

## Biographies



Photo Credit: Julián Cruz Cortés

Isabel Hawkins, Ph.D., is a bilingual and bicultural native of Córdoba, Argentina. Dr. Hawkins received her Ph.D. in astrophysics at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1986. She worked for 20 years at the University of California at Berkeley as a Senior Fellow on several NASA satellite projects, and as the Director of Science Education at the Space Sciences Laboratory. Currently, she is Astronomer & Project Director at the San Francisco Exploratorium, and Faculty of the Indigenous Education Institute, Friday Harbor, WA. In 2005, she hosted a live webcast from Chichén Itzá, Yucatán, México, during the March Equinox, and was executive producer of the award-winning book and website *Traditions of the Sun*, on the astronomy at Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico and at several Maya archaeological sites in the Yucatán. In 2011, Dr. Hawkins produced the bilingual (English and Hawaiian) Webby-award winning website *Never*

*Lost: Polynesian Navigation* at the Exploratorium, which features the astronomical foundations of Native Hawaiian navigation. Her work focuses on broadening access to science and enhancing participation by all communities through the appreciation of the cultural roots of science. Dr. Hawkins received eight NASA awards between 2004 and 2008 for her work on NASA education and public outreach. In 2009, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific awarded Dr. Hawkins the prestigious Klumpke-Roberts Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the public understanding and appreciation of astronomy.

María O. Ávila Vera is a Maya elder born in Xul and raised in Peto, Yucatán, México. She is a steward of the traditions of her ancestors using her life experience and native language, Yucatec Maya. Mother of eleven children, she shares her time between Petaluma, CA, and Mérida, Yucatán. She actively researches the knowledge of the Maya by capturing the oral tradition of her people and sharing native knowledge with her family, her friends, and her community. Over the past six years, she has collaborated with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in México, UC Berkeley Space Sciences Laboratory's Center for Science Education, as well as the *Cosmic Serpent* and *Native Universe* projects funded by the National Science Foundation. She is a member of the elder advisory council of the Indigenous Education Institute, Friday Harbor, WA. Doña Maria Ávila Vera serves as a bridge between native and western ways of knowing in museums, the classroom, and community settings.



Photo Credit: Gabriela Moretti

Alonso Méndez is a Tzeltal Maya cultural astronomer who has spent more than fifteen years researching the astronomical knowledge of his ancestors and his people. He was born in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas,



Photo Credit: Lilla Nikolics

México, and spent much of his youth surrounded by the vibrant highland culture of the Tzeltal and Tzotzil Maya, as well as the emergent movement in anthropology and ethnography that occurred during the '60s and '70s. His Father, Alonso Méndez Ton, a Tzeltal Maya of Tenejapa, Chiapas, participated prominently in these studies as a cultural informant, translator, and liaison, while his Mother, Francisca T. Méndez, also played a key role in the Maya communities as a historian, facilitator, and participant in the social and ritual life of the Highland Maya. In this atmosphere of dynamic contact between cultures, Alonso witnessed critical changes that altered the physical and cultural landscape of Chiapas. Alonso attended Middlebury College, graduating in 1987 with a degree in Fine Arts. In 1997 he served as project artist with the *Palenque Mapping Project* and subsequently with the *Proyecto Grupo de las Cruces* and the *Proyecto Arqueológico Palenque*. At that time, he began to conduct astronomical investigations at Palenque and other important sites in the area, discovering many new astronomical alignments in the major temples

as well as developing new understandings of the hieroglyphic texts at these sites. His publications and presentations have been incorporated in educational programs with a focus on indigenous science and native knowledge. His most recent participation is as co-scriptwriter for the full dome planetarium production on Maya astronomy called *Tales of the Maya Skies* for the Chabot Space & Science Center of Oakland, CA.

José Guadalupe Huchim Herrera is a Yucatec Maya archaeologist and architect, and is currently Director of the Archaeological Site of Uxmal and the Sites of the Puuc Route in the Yucatán, México. He is also Director of the Archaeological Projects in Uxmal and Chichén Itzá, and a member of the *Consejo Nacional de Arqueología* in México City. José Huchim was born in Muna, Yucatán, México. As a child, he lived in the Uxmal and Chichén Itzá archeological sites with his family, while his father and grandfather participated in the archeological stewardship of these ancestral cities of the Maya. Mr. Huchim is fluent in Yucatec Maya, the language still spoken by his family and community of Muna. José Huchim has conducted research in archeo-astronomy in various Maya ancient sites, including Dzibilchaltún, Uxmal, and Chichén Itzá. He involves the local community of San Simón in the archaeological restoration of Uxmal and other sites. He holds an M.S. degree from the *Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán*, Mérida, Yucatán, México. His dissertation involved research on the hydraulic systems of Uxmal. He has worked in partnership with UC Berkeley, California, the Exploratorium museum in San Francisco, and NASA on joint educational programs including the development of webcasts in connection with the Kukulkán equinox alignment at the pyramid of El Castillo in Chichén Itzá.



Photo Credit: Julián Cruz Cortés



Photo Credit: Martín Poz Pérez

(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), which describes the work of K'iche' Day Keepers who steward the sacred Chol Q'ij Maya calendar.

Jean Molesky-Poz, Ph.D. is Faculty at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA. She received a B.A. in theology and sociology from Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, WI; a M.A. in educational psychology from San Jose State University in 1980; and a Ph.D. in the cultural and historical studies of spirituality from the Graduate Theological Union in 2000. She joined the Santa Clara University faculty in 2004. Her research delves into comparative spirituality with a focus on contemporary Maya expressions in highland Guatemala, women in the Catholic community, and emergent interpretations of the charism of Clare of Assisi. Her teaching and writing on Christian spirituality have led her to assist parishes and women's groups in developing retreats and study groups. She is author of the book *Contemporary Maya Spirituality: The Ancient Ways Are Not Lost*

