



An Indigenous Rebel with a Cause

Lucia Xchiu, Festivales Solidarios
Guatemala

☀ Call to Action

Join with others in your community to fight for a cleaner, safer, sustainable environment. Inspire others to join you through the use of art & music. Support Festivales Solidarios: @festivalesgt on Twitter

☀ Values

- Solidarity
- Justice
- Equality
- Leadership
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Our choices define us.

Creativity, education, and passion are essential for success in all endeavors in life.

Let what you love the most inspire you to fight for change.

Lucia Xchiu's first act of activism came early: when she was four years old she became the first girl to ever take karate lessons in her Indigenous community.

When she was older, she founded Festivales Solidarios — a music and art gathering that seeks to protect land defenders and free political prisoners in Guatemala. A lawyer, journalist, activist, and artist, Lucia doesn't fit into the boxes typically drawn around Indigenous women. Her mission is to support her community through nonviolent activism and awareness building around issues like human rights and climate change.

☀ Language Arts

Write a research essay about the plight of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala: What are their living conditions like? How is their culture, economy, standard of living, and access to basic services being affected by politics? What is being done to help them?

Working in groups of 2-4 people, create a presentation about how the effects of climate change have increased the importance of Lucia's work and that of others who are protecting land defenders among the Indigenous peoples of Guatemala.

Working in groups of 3-5, create an information campaign about Human Rights violations against Indigenous populations in Guatemala. Your campaign must include a 5-minute video, 6-8 Instagram posts, one Facebook post (at least 500 words long), and a series of 10-12 Twitter messages.

STEM Activities

Using the dataset links below and a spreadsheet (or a graphing calculator, or graphing by hand), construct a line graph of Guatemalan men and women (horizontal axis) and the percentage of people below the poverty level (vertical axis). Then on the same graph, plot the percentages of Indigenous people who are below the poverty level. Label the graphs “Total number of people” and “Indigenous people.” What can you say about these variables? Resources: [Dataset from the World Bank](#)¹, [data from MacroTrends](#)², [Borgen Project](#)³.

Guatemala’s Maya Biosphere Reserve was established in 1990 to protect the rainforest from accelerating levels of deforestation, illegal logging, and forest fires. Individuals known as land and environmental protectors are also on the front lines of protecting the earth’s land, but oftentimes they are killed. Create a graph or chart highlighting the total number of land defenders who have been killed since 2002. What percentage of those killed were from Guatemala? What is the average rate of growth or decline in the total number of people killed since 2002? Is the average rate of those killed in Guatemala higher or lower than the total? After reading this [article](#)⁴, who or what do you think is perpetuating these killings (industries? governments? or others?).

- **Sources:** [Land and Environmental Defenders: Annual Report Archive from Global Witness](#)⁵
- Using this resource on [literacy rates of various groups in Guatemala](#)⁶, what is the average rate of growth or decline in literacy rates among women between 1960 and 2020? Write an equation to calculate the average. Calculate the instantaneous rate of change for the years 1960, 1980, 2000, and 2020 using the derivative. Has the average rate of change increased or decreased over the years?

Sustainability Innovations

Lucia has built [Festivale Solidarios - Medium](#)⁷ as a way to highlight issues occurring in Guatemala City and its surrounding areas. Many of the articles address the protection of land defenders and explain why it’s extremely important in Guatemala City.

Review this [circular economy project](#)⁸ in Guatemala City. How did the establishment of AbonOrganiCo assist the community in their transition towards sustainability?

How has Guatemala adjusted to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic? This [article](#)⁹ highlights how Indigenous people were affected by the pandemic.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Defender of Environmental and Indigenous Rights Activists. Indigenous peoples are often bold defenders of the Earth, and are thus often subject to threat or violence. Supporting them in their quest to protect and heal the land can be a valuable way to help. Groups like the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) undertake efforts to protect environmental activists. [Learn about CIEL’s work here](#)¹⁰.

Musician. Music, like other forms of art, is a powerful way to draw attention to environmental causes, as [this article](#)¹¹ demonstrates. It’s not easy to become a professional musician, but it is possible: [this article explains how](#)¹².

Green Architect. Architects, by their very work of designing buildings, can play a huge role in creating a more sustainable future. For

example, designing energy efficient, passive solar, healthy buildings means that less energy will be used in heating and cooling. Interested in designing buildings? [Learn how to be an architect here](#)¹³.

Martial Arts Instructor. There are few sports more sustainable than martial arts, where one needs little to no equipment, not even shoes! While martial arts are not as popular as they once were, there are more than 20,000 martial arts schools in the United States. Want to be an instructor? First [find a school](#)¹⁴ and become a master; then look for an instructor job, or [start your own dojo](#)¹⁵.

1 https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/SM2020/Global_POVEQ_GTM.pdf

2 <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/GTM/guatemala/poverty-rate>

3 <https://borgenproject.org/indigenous-poverty/#:~:text=Indigenous%20groups%20make%20up%20more,35%25%20suffering%20from%20food%20insecurity.>

4 <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/last-year-was-deadliest-for-environmental-activists-defenders>

5 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/land-and-environmental-defenders-annual-report-archive/>

6 [https://knoema.com/atlas/Guatemala/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate#:~:text=Guatemala%20%2D%20Adult%20\(15%2B\)%20literacy%20rate&text=Adult%20literacy%20rate%20of%20Guatemala,average%20annual%20rate%20of%206.21%25.](https://knoema.com/atlas/Guatemala/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate#:~:text=Guatemala%20%2D%20Adult%20(15%2B)%20literacy%20rate&text=Adult%20literacy%20rate%20of%20Guatemala,average%20annual%20rate%20of%206.21%25.)

7 <https://festalessolidarios.medium.com/>

8 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335566914_Reflections_on_Service_Learning_for_a_Circular_Economy_Project_in_a_Guatemalan_Neighborhood_Central_America

9 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070862>

10 <https://www.ciel.org/issue/defending-the-defenders/>

11 <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2206461-the-musicians-helping-make-climate-change-a-cultural-movement/>

12 <https://www.academiccourses.com/article/how-to-become-a-professional-musician/>

13 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/architect>

14 <https://dojos.info/>

15 <https://globalmartialarts.university/2021/05/19/what-are-the-requirements-to-becoming-a-martial-arts-instructor/>

