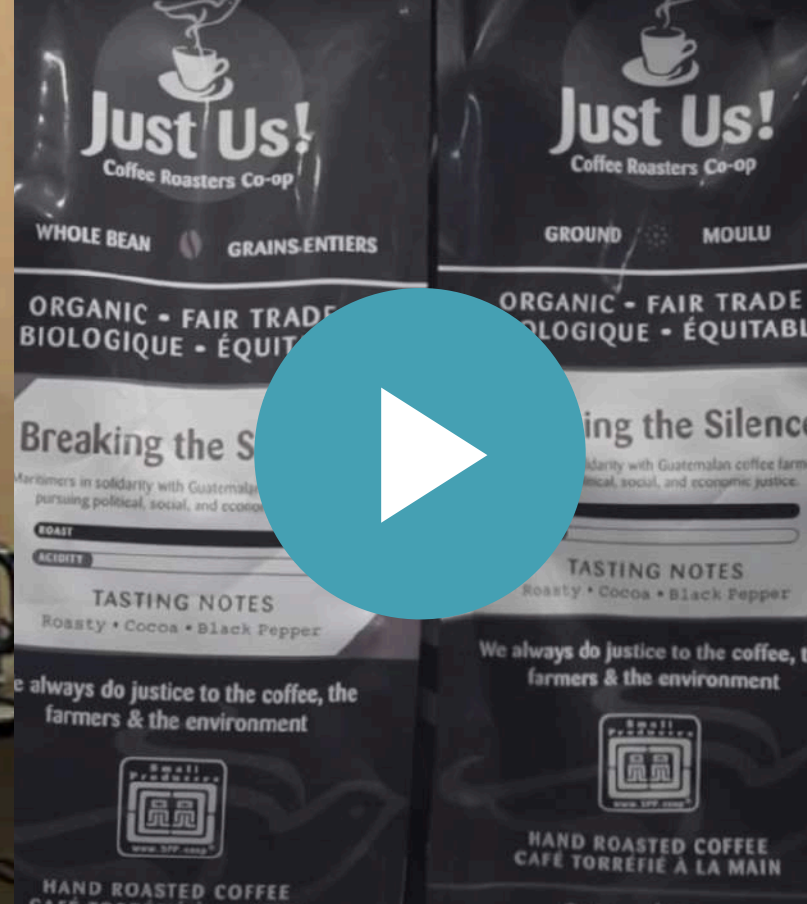
We were also delighted to welcome Javier Lopez to Tatamagouche during his Maritimes orientation in April. This was a special visit for us, as we had welcomed his aunt and father several years ago as part of the Tatamagouche School / Community Exchange. An important part of Javier's orientation was a presentation on Indigenous rights and treaties in our Wabanaki region.

Members from the BTS North Shore Committee gather at Tatamagouche Centre.





(left to right): BTS Halifax Committee member and dedicated volunteer, Susanne Litke with SMU student, Hermela Tekie at the Halifax Forum Farmers' Market.



BTS HALIFAX COMMITTEE & COFFEE REPORT

The BTS Halifax Committee continued to sell coffee weekly at the Halifax Forum Farmers' Market and monthly for half the year at the Meander River Farm Market.

Despite the challenges faced, including jumps in the price of both coffee and chocolate, along with competition from another coffee booth that started selling at the Forum Market last year, we're proud to have raised \$7,000 to support BTS!

Many thanks to our regular volunteers Susanne, Yvette, Linda, Beth, Carole, and Lisa Roberts who cover the Forum Market table every Saturday morning. Thank you to the team at [Just Us! Coffee](#) who continue to provide free coffee cups and lids. And lastly to our [SMU Fair Trade students](#), Canada Summer Jobs hire Cristi, and Janelle who is a huge support for the Meander River Market!

[BEYOND THE BEAN](#)

Watch this 10-minute documentary produced by Hubert Den Draak to learn the story of BTS Coffee

[FAIR TRADE PLUS](#)

Listen to SMU professor, Dr. Gavin Fridell discuss the Fair Trade Plus model of coffee production that emerged from BTS' partnership with CCDA and JustUs! Coffee





(left to right) Kathryn Anderson crosses the finish line during the Blue Nose Marathon; BTS Antigonish volunteers, Bob Zecker, Meredith Davis, Diane Walsh, and Eve Rosenberg sold tickets, crafts, and coffee at the Garnet Rogers Benefit Concert.

FUN!RAISING TO SUPPORT BTS

This year, our network once again demonstrated what grassroots solidarity looks like in action. One of our biggest successes was the 2025 Blue Nose Marathon, where members across Nova Scotia, PEI, and New Brunswick raised an unprecedented \$19,090.27 – our highest Blue Nose total ever! A huge thank you to everyone who ran, walked, fundraised, or donated. A special shout-out goes to the **Go Nish Silencebreakers**, our top fundraising team, followed closely by **Kathryn Anderson** and the **BTS PEI Walkers**.

Later in the year, the Antigonish community treated us to a beautiful evening of music at Garnet Rogers’ benefit concert at St. James United Church, raising more than \$3,600, while bringing together long-time supporters and new friends. Thank you to **Garnet Rogers**, the **BTS Antigonish Local Committee**, and all who attended. Former BTS Intern **Ally Lord** also organized a candlelit yoga fundraiser at Veith House in Halifax, drawing more than 20 participants and raising over \$300 in a warm space for reflection and solidarity. We’re so grateful to Ally and everyone who came out to stretch, breathe, and support BTS.

Finally, we deeply appreciate all the dedicated members who sell BTS coffee and Guatemalan crafts at markets, fairs, and community events year-round. We couldn’t do what we do without your support!

TO OUR LOCAL COMMITTEES & VOLUNTEERS

The BTS Network is full of passionate members and volunteers from across the Maritimes and beyond who give their time and energy to support our ongoing work. Thank you to the **BTS Local Committees in Antigonish, Fredericton, Halifax, North Shore, and PEI!**

TO OUR DONORS

Thank you to everyone who attended our fundraising events and donated to support BTS in 2025, including the following institutional donors: Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC); Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Global Justice Fund; CUPE Nova Scotia; Congregation of Notre Dame; Inter Pares; Just Us! Coffee Roasters; Mount Allison Faculty Association; Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), Social Justice Fund; Sisters of Saint Martha (Antigonish); St. Mary’s University (SMU), Global Development and Political Science departments; UNIFOR; United Church of Canada; United Church of Canada Foundation’s MacNeill Family Fund; and the United Steelworkers Union, Humanity Fund.

TO TATAMAGOUCHE CENTRE

As always, a very special thank you to Tatamagouche Centre for their support.





(left to right) BTS member, Tracy Marshall with Sutik.; Joe Googoo, Sutik, and Tracy at IMAP with coordinator, Inés Cuj.

IN LOVING MEMORY: SUTIK (JUDY) GOOGOO

My dearest friend.
My greatest mentor.
My favourite elder in the whole entire
wsitqamu (earth).

There is no way to describe how much I
will miss Sutik.

I never left her house in the warm
weather without new plants or a fresh
harvest from the garden. She made sure
my belly, heart, spirit, and trunk were all
full, while dragging my visits on for as long
as possible.

She taught me so much in this little time
we had together, earth side.
How to garden and embrace the chaos.
How to harvest and prepare medicines.
To remember to embrace child-like play
and enjoy life.
How to be a better person, a better
woman.

To find humour everywhere, especially
when tomatoes look too excited to see me.
To see the small things most people walk
right over.
To quite literally stop and smell the flowers.
That sometimes people needed to be
reminded that kindness does not mean
weakness.

Sutik was a 4'9" force that touched so many
hearts, so many spirits.
This loss was sudden, and so very painful.
I'm so lucky to feel so much pain because I
have so much love for her.
Grateful to have spent a fraction of time in
this life by her side.

I will build so many gardens and plant so
many seeds in your honour.
Nmultis, I will see you again in the spirit
world, my beautiful friend.


— Written by Tracy Marshall

FOLLOW US

 [@btsmaritimesguatemala](https://www.instagram.com/btsmaritimesguatemala)

 [@BTSGuateMaritimes](https://www.facebook.com/BTSGuateMaritimes)

 breakingthesilenceblog.com

 [Subscribe to our newsletter](#)

 tinyurl.com/donate2bts