Open class # 35

On November 16, 2026, teacher Aracely Rogel gave a presentation on the topic of “Traditional Weddings.” Learn here about the various traditions surrounding Indigenous weddings—some of which are still practiced by families in Guatemala, particularly in San Antonio Aguas Calientes. (Hida López – contributor)

Objective

To expand each participant’s vocabulary and fluency through an exploration of wedding traditions within Indigenous communities.

Weddings in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, Sacatepéquez

Discover the various traditions surrounding Indigenous weddings—some of which are still practiced today by families in Guatemala, particularly in San Antonio Aguas Calientes. (Hida López)

The Formal Proposal

In Indigenous communities, the proposal is a formal, communal, and ceremonial act. The groom and his family—accompanied by a spiritual guide, an elder, or an intermediary, such as a shaman—visit the bride’s family to formally request her hand in marriage. The groom does not speak directly to his prospective in-laws; instead, he relies on older relatives, godparents, or a spiritual guide to present the request respectfully and to help plan the wedding.

The groom’s family brings symbolic gifts for the bride’s family—for example, baskets containing bread, chocolate, chickens, various beverages (such as soft drinks, beer, or tequila), and cigarettes, among other items.

Wedding Preparations

Everything begins with the formal proposal, at which point the wedding date is set. This stage is significant because the bride-to-be presents a gift to her future mother-in-law: a *zute* (a type of shawl). Traditionally, this garment is woven by hand—using a backstrap loom—over a period of eight months to a year; however, as many women today do not weave, it is often purchased instead. The bride also provides gifts for her future father-in-law, as well as the groom’s grandparents.

The groom, for his part, is responsible for providing the traditional attire that the bride will wear for the wedding. He must have a *güipil* (a traditional blouse) and a *corte* (a traditional skirt) specially made for her, and he must also purchase her footwear—such as sandals or shoes—along with any necessary accessories.

At a wedding, the *padrinos* (sponsors/godparents) arrive at the groom’s house and have lunch there, as weddings typically take place in the afternoon. Afterward, they go to the bride’s home, bringing along a gift—which includes all the clothing and accessories she will wear. Then, the mother-in-law, the *madrina* (female sponsor), and two other women—one representing the bride and the other the

groom, acting as witnesses—go into the bride's room to help her dress and prepare for the religious ceremony. Once she is dressed, they return to the rest of the group—the bride's and groom's families—at which point the bride presents gifts to her mother-in-law, father-in-law, and the groom's grandparents. The entire party then heads to the church, where the groom is waiting.

Following the ceremony, the group travels to either the groom's or the bride's home, where it is customary for the parents, *padrinos*, grandparents, and older relatives to bestow a blessing upon the newlyweds (using rose petals and incense). Afterward, everyone proceeds to the venue for the reception. The groom's family covers the costs and prepares the meal—typically *pepián* or a stew—along with everything else for the celebration, including the music.

Famous quotes about marriage

1. To be married is to choose the same person every single day.

2. Those who love each other speak heart-to-heart.

3. Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.

4. A married couple needs a home of their own.

