# MAYA TRADITIONS FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2014





www.mayatraditions.org

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#### LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

#### Dear Maya Traditions' supporter,

This year marks one of continued and exciting transformation for Maya Traditions Foundation. Collectively our artisans and their families, our healers and their communities, our staff and volunteers we have shared the experience of significant change, and a pronounced shift towards sustainability.

In 2014, Maya Traditions was recognized by the World Fair Trade Organization as an official Fair Trade Organization, working to connect Maya artisans with international markets, building relationships that promote respect and equality.

For over twenty years, Maya Traditions has been partnering with indigenous female artisans, promoting economic independence and supporting individual women as change makers in their communities, while creating high-quality Fair Trade products for sale throughout the world. We have witnessed the impact of our partnerships with women in Guatemala, changing entire families, communities, and generations.

We have also benefited from an increased global awareness of ethical fashion and Fair Trade. As we continue to work toward empowering and improving the quality of life for our artisans, we recognize the value of our model and its proven ability to ensure sustainability.

For these reasons, we have taken exciting new steps to become a true social enterprise. In 2014, we engaged the support of talented volunteers who worked with us to rebrand the organization, create a business plan, and identify targeted niche markets. This strategy was designed to increase sales, ensuring additional income for our artisans, as well as generating revenue at an organizational level to allow for expansion of our model to new communities.

Maya Traditions identified three strategic priorities that will inform our efforts moving forward:

- A deeper understanding of the needs of our artisans
- Commitment to evolving social programming platforms
- A strategic approach to identifying and building systems for a sustainable future

This roadmap will guide us in realizing our mission—supporting the needs of our artisans—who are the heart of our work.

Based on our unwavering commitment to the Fair Trade Principles, our impact will continue to be realized among the artisans, their families and communities.

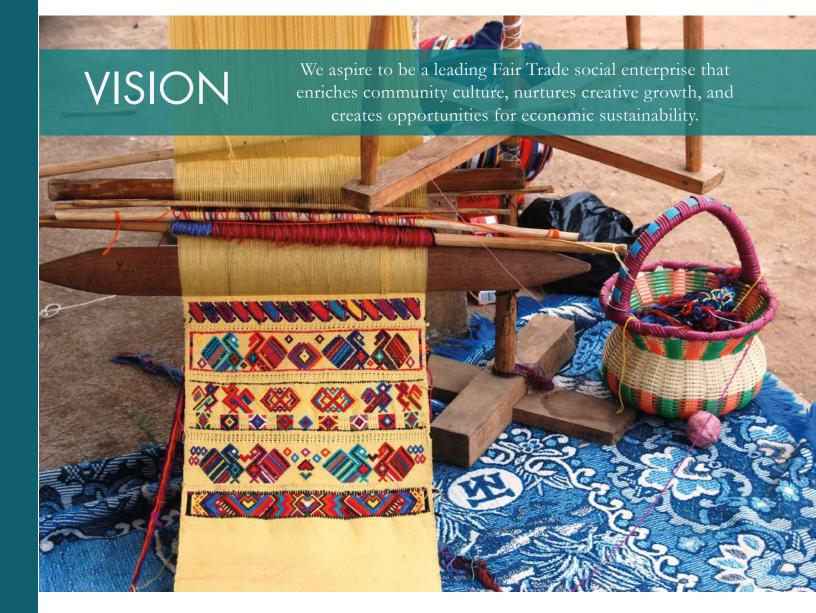
As we begin 2015, we remain grateful to each of our supporters for having made a profound difference in the lives of the women we are privileged to work with. We look forward to building on our successes, and providing relevant and thoughtful support to indigenous female artisans in 2015.

Erin Kokdil Director Maya Traditions Foundation

## MISSION

Maya Traditions Foundation works to empower and improve the quality of life for Maya women artisans and their families and to contribute to the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge, art, and culture in Guatemala.

To do so, we offer women artisans and their families education-driven social programs and market access to international Fair Trade and artisanal networks with a focus on traditional Maya culture and traditions.



# ABOUT US

Maya Traditions Foundation—known locally as Fundación Tradiciones Mayas—was founded in 1996 as a U.S. fair trade business following nearly a decade of collaboration between founder Jane Mintz and groups of skilled indigenous backstrap weavers near Lake Atitlan, Guatemala. Over the years, the organization has grown to include social programs in Artisan Development, Youth Education, and Community Health, and in 2007, Fundación Tradiciones Mayas became a registered NGO in Guatemala.

We are based in Panajachel, Guatemala, and are headed by several indigenous Maya women and international workers. We currently work with seven indigenous rural communities throughout the Western Highlands of Guatemala and support over 600 indigenous Mayas with education-driven social programs that focus on providing educational opportunities, promoting self-sufficiency, and preserving Maya culture.

## WHY GUATEMALA

The indigenous Maya population in Guatemala today faces many obstacles that contribute to startling statistics that quantitatively indicate the disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in regard to poverty levels and access to education and health services. Over 75% of the indigenous population lives in poverty, double the proportion of non-indigenous poor. Of this population, indigenous Maya women are often further marginalized. It is estimated that the average indigenous woman will go to school for 1.8 years.





We start with skilled indigenous women artisans



Weave in tools, training, and grassroots social programs



strengthen communities

## OUR MODEL FOR CHANGE

The Maya Traditions' model is focused on supporting artisan cooperatives, strengthening their entrepreneurial ecosystems, and building strong communities that are successful and sustainable. We achieve this through a model that unites international market access with socially responsible programming that increases local capacity and preserves traditional culture.

As many of our artisan partners did not have the opportunity to receive formal education, our grassroots social programs are an essential part of our work, promoting both personal and professional development and growth of our artisan and her family. Maya Traditions maximizes our impact through partnering with women. When we invest in one woman, we invest in a generation.

Many of the artisans we partner with are mothers and wives, and they manage their households as well as their weavings. They are capable and strong, and welcome our support in realizing increased economic empowerment. Through our multi-faceted approach, we have seen our artisans develop into pro-active, self-sufficient artisans who are able to conduct business in a larger marketplace.

As a part of our work, their families and communities directly benefit from our social programming, including our Artisan Development Program, Community Health Program, and Youth Education Program. It is estimated that Maya Traditions directly and indirectly impacts more than 1,000 people and eight indigenous communities in the western highlands of Guatemala.



As a recent member of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), we are proud to share how we integrate the 10 Principles of Fair Trade into our work across our cooperatives, communities, partners, staff, and volunteers.

# WHAT IS FAIR TRADE?

"Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers especially in the South. Fair Trade organizations have a clear commitment to Fair Trade as the principal core of their mission. They, backed by consumers, are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade." (www.wfto.com)

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I have so much respect for the artisans we work with. Many of our artisans did not have the opportunity to attend school nor study art, though through our ancestral practice of backstrap weaving, they have learned these incredible designs that many people study in school. Maya Traditions promotes the art of backstrap weaving

and supports the artisans with an economic change—a fair wage. Their families, especially their children, benefit directly as they now have the right to study and are able to live an improved quality of life."

-Floridalma Perez Sicay, Production Manager

#### Maya Traditions is Committed to Creating Opportunities for Indigenous Female Artisans and their Communities

Poverty reduction through market access is a key focus of Maya Traditions. We partner with indigenous female artisans that work in cooperatives and small, family-run sewing businesses that support economic mobility.



In 2014, Maya Traditions continued and formalized partnerships with eight cooperatives of indigenous female artisans throughout the Western highlands of Guatemala. Through these partnerships, we offered scholarships, trainings, and economic opportunity to more than 100 indigenous families.



Maya Traditions partnered with local organization EntreMundos in 2014, offering an eight-month training course on Community Tourism. Through this partnership, we hope to increase cross-cultural understanding of traditional Maya art and culture, while also offering further opportunities to diversify revenue for our artisans, healers, and their families.



Through a rebranding effort in 2014, we developed 19 new partnerships with high-end boutiques, retailers, and designers that will increase artisans' sales and allow them to share their skills and creativity with additional partners.



#### Maya Traditions Promotes Transparency and Accountability in All Aspects of Our Work

Maya Traditions continually works to increase transparency in our management and commercial partnerships. We find appropriate ways to involve employees and producers in our decision-making processes. We are also in constant communication with our partners in order to create strong and open relationships.

In 2014, Maya Traditions signed formalized contracts with artisan partners and tailors, guaranteeing that every party involved in the production process is aware of their rights, and that all steps are transparent.







2014 saw the design of a new website. Through the support of a team of committed volunteers, the website was built to fully detail our work, sharing the stories of our artisans and healers—our story and further communicating our impact.



Through support of volunteers in 2014, we developed a social media strategy with the goal of keeping our followers and partners informed and updated on the day-to-day work of Maya Traditions.

We are proud to share our work on all of the following social media platforms:



# MAYA TRADITIONS ON THE GO

A glimpse into our instagram account



#### Maya Traditions Follows Fair Trading Practices

Maya Traditions works to embody our values of social justice and the economic and environmental well-being of our artisans and their families through all of our trading partnerships. We partner with socially conscious businesses and designers who respect the constraints that come with working with small-scale production and whose mission is to create quality products that serve as a platform to overcome the financial disadvantages artisans face in Guatemala.

In our efforts to ensure fair trading practices, Maya Traditions maintains long-term relationships based on solidarity, trust, mutual respect, and the shared vision of the growth of Fair Trade. We maintain effective communication with all trading partners and work to grow these partnerships in a manner that benefits both the consumer and producer equally.

Through our sales and design partnerships, we promote and protect the cultural identity and traditional skills of our artisans. Through partnering with Maya Traditions, eight cooperatives of indigenous female artisans are guaranteed fair wages to practice their traditional art and share it with individuals throughout the world.



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We thank our clients greatly for the support they offer through purchasing our products. Through these sales, our artisans not only receive a fair wage, but all revenue is reinvested into the Foundation to support our social programs."

-Marisol Morales Calel, Programs Coordinator



# WHAT IS BACKSTRAP WEAVING?

The art of backstrap weaving is practiced by many artisans in the highlands of Guatemala and has been indigenous to this region for generations. According to Maya myth, backstrap weaving originated with Ixchel, the Maya Goddess who takes numerous forms including Moon, Water, Weaving, and Childbirth. She is the deity of fertility and procreation, and represents female empowerment. Ixchel taught the first woman to weave, and since then the practice has been passed on from mother to daughter, generation after generation. At birth, baby girls are presented with the necessary tools for weaving. At the age of eight or nine, Maya girls are taught to weave for the first time, by their mothers, older sisters, and older women.

"Backstrap weaving means the world to me. It means life, work, income and a way for me to **sustain my home**."

> -Matea Morales Pablo, Maya Traditions' artisan partner

#### Maya Traditions Provides Payment of a Fair Price

A fair price is defined as one that has been mutually agreed upon by all through dialogue and participation; it provides fair pay to the producers and can also be sustained by the market. Maya Traditions trains our artisans to calculate a fair price for their work and works with them to evaluate how it meets the demands of international markets.

In addition to paying artisans a fair price, we work to provide our artisans, their families, and their communities with additional support through our social programs. Artisans have access to scholar-ships for their children, educational opportunities for themselves, and herbal medicine.

Through providing our artisans with the necessary skills and tools to determine fair prices, we have seen a positive shift among the cooperatives we work with. Artisans have established a greater appreciation for the value of their work and time, and have increasingly begun to seek out new and beneficial business relationships.





They taught me how to create a budget and determine a fair price.





For me**, it is a development."** -Yolanda Calgua, Maya Traditions' artisan partner

#### Maya Traditions Ensures No Child or Forced Labor

Maya Traditions values youth education and works to guarantee a safe and fair childhood for the children of our artisans. We recognize that due to high poverty levels and cost of education in Guatemala, many indigenous families must send their children to work in order to contribute to the family's income.

In order to avoid or limit this work, we offset the cost of education for our artisan partners through our Youth Education Program. This program offers economic support for the school-aged children of the artisans we partner with, and invests in the personal and professional development of students at the secondary level through workshops and community service initiatives.

# YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

In 2014, Maya Traditions supported a total of 106 school-aged children with financial scholarships and personal and professional workshops.

In Guatemala it is reported that only 32% of senior-high age youth are enrolled in school. Maya Traditions' artisan partners report that **98% of their senior-high aged children** are enrolled in high school.



In 2014, we partnered with many organizations to offer workshops for the students we support. Through partnerships with WINGS, Vivamos Mejor, COINDI, and Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, we hosted workshops on sexual health and reproductive rights, the environment, civic participation, and violence and human rights. We also facilitated resume building and cover letter writing workshops to aid with job obtainment after graduation. All of the aforementioned resources directly contribute to the personal and professional growth of our students, offering them a wide array of informal learning opportunities. Students in six communities conducted a total of 150 hours of community service through hosting workshops with their mothers. Students in San Juan La Laguna held workshops about violence, human rights, and reproductive rights.

One student in San Juan shares, 'When we began the workshop series, the participants were a little uncomfortable with the subject. But little by little, they began to trust us and express the different types of violence each one has suffered. Now they know more about their rights and how to defend themselves.'



# UNLOCKING SILENT HISTORIES:

### MAYA TRADITIONS CHAPTER

2014 marked our second year of partnership with Unlocking Silent Histories. Eleven indigenous Maya youth were inaugurated into the second group of students participating in the Unlocking Silent Histories: Maya Traditions Chapter. In addition to the newly incorporated students, four youth who began working with the project in 2012 were able to continue participation, improve their techniques, and take on leadership roles within the program and in their local communities. These four youth began working as program leaders in the beginning of 2014 and have greatly exceeded our expectations. These inspirational front-runners have guided the 11 additional novice filmmakers in completing their documentaries.

#### Maya Traditions is committed to Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association

Since the founding of Maya Traditions, we have been committed to non-discrimination and the promotion of gender equality, a fundamental aspect of human rights. We encourage our cooperatives to manage their own finances and administration, and support them in their freedom of association and organization.

In 2014, two artisans from the cooperative Chuwila in Quiejel participated in a workshop series with Entremundos on Gender Equality in Quetzaltenango. With the material distributed during the workshop, Maya Traditions developed an official policy on Gender Equality, ensuring that all beneficiaries, employees, and volunteers are aware of the importance and our priority of gender equality in our work.



In 2014, Maya Traditions supported the Los Pinos Cooperative with workshops on accounting, specifically teaching artisans how to pay their taxes online. Through this workshop series, the Los Pinos Cooperative will be able to independently manage their finances and comply with Guatemalan law regarding taxes. Maya Traditions began partnering with a network of Maya healers in 2009. Through our support, the network has achieved legal association status in Guatemala in 2013, supporting the healers in their efforts to mobilize and create public spaces to voice and promote indigenous Maya medicine. In 2014, we continued our partnership by supporting them in registering with the local tax office and contracting an accountant.

#### Supporting Cooperative Governance with the Flor Juanera Cooperative As shared by Artisan Development Coordinator Isabel Chalcú



We visited San Juan La Laguna for the election of the new leaders for the cooperative Flor Juanera. Flor Juanera elects a new board every two years, so the new women will lead the group from 2014-2016. The activity began with the group nominating five women, followed be each member of the cooperative casting their own vote. In the end, Micaela Dorotea was elected the new Board President, Juana Mendoza the Representative to the Foundation, Cecilia Mendoza the Treasurer, Alejandra Hernandez the Secretary, and Estela Ujpan the Chairperson.

Supporting the governance and development of the cooperatives that we work with is important to Maya Traditions for a number of reasons. First, it allows members of the cooperatives to be leaders and experience different types of leadership. Second, it provides artisans with a strong voice to share their hopes and needs with customers like Maya Traditions. Finally, a strong cooperative with supportive members leads to the production of high quality textiles.

#### Maya Traditions Ensures Good Working Conditions

We at Maya Traditions recognize that high quality products cannot be created, and students cannot be successful, in a space that is not healthy and safe; therefore, we have an ongoing commitment to support our artisans and their families in efforts to improve the conditions of their homes.

In 2014, Maya Traditions Foundation worked with cooperatives to improve health and safety practices by providing access to water filters. Through a collaboration with Ecofiltro and Buy the Change Foundation, the cooperatives of Chuacruz and Chirijox received ecofiltros, a water filter produced in Guatemala, at a discounted price, ensuring their access to clean, potable drinking water.







# GUEST VOICE

Why Tribe Alive supports Maya Traditions and Socially Conscious Fashion



At Tribe Alive we celebrate and support a fair trade model because we believe strongly in the future of social responsibility in the fashion industry. The importance of social responsibility lies in the fact that smart business decisions are not just a matter of counting short-term dollars and cents. Instead we wish to be wise decision-makers and look at the future impact of today's choices - on people, on communities and on the opinions of our customers. We believe that the future of fashion is moving toward social consciousness, and that one day it will no longer be acceptable to purchase from companies that do not practice ethical consumerism. We are just as much interested in growing a successful brand as we are in impacting the lives of marginalized women all over the world. We do not need to choose between financial success and making a difference. There is room for both, and it's our hope to be a part of building a movement that exposes that fact and educates people on the importance of buying fair trade goods, and how a single purchase can be a part of changing the developing world.

Being able to connect and collaborate with other organizations that share our same beliefs is the best part of what we do. We have been so fortunate to be given the opportunity to work with Maya Traditions and envision a long lasting partnership. We had the privilege of traveling to Guatemala this past summer to meet the Maya Traditions team, and finalize details on our launch collection. We walked away from that trip with an immense sense of respect and gratitude for the work that Maya Traditions does. Their mission to empower and

improve the quality of life for Maya women artisans and their families through education-driven social programs and market place access is inspiring. Through fair trade principles they are affecting real change in indigenous communities in Guatemala, and experiencing that first hand was life changing for the Tribe Alive team.

Alongside Maya Traditions, we have developed a one of a kind collection to launch November 1 of this year. Maya Traditions has been a part of our team since the very beginning, and has supported us in areas of fabric selection, new design collaboration, sourcing, cost control and production consultation. Not only are they an incredible social enterprise empowering communities all over Guatemala, but also they conduct themselves like a well-run business. They have never ceased to amaze us with their organization, timeliness, persistence and transparency. But above all else, we are most grateful for the relationships we have built with the Maya Traditions team. They feel very much a part of our Tribe, and we feel a part of theirs.

"The power of one, if fearless and focused, is formidable, but the power of many working together is better." Tribe Alive is certainly that much better because Maya Traditions is working right alongside of us to utilize fair trade fashion as a platform to empower communities. We can't wait to see what that future holds, and what we're able to accomplish together.

#### **Carly Burson** Co-Founder of Tribe Alive

# Maya Traditions Offers Capacity Building to our Artisans and their Families

Maya Traditions first and foremost sees our artisans, students, and healers as women, men, children, and community members. By providing opportunities for personal and professional development, we are supporting their long-term and well-rounded improvement. In 2014, we provided many opportunities for growth and development through our Artisan Development and Community Health programs.

# ARTISAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Our Artisan Development Program was launched in 2009 to further support the personal and professional growth of our artisans. Today, the Program offers trainings and personal support to promote the well-being of the artisan and her family.

#### IN 2014 WE:

- Visited our cooperatives monthly.
- Held trainings on interpersonal relations, focused on communication and working as a team.
- Conducted a needs assessment to understand the needs of our artisans in order to plan future trainings.

• Partnered for the second year with A Heart for Guatemala to provide artisans with the training Education & Empowerment 102 which provided twenty artisans from four communities eight-weeks of literacy training. At the close of the workshop series, artisans demonstrated improved reading and writing skills and more confidence in themselves.







Marta Chacom Chocoy, a graduate of the Education and Empowerment class, from Santa Clara La Laguna is pure inspiration. Only a couple of months before the class she gave birth to a beautiful baby. That did not stop her from traveling each week with her to baby, attending the classes to learn how to read and write. Through my conversations with Marta, I recognize the great importance of this program. Through her participation, Marta has been able to fulfill one of her lifelong desires—that of reading and writing.

Marta also told me that her strongest motivation is her baby, and her children. When they see her working towards her own education, reaching her goals, it inspires them to reach their own goals.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

Our Community Health Program centers on the preservation and promotion of traditional Maya medicine and knowledge, and the use of medicinal plants to treat common illnesses. We currently partner with the Atitlan Ajq'omanela' Association, a group of Maya healers, to further this focus.



In 2014 we collaborated with the Onaway Trust and Nourish International: University of Pittsburgh to advance the mission of our Community Health Program in the following ways:

• Completed much needed maintenance to our Organic Medicinal Plant Garden—also known as the 'mother garden'—located in Panajachel, Sololá. The repairs included: replacing the palapa roof of the educational center, improving the terracing and stairs in the garden to ensure safety, and repairing the plant dryers which are used to dry the medicinal herbs used by our Maya healers and sold locally in Panajachel.

• Held three clinics in collaboration with the Atitlan Ajq'omanela' Association in public health centers. In each community, one midwife, one bonesetter, and one healer were present to ensure that the best medical attention was provided to all of their patients. Prior to the medical clinics, healers worked together to produce tinctures, salves, and teas that were distributed free of charge to patients.





# MAYA TRADITIONS PROMOTES FAIR TRADE

Maya Traditions continuously raises awareness among our clients, customers, donors, and artisans of the aim of Fair Trade and of the need for greater justice in world trade through Fair Trade.



In 2014, we focused on sharing this awareness with our community in Panjachel and also among our staff. In order to connect with our local community, we organized our first annual World Fair Trade Day Celebration, inviting representatives from all of our cooperatives to join us in Panajachel.



Artisans demonstrated the different techniques used by each cooperative to a diverse public. Artisans also had the opportunity to share how their relationship with Maya Traditions has supported their personal growth, and the growth of their cooperative.

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Inspired by this event and our desire to further integrate the Fair Trade Principles into our work, the staff participated in a workshop with Maya Traditions' founder Marta Lynd-Altan on the 10 Principles of Fair Trade, detailing how our work follows each of the principles, and ways to improve our work for the future. Inspired by this workshop, Maya Traditions' Sales & Marketing Director, Alison, led the team in a strategic planning retreat, focused on developing our plan following the 10 principles of Fair Trade. We are currently developing the Maya Traditions' Strategic Plan and hope to share it with donors, partners, and clients in June 2015.









#### Maya Traditions Respects the Environment

We pride ourselves in the responsible use of raw materials and buying locally whenever possible. We give priority to creating products made with resources that originate from sustainably-managed sources, and have the least overall impact on the environment.

In a continued effort to minimize our overall impact on the environment, Maya Traditions launched a line of naturally dyed scarves and began offering naturally dyed textiles. These products are made using locally found plants and insects.



We also work to hold regular workshops on organic permaculture and composting. In 2014, Maya Traditions incorporated workshops into our Youth Education Program on deforestation and protecting the environment. From there, students replicated the new knowledge in their local communities with their respective cooperatives.









A student from Quiejel, who completed their community service project on protecting the environment, shares, 'The women in the cooperative were very enthusiastic with our workshop series, and shared that they were happy to have the opportunity to collaborate with us students, teaching them how we all can make small changes to better care for the environment and not producing as much trash.'

#### Financials

#### JANUARY 1, 2014 - DECEMBER 31, 2014

	ASSETS	
\$74,978	Cash	\$13,730
\$63,240	Accounts Receivable	\$3,753
\$16,076	Inventory	\$29,055
\$4,056	Fixed Assets	\$227
\$158,340.00	Total Assets:	\$46,765
	\$63,240 \$16,076 \$4,056	ASSETS   \$74,978 Cash   \$63,240 Accounts Receivable   \$16,076 Inventory   \$4,056 Fixed Assets   \$158,340.00 Total Assets:

#### **EXPENSES**

Surplus/Deficit	(\$2,650)
Total Expenses	160,990
Management & General	\$34,133
Youth Education Program	\$34,487
Access Program	\$33,233
Fair Trade Market	
Community Health Program	\$11,248
Community Tourism Program	\$1,221
Artisan Development Program	\$4,939
Cost of Goods Sold	\$41,729

#### LIABILITIES

Total Liabilities	\$868
Other Current Liabilities	\$868
Accounts Payable	0

#### Partners

#### 2014 BUSINESS PARTNERS/ OR RETAIL & DESIGN PARTNERS

Guatemala
Maya Traditions Foundation Store
Uxibal
<b>Denmark</b> Guatemala Fair Trade

Cross 2 Culture

India

**The Netherlands** Maya Moda

#### **UK** Fairplay Clothing

USA Archive NY Ara Collective The Little Market Local and Lejos Global Goods Partners Malena Mission Guatemala Mi Esperanza Novica Red Dirt Tribe Alive Vivodec

#### 2014 PROGRAM & FUNDING PARTNERS:



#### **Initiatives Needing Your Support**

•Support Maya Traditions' Growth by Donating: Maya Traditions is hard at work with a variety of different projects, but specifically working to create new partnerships and expand our social enterprise. By donating to Maya Traditions, you will be directly supporting our efforts in connecting with more international markets, increasing the amount of work for our artisans, and furthering the impact of our social programs.

•Connect us with Designers and Retailers: Our Fair Trade Market Access program is always looking for new partners to grow our enterprise. We partner with retailers and designers to produce high quality handmade accessories and home furnishings.

•Sponsor a Student: Maya Traditions has identified artisan families who have the most need and the students who would benefit most from individual sponsorship. Through supporting an individual student, he or she will receive the support they need to excel academically.

•Volunteer: The success of our work at Maya Traditions is made possible through the constant support of volunteers. Find out how you can become a part of our work by volunteering with us in Guatemala by contacting guatemala@mayatraditions.org.

•Spread the News: Follow us on social media and share our work with your friends and families! The more people know about our work, the better!

Mil gracias! Maya Traditions is fortunate to have support from generous and caring individuals, organizations, and businesses.

To donate, please visit http://www.mayatraditions.com/get-involved/donate/ or email guatemala@mayatraditions.org to learn about other opportunities to get involved.

