

## ECOPOLITICS PODCAST: Additional Pedagogical Resources (Episode 9)

### Episode 9: Indigenous Environmental Rights: The Maya of Belize

*Overview: In this episode Cristina Coc (Toledo Alcaldes Association/Maya Leaders Alliance) and Filiberto Penados (Julian Cho Society) draw on their experience in Belize to illustrate the crucial connections between Indigenous land rights and environmental conservation.*

### Key Takeaways

- “We have struggled for the last three decades and we are prepared to continue to struggle to see the protection of our lives, the protection of our ability to be Maya on the land that we were born, and in the land that our ancestors have left for us. ” (Cristina Coc, 22:42-23:30)
- Indigenous peoples are looking to expand the contemporary conversations about decolonization beyond rights-based policies, to include discussion of language-rights, land-based rights, and the affirmation of the value of Indigenous knowledge(s) and different types of governance and leadership.
- While the dominant view in Belize today is that land is a source of livelihoods built through commodification, the Mayan understanding of land goes beyond the idea of commodities. Instead, the land is part of the communities’ “physical, spiritual and social existence” (Christina Coc. 16:00-16:22).
- Alternative systems of governance and leadership continue to exist within Mayan communities, supporting calls for increased autonomy and self-determination at the local community level.
- Relationships between university students, scholars, and civil society in both the Global South and Global North have offered support for the Mayan people seeking to affirm their rights to the land.

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about the traditional systems of governance discussed in this episode? Do you think it is possible for these systems to coexist with the democratic systems that emerge out of the European tradition?
2. To what extent do you think global institutions, such as trans-national courts or the United Nations, offer opportunities and/or obstacles for self-determination of Indigenous communities?
3. How would you respond to Dr. Penados’ idea that “other ways of knowing” continue to be an important tool to address the challenges of climate change, rights of Indigenous peoples, and ecopolitics?

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### Learn more about our Guests

#### Christina Coc

- <https://humanrightspractice.arizona.edu/people/cristina-coc>

#### Select articles and videos

- The Centre for Indigenous Studies. “Maya Land Rights & Governance.” December 17 2014. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otNQeEXHlao>
- IGDS UWI St. Augustine Unit. “**Cristina Coc** – Indigenous Geographies and Caribbean Feminisms” June 14 2017. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFv25e1h-mc>

#### Dr. Filiberto Penados

- <https://celabelize.com/faculty/filiberto-penados/>

#### Select articles and videos

- Institute for Social and Culture Research (NICH). “De Conolizing Bio Politics by James Stinson and **Filiberto Penados**” November 26 2019. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOVj5MGTrwQ>
- Gahman, Levi, **Filiberto Penados**, and Adaeze Greenidge. “Indigenous Resurgence, Decolonial Praxis, Alternative Futures: The Maya Leaders Alliance of Southern Belize.” *Social Movement Studies*. 19, no. 2 (2020): 241–248.
- Kosempel, Paul, Linda G. Olson, and **Filiberto Penados**. “The Unseen Revolution: Leadership for Sustainability in the Tropical Biosphere.” in Gallagher, Deborah Rigling, Benjamin W. Redekop, and Rian Satterwhite. *Innovation in Environmental Leadership: Critical Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

### Explore resources mentioned in this episode:

- Julian Cho Society <http://www.jcsbelize.org/pages/home.php>
- Learn more about Carleton Univeristy’s Experiential Learning trip <https://newsroom.carleton.ca/story/experiential-learning-belize/>
- Maya Leaders Alliance v The Attorney General of Brazil <https://leap.unep.org/countries/bz/national-case-law/maya-leaders-alliance-and-toledo-alcaldes-association-v-attorney>
- Caribbean Court of Justice <https://ccj.org/>
- Center for Engaged Learning Abroad <https://celabelize.com/>
- International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Convention C169 [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>
- The Convention on Biological Diversity’s position on Traditional Knowledge, article 8(j). <https://www.cbd.int/traditional/>

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### Learn more about the Maya Land Rights case

- Anaya, S. J. (2008). *Reparations for Neglect of Indigenous Land Rights at the Intersection of Domestic and International Law—The Maya Cases in the Supreme Court of Belize*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199235605.003.0020
- Campbell, M. S., & Anaya, S. J. (2008). “The case of the Maya Villages of Belize: Reversing the Trend of Government Neglect to Secure Indigenous Land Rights.” *Human Rights Law Review*. 8(2), 377-399. doi:10.1093/hrlr/ngn005
- *Maya Leaders Alliance v The Attorney General of Belize*, 2015 15 (AJ)  
[https://elaw.org/system/files/bz.mayaleaders\\_0.pdf](https://elaw.org/system/files/bz.mayaleaders_0.pdf)
- Sioui, M. (2018). *Being Part of the Land: The Responsibility-Based Yucatec Maya Land Ethos*. <https://curve.carleton.ca/12ed094a-95bd-4cbb-8bee-04f4004826c4>

### Learn more about the relationship between human rights and climate change

- Davies, Kirsten, Anna Grear, S Ravi Rajan, Tom Kerns, Catherine Iorns Magallanes, and Sam Adelman. “The Declaration on Human Rights and Climate Change: a New Legal Tool for Global Policy Change.” *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*. 8, no. 2 (2017): 217–253.
- United Nations. “Climate Change and Human Rights.” December 2015.  
[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate\\_Change\\_and\\_Human\\_Rights%3Fsequence=2&BisAllowed=](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate_Change_and_Human_Rights%3Fsequence=2&BisAllowed=)

### Learn more about Indigenous Knowledge and the Climate Crisis

- Apraku, Amos, Wilson Akpan, and Philani Moyo. “Indigenous Knowledge, Global Ignorance? Insights from an Eastern Cape Climate Change Study.” *South African Review of Sociology*. 49, no. 2 (2018): 1–21.
- Whyte, Kyle Powys. “Indigenous Women, Climate Change Impacts, and Collective Action.” *Hypatia*. 29, no. 3 (2014): 599–616.
- McGregor, Deborah. “Mino-Mnaamodzawin.” *Environment and society* 9, no. 1 (2018): 7–24.