

## Chicano Studies Program Hosts Mini-Conference on Curanderismo and Indigenous Healing

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The Chicano Studies Program held a mini-conference on Saturday, Dec. 3 featuring experts sharing generations of knowledge in the practice of Curanderismo and Indigenous healing.

“We’re celebrating 50 years of Chicana/o Studies in Pueblo and Curanderismo is a significant part of this culture,” Judy Baca, professor of social work, said. “Hosting a mini-conference on campus was important because it bridges academic knowledge surrounding healing and wellness with traditional cultural and Indigenous knowledge in this region. It is also important to document these practices for future generations, so they are not lost over time.”

Curanderismo is a traditional Mexican American healing system that holistically treats disorders through religious, spiritual, supernatural and health-related means. Panelists and workshop facilitators included Maria Clark Vega, Lilian Chavez, Benetta Romero, and Rebecca Robles. Campus and community members attended the panel presentations and participated in breakout workshops and discussion sessions. The event was sponsored by the Colorado Cares Grant, El Movimiento Sigue, the Pueblo City-County Library District and the CSU Pueblo University Library.

Maria Vega Clark is a Pueblo native, progressive activist and was a participant in the Chicano Movement. She has a background in early childhood education, the Bilingual Program in Denver, and community advocacy for students and families attending public schools. Vega Clark earned a bachelor’s in anthropology with a minor in Spanish at CSU Pueblo. She holds a master’s degree in counseling from Adams State University.

Lilian Chavez is a Xicana/Mexicana Indigenous woman born from parents with Nahuatlaca roots. She has a background in curandera/os and has worked with elders from Abya Yala and has taken part in many traditional Indigenous ceremonies. Chavez’s practice centers around Indigenous epistemologies where she emphasizes a sense of reverence toward our relationship with humanity and Mother Earth. She holds a doctorate in sociology and is an associate professor at Mesa Community College. Chavez has lived in Arizona, Texas and Kemet, Egypt.

Benetta Cruz was initiated by La Asociación de Pueblos Maya para el Desarrollo y la Productividad Manuel Tot Asomaya of Cobán, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala into El Circulo de Guías Espirituales in 2019. This conferred upon her the ability to legally access and practice at locations throughout the Mayan Nation held sacred by the Mayan Nation peoples. Her practice has expanded from Mexico, Guatemala, and along the Front Range from the Denver area to Albuquerque, New Mexico.