TIP SHEET

Title: *El niño de maíz / The Boy of Maize*

Author: Mario Bencastro **Illustrator:** Christina Rodriguez

Publication Date: May 31, 2022 **Pages:** 32 **Price:** $18.95 **ISBN-13**: 978-1-55885-946-3

Trim: 8.5" x 11" **Format:** Hardcover **Ages**: 5-10 **Imprint**: Piñata Books

In a land where the yellow jaguar lives and the sun rises behind green mountains, "the earth was filled with joy" when Balám, the boy of maize, was born. He climbed on top of a big, blue turtle, and along with an assortment of other animals, began the journey to the village.

Excited to spread the word about the child's birth, the creatures worked together—each utilizing its special skills—in perfect harmony with Mother Earth. The turtle walked so slowly that he sent the louse ahead to give the good news to the townspeople. But the louse fell asleep in the road, so the toad swallowed him and said, "I will take you with the message." The toad, exhausted from taking big leaps, was swallowed by the snake, and the snake, unable to cross the river, was swallowed by the hawk. When the bird flew into the village, the louse delivered the message, but long days and nights passed and still the boy did not arrive! Would the great turtle be able to deliver the special boy?

Capturing the essence of nature while telling the mythical story that unites Central American countries around the importance of corn, this enchanting bilingual picture book introduces children to the Mayan origin story of a people made of maize. Written by acclaimed Salvadoran writer Mario Bencastro, it contains beautiful illustrations by accomplished children's book artist Christina Rodriguez.

GENRE: Bilingual children's book, multicultural children's literature, Spanish-language picture books, Central America/El Salvador/Latin America

SELLING HANDLES:

- Introduces children to the Mayan origin story about a people made of maize
- Written by an acclaimed Salvadoran author
- Contains exceptionally beautiful illustrations by a skilled, prolific illustrator

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR CREDENTIALS:

MARIO BENCASTRO is the author of numerous award-winning books, including a bilingual picture book, *Un tren llamado Esperanza / A Train Called Hope* (Piñata Books, 2021), and a novel for teens in English and Spanish: *A Promise to Keep* (Piñata Books, 2005) and *Viaje a la tierra del abuelo* (Piñata Books, 2004). Bencastro lives and works in Florida.

CHRISTINA RODRIGUEZ is the illustrator of several picture books for children, including *We Are Cousins / Somos primos* (Piñata Books, 2007), *Mayte and the Bogeyman / Mayte y el Cuco* (Piñata Books, 2006) and *Un día con mis tías / A Day with My Aunts* (Piñata Books, 2006). She graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2003 with a BFA in illustration.

PRAISE FOR *EL NIÑO DE MAÍZ / THE BOY OF MAIZE*:

- Named to the Bank Street College of Education's Best Children's Picture Books of the Year in Spanish (2023)
- Named a 2023 Américas Award Commended Title

PRAISE FOR THE WORK OF MARIO BENCASTRO:

"This bilingual picture book shares a young boy's journey in often-rhyming stanzas in English and Spanish. Realistic illustrations show readers the simple joys of the young boy's life as well as the fears and worries of his crossing. This is a much-needed introduction for young readers to the migration many children make every day."
—*School Library Journal* on *Un tren llamado Esperanza / A Train Called Hope*

"Impressively illustrated by the artistry of illustrator Robet Casilla, this moving, poetic story by Salvadoran author/storyteller Mario Bencastro touches on the difficult journey north many Central American children make in hopes of finding their parents and a better life — making *A Train Called Hope/Un tren llamado Esperanza* an especially and unreservedly recommended addition to family, elementary school, and community library bilingual picture book collections for young readers ages 8-12.
—*Midwest Book Review* on *Un tren llamado Esperanza / A Train Called Hope*