



culture + history

# IMPACT

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CULTURE AND HISTORY | NICH, BELIZE, 2023 -2024

VISUAL REPORT





**Women in Art 2024** - Painting In Pairs, a duo painting session for mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and mentors (March 14), Womxn in Art exhibit launch (March 15) and Veranda Concert Series featuring Des and Chela (March 16)



*Celebrating 20 years at the NICH Stakeholders event , 1 March 2024*

## **Culture + History: 2023 - 2024**

**Remarks Hon. Francis Fonseca, Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology  
Budget presentation on Culture, Belmopan, Belize | 20 March 2024**

When it comes to our Culture and History I must start with acknowledging the many hard working and dedicated people at the National Institute of Culture and History including stakeholders – our artists, musicians, dancers, tour guides, historians, archaeologists, and community culture activists. This shout out to our cultural community is extra special,

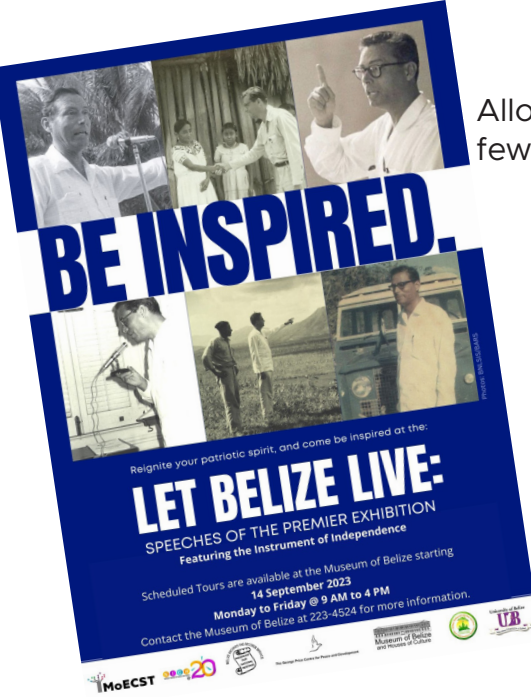
because **NICH turns 20 this year.**

Twenty years ago Prime Minister Said Musa spoke to parliament about the newly formed NICH; he said,

*...and as we work to radically change the culture that dooms us to anarchy and social disruption to one that redeems the virtues of fairness, solidarity, peace and justice, we will fully engage the artists and cultural workers of all our ethnic groups as pivotal instruments of this transformation.*

*We are now putting into effect the National Institute of History and Culture (NICH) that will spearhead and guide this revolution and provide the environment to unleash the creative talents of our people, offer meaningful employment and take the message abroad in world class exhibitions and performances.”*





Allow me now to reflect on the past year, and briefly outline a few of the significant actions and programs carried out by NICH.



*Museum of Belize, September 2023*



*Ignacia Cacho Library, Dangriga, April 2023*



*George Price Centre, Belmopan, January 2023*



*Punta Gorda Library, March 2023*



Our Let Belize Live project, organized by our Institute for Social and Cultural Research, honours the legacy of our great national hero Rt. Hon. George Price. In alignment with Premier Price's commitment to community engagement, a traveling exhibition embarked on a journey across Belize.



Last year we enhanced the awareness of Emancipation Day 2023 underscoring the importance of fostering nationwide historical consciousness surrounding this significant holiday.

In his keynote remarks at the official Emancipation Day ceremony our Deputy Prime Minister remarked,

*“To honor the story, the journey and survival and eventual freedom of our African ancestors is to honor the very best of who came before us. It's a story that started on the coast of West Africa.... Today is about paying tribute to all our ancestors that were enslaved.”*

# Belize Culture Fund



In December 2023 we announced the Belize Culture Fund for Dynamic grants, creative innovation, making museums vibrant, digital archaeology and safeguarding at risk living heritage. And earlier this month we publicly announced the winners of this 1st round.



Against the backdrop of this sacred site, 23 dancers of Santa Cruz Village adorned in vibrant attire, accompanied by 18 copal incense bearers, graced the plaza with a captivating display of the sacred Deer Dance. For over three decades, this festive celebration has been an integral part of Maya communities, often relying on rented attire and marimbas. These treasures will be stored at the NICH, ready to be utilized upon request from specific villages across Belize.

The Deer Dance holds profound cultural significance, rooted in pre-Hispanic Maya traditions. It symbolizes the resilience of indigenous peoples and their relationship with nature, particularly with sacred animals like the deer, jaguar, and monkey, which are prominently featured in the dance.





*Pan Yaad, Old Government House, Belize City, September 2023*



Last year and again this year NICH will collaborate to promote and pay respect to our Indigenous brothers and sisters on Indigenous Resistance Day.

Some of the outstanding arts and cultural programs organized by our Institute of Creative Arts include the Pan Yaad featuring many steel bands from across Belize, the National Festival of Arts, a revitalized Women In Art series of creative expressions, and the very popular National Song Competition whose winner last year was the amazing artist Marlyn Vansen.





Minister of Culture Hon. Francis Fonseca, winning artist Marlyn Vansen and ICA Director Kim Vasquez, the Bliss Stage, September 2023



Acting training



Tangle Wood exhibition by Carl Gordon, Belisle Gallery, August 2023



International Archaeology Day, October 21 is a worldwide celebration of the contributions of archaeology to the global community. The IA hosted a site fair at Lamanai in 2023.



Actun Tunichill Muclal Cave training, May 2023. This workshop is a necessary training for tour guides to be aware of the regulations for the site and the safety measures they must take to ensure the wellbeing and welfare of the tourists that visit the site.



Ruta Maya, March 2023



Nature Conservancy Day 2023

At our Institute of Archaeology we continue our professional management and safeguarding of 14 Parks which spans some 29,377 acres. Our partnership with our sister institution BTB remains strong and energetic. Belize's tour guides, operators, and artisans continue to welcome with world class service thousands of tourists.



Last year we saw an increase in community cultural and historical programs originating from our Museum of Belize and Houses of Culture. This network of cultural spaces include Houses of Culture in Benque Viejo del Carmen, Corozal Town, Orange Walk Town, and Belize City.



*Earth Day at the Corozal House of Culture, Corozal Town, 2023*



*Garifuna Settlement Day Celebration, Banquitas House of Culture, Orange Walk Town, November, 2023*



*Marimba Group, Benque House of Culture, Cayo, 2023*



*Galen Summer Program, San Ignacio/Santa Elena (SISE) House of Culture, 2023*



*NICH training in fire fighting, communications and public relations, writing and security protocols Nov 2023*



*NICH Board member Jaylan Craig presenting NICH staff of the year award to Georgia Gentle, March 2023*



*UNSECO Intangible and Cultural Heritage workshop July 2023*

It must also be noted that NICH gave significant financial support to a wide range of creative groups and individuals all across Belize. We see this as grassroots sparks of progress. When we invest in people we lay the groundwork for cultural development.

The period of 2023-2024 has been marked by significant strides in Belize's cultural landscape, with the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) at the forefront of these endeavors. Celebrating its 20th anniversary, NICH has continued to honor the nation's rich heritage through various initiatives, including exhibitions, festivals, and preservation efforts. From commemorating Emancipation Day to supporting indigenous communities and fostering artistic innovation, NICH's commitment to cultural enrichment has been unwavering. Looking ahead, plans for partnerships, museum expansions, and educational initiatives signal a promising future for Belizean culture. With a focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and creativity, NICH remains dedicated to nurturing Belize's cultural identity and inspiring generations to come.



*Museum of Belizean Art (MOBA) set to open 17 April 2024*

## Moving forward into this new fiscal year

I would like to highlight a few key programs and projects we will implement.

In our plan we will establish a new partnership with the Gulisi Garifuna Museum in Dangriga and finally move to open a House of Culture in Punta Gorda.

We will pay special attention to include STEAM into our Museum, and continue our Cultural Heritage Programs by developing workshops, performances, and interactive displays, that focus on understanding of our history

At the Institute of Creative Arts we will implement a cultural Handicraft Development Program, continue to Revive and Develop our National Festival of Arts and launch a Belize Music Symposium that focuses on industry development, meaningful engagement and leveraging of Belizean music genres

In archaeology we will develop a comprehensive management plan for Caracol ensuring adherence in best practices for archaeological research, biodiversity protection, and tourism and visitor experiences. We are well underway toward the completion of the Cave Management Policy to guide overall management and use of cave sites.

We will improve our revenue collection system for the archaeological reserves by moving towards an e ticketing system.

2024 marks the year when our Archaeology institute pivots, and starts utilizing technology whether through documentation of artifacts and the upgrading of exhibits and visitor centers.

NICH will continue to support and participate in the active preservation and safeguarding



# BELIZE MUSIC PROJECT

research > education > innovation

*Ivan Duran, director Belize Music Project presenting to NICH Board, February 2024*

of Belize's intangible cultural heritage by updating educational documentaries on the Deer Dance, Semana Santa, Finados, Bram, and Yurumei, among others, and make these available on the 501 Academy.

With support of the Archives and Records Service and the University of Belize will take the research charge of Emancipation Day, bringing to the fore Belize's African experience and their contributions to the socio-economic development of Belize.

NICH will partner with the George Price Center for Peace and Development to organize public lectures, discussions and educational resources.

We will continue the Belize Culture Fund which will see another call for applications in July 2024. The mission of the Belize Culture Fund is to encourage the many aspiring and professional artists, musicians, authors, researchers, and creators to make a greater impact in our communities and to inspire others to join the cause of building a more peaceful and culturally vibrant Belize.

This year our Institute of Archaeology will host the Belize Archaeology Symposium where leading scientists, archaeologists and historians come from many international Universities to share their knowledge.

This year NICH in collaboration with partners including the BTB will launch the Belize Music Project with the ambitious goal to document and restore Belizean recordings of the last 100 years to honour the rich legacy of our artists and to inspire our younger generation to learn their musical roots in order to innovate and build the future sounds of Belize.

Soon NICH will open at the old Government House in Belize City, the Museum of Belizean Art (MOBA for short). It will begin with a diverse exhibit featuring 65 artists whose work spans 70 years. Going forward this Museum will be utilized for all kinds of multi-media exhibitions incorporating technology and innovation. In essence the MOBA is a platform for the next generation of artists.



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NICH is Belize's premier cultural institution dedicated to the safeguarding, promotion, expression, conservation and sustainable development of culture in all its diversity in collaboration with the people of Belize.

A Belize that embraces and promotes Our Cultures, Our Values, Our Identity, Our Prosperity in a global community.



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