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INDIANS MAKE GAINS IN GUATEMALAN ELECTIONS

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Candidates from among the indigenous peoples who together make up 42 percent of **Guatemala's** 13 million citizens won 129 of the 332 mayoral races in last weekend's general **election**.

The Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities noted Thursday that in the 2003 elections, the country's Indians won 123 mayorships of the 331 that were up for grabs.

The relatively good results contrasted sharply with those obtained by Nobel Peace Prize recipient and indigenous activist Rigoberta Menchu, who was running for president.

Menchu, the first Indian woman to campaign for the country's top office, wound up in 7th place in the presidential balloting with just 3.09 percent of the votes cast on Sunday.

The provinces in which indigenous candidates won the most mayorships were Huehuetenango, with 22, Solola, with 17, and San Marcos, Quiche and Quetzaltenango, each with 14, all in the country's western highlands.

According to the coordinator of the indigenous officeholders group, Carlos Guarquez, little by little the political parties are according importance and participation in the popular elections to the country's indigenous peoples.

There are 22 Mayan peoples in Guatemala constituting 42 percent of the population, while another 45 percent are of mestizo ancestry.

Of the 332 mayors elected on Sunday, eight were women, according to the results provided by the Supreme Electoral Court.

In the presidential contest, none of the 14 candidates secured an absolute majority, so the two top vote-getters, social democrat Alvaro Colom and right-wing retired Gen. Otto Perez Molina, will face off against each other in a Nov. 9 runoff.

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