

# INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER

CENTRO DE RECURSOS JURÍDICOS PARA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

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## **Agua Caliente v. Guatemala - Maya Q'eqchi' Rights to Land**

**Washington D.C., March 11-15, 2013**

### **About the Maya Q'eqchi' delegation**

The delegation of Maya Q'eqchi' community leaders and advocates have brought their fight to Washington, D.C., to inform the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, U.S. government officials, human rights organizations, and others about their daily struggle to protect their human rights against mining interests. They hope to build alliances with key actors that can apply pressure to the Guatemalan government to respect their rights and promote policies that protect the environment and prevent harm to indigenous peoples. The delegation also wants to inform and help others working in Guatemala understand the fundamental legal principles of the 2011 Constitutional Court decision and how they can use it in their work. In order to effect change in Guatemala and adequately support indigenous peoples' efforts to protect their rights to land, right of self-determination, and self-government rights, we must pursue collective action.

### **Rodrigo Tot, President of Agua Caliente**

Rodrigo is a Maya Q'eqchi' community leader, President of the Agua Caliente indigenous community in El Estor, Guatemala, and a human rights activist with over 20 years of experience. Rodrigo is leading a legal battle against mining interests to ensure that the Maya Q'eqchi' people of Agua Caliente and surrounding communities have full rights to their lands and natural resources, and that their rights of self-determination and self-government are not undermined. He has also worked on a bilingual (Q'eqchi'-Spanish) program with Écoles sans Frontières in El Estor to ensure that future generations continue using their traditional language.

### **Carlos Pop, Local Counsel**

Carlos is a Q'eqchi' attorney and local counsel for the Agua Caliente case. He has extensive experience on both individual and collective indigenous rights cases in Guatemala and within the Inter-American Human Rights System. Carlos has held various consulting positions with universities in Guatemala, the United Nations, and the Dioceses of Verapaz, among others. His life is under continued threat because of this legal work to protect the Agua Caliente community, its leaders, and indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

**Romel Reyes, Executive Director of Defensoría Q’eqchi’**

Romel is a teacher and facilitator by training and has held various positions with Defensoría Q’eqchi’ since 2005. He is a strong advocate of bilingual education and human rights protection for the Maya Q’eqchi’ people. Romel has traveled throughout Central and South America participating in indigenous collective rights trainings and workshops. As the Executive Director of Defensoría he hopes to strengthen its international presence as an indigenous led human rights organization.

**Manuel Xo Cu, Coordinator of the Legal Department of Defensoría Q’eqchi’**

Manuel brings over 24 years of experience working with indigenous youth in the Izabal province on human rights and development issues. As Coordinator of the Legal Department of Defensoría Q’eqchi’, he provides technical support to Q’eqchi’ communities and accompanies the Agua Caliente case in proceedings related to the implementation of the 2011 Constitutional Court ruling and the precautionary measures. Manuel’s commitment to working with indigenous youth and protecting the Maya Q’eqchi’ people’s rights to land, territory and natural resources led him to join Defensoría Q’eqchi’ in 2006.

**Asociación Estoreña Para el Desarrollo Integral (AEPDI) - Defensoría Q’eqchi’**

AEPDI is an indigenous led human rights organization whose main objective is to ensure that the Maya Q’eqchi’ people have access to justice, sustainable development opportunities, and a bilingual and inter-cultural education that promotes their right to security and human dignity. The Defensoría Q’eqchi’ is the Justice program at AEPDI, comprised of a bilingual (Q’eqchi’-Spanish) technical team that works to address human rights violations and environmental issues and monitors judicial proceedings. Defensoría also provides human rights trainings to indigenous leaders and community members. For more information, please visit AEPDI-Defensoría Q’eqchi’ online at <http://aepdi.org.gt/> or <https://www.facebook.com/aepdi.defensoriaeqchi>.

**Indian Law Resource Center**

The Indian Law Resource Center is a non-profit law and advocacy organization established and directed by indigenous lawyers and experts of the Americas. The Center is based in Helena, Montana, and also has an office in Washington, D.C. We provide legal assistance without charge to indigenous peoples throughout North, Central and South America that are working to protect their lands, resources, human rights, environment and cultural heritage. The Center seeks to overcome the grave problems that threaten indigenous peoples by advancing the rule of law, by establishing national and international legal standards that preserve their human rights, and by challenging the governments of the world to accord justice and equality before the law to all indigenous peoples of the Americas. For more information, please visit us online at [www.indianlaw.org](http://www.indianlaw.org) or [www.facebook.com/indianlawresourcecenter](http://www.facebook.com/indianlawresourcecenter).