

N I C H

2025-26

IMPACT

CULTURE IS WHO & WHAT WE ARE

NICH IMPACT Report
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CULTURE THE SOUL OF A NATION



We move forward with a mantra that is not merely a slogan, but a heartbeat: Culture is who and what we are. Today, I am proud to reaffirm that our government does not view culture as a luxury of the past, but as a primary engine for our future development. We are investing in the soul of Belize.

Our history is no longer buried in silence; it is being illuminated by the light of the future. Through LiDAR drone surveys and 3D printing, we are mapping our legacy from Altun Ha to Cerro Maya, ensuring all 14 archaeological reserves are digitally immortalised.

We are not just looking at stones; we are caring for the people and the treasures within them. We have brought home over 150 of our ancestors' artifacts from foreign shores, housing them in a modernized, climate-controlled storage. We have breathed new life into Caracol and the Serpon Sugar Mill through solar electrification.

The world's eyes are on us. The unearthing of Maya King Te'Kab Chaak's tomb at Caracol last year is a reminder that Belize remains a titan of Maya scholarship and national pride.

Our heritage is also found in our flavours and our struggles. The Belize Food Heritage Project ensures that the secrets of our kitchens are preserved for the next generation.

We have honoured our political journey with the PUP at 75 exhibit, "Serving the People, Continuing the Revolution," teaching our youth that independence was not a gift, but a hard-won journey.

Through the NICH Culture Fund, we are putting resources directly into the hands of our creators.

We are working with our people in Gales Point and Sarteneja to learn how traditional knowledge is our best shield against climate disasters. From the personal letters of the Father of the Nation, George Price, to the archives of the 17th century, we are decoding our past to empower an informed, critical-thinking citizenry.

The National Festival of Arts and the Bliss Center remain the vibrant nurseries of our youth's imagination. By subsidising over 25 major productions, we have ensured that the stage belongs to everyone, not just a few.

We are turning hobbies into industries. On July 10, 2025, we engaged in a National Strategy & Roadmap, a blueprint for a creative economy. Just this past January, our "Big Choon" Music Forum gathered 120 of our musical giants to align our rhythms with the business of the global stage.

In closing it must be noted that our government has directly invested close to \$1 million in creative Belizeans and organizations pursuing cultural projects and another \$2.4 million is planned for programming this year.

Of significant note was the creation of the Belize National Orchestra last September. This Orchestra is more than just a musical project; it is a cultural initiative designed to establish an orchestral ensemble that truly reflects the rich musical tapestry of Belize.

On December 9, 2025, in New Delhi, the world stood still as the Krismos Bram and Sambai of Gales Point Manatee were inscribed upon the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The echoes of those drums travelled from the shores of the lagoon to the halls of India, and back home to the largest Christmas celebration Gales Point has ever seen.

This is our commitment: to keep the drum beating, to keep the stories flowing, and to ensure that the culture of Belize remains our greatest national treasure.



Digital Documentation Project

The IA's commitment to digital heritage continued in 2025 through several avenues: In the first instance, our in-house documentation of artifacts from all over the country, in particular, the first royal tomb of Caracol, as well as supporting the documentation of the Institute of Creative Arts-led Handmade by Bze exhibition. Secondly, through new partnerships with local organizations, the Research and Enforcement Unit has been able to expand on the digital documentation project. The IA was the recipient of a 3D printer donated by the Belize Electricity Limited allowing us to expand on our archaeological documentation process and improve on educational outreach initiatives. Finally, the IA has established new connections with local and international universities in capturing broader themes in archaeology. In June 2025, Altun Ha was the focus of a pilot project entitled *The Maya Mapping Collaborative*, a collaboration with Auburn University and the University of Belize's Environmental Research Institute. Through this project, the IA digitally documented the structures and landscape at Altun Ha through LiDAR drone surveys and captured the key communities that work towards a shared cultural stewardship of the site through the development of an ArcGIS Storymap. This initiative provided on the ground, real-time training in GIS and Storymap for IA Staff and UB/ERI/Auburn University students. After the successful launch of the Altun Ha Storymap, the team shifted focus and began the process of recording Cerro Maya by implementing the same strategy of LiDAR scanning the site as well as engaging with vital communities in Cerro Maya's periphery. This Storymap project is expected to eventually document all 14 archaeological reserves.

Link to the Altun Ha Storymap featured on the NICH website: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c251ef618151498f92bc4e4a0746d030>

Peru Bilateral Agreement Project

As part of our bilateral agreement of cooperation between Peru & Belize in cultural heritage, the Institute of Archaeology established formal relations with the Agencia Peruana de Cooperacion Internacional (APCI) and the Peru Ministry of Culture, with the objective of exchanging ideas and exploring opportunities to strengthen and enhance the management of our archaeological reserves and its cultural and infrastructural assets via an exchange program. In 2025, a multidisciplinary team from the Institute of Archaeology travelled to Peru and visited various, unique archaeological sites and museums, including the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, where they gained experience on sustainable practices in the management of archaeological sites, inclusive of its biodiversity and ecosystems. As a result, and with the support of the NICH Administration, the IA has now commenced the development of a Management Plan Framework for Archaeological Reserves in Q1 2025, and the development of a Management Plan for the Caracol Archaeological Reserve by 2026.





In 2025, the Institute of Archaeology (IA), made significant strides in strengthening and safeguarding the Belize National Collection, marking a pivotal year for collections management. One of the most notable achievements was the successful return of over 150 Belizean Maya artifacts as well as the donation of several interactive display units following a ten-year international tour in the US, reaffirming the country's commitment to the care and repatriation of its cultural material. This milestone also underscored the growing responsibility of the IA to ensure that returned and newly acquired materials are properly housed and preserved for future generations. In response to the continued growth of the National Collection, the IA prioritised the upgrading and preparation of its archaeological storage facility to meet modern standards. Throughout 2025, focused efforts were made to improve storage readiness, climate relevance, and long-term conservation conditions; an essential achievement given that proper storage has long been a critical need for archaeological material in Belize. Additionally, the IA's collaboration with the Museum of Belize on updating the *Maya Creating Civilization Exhibit* played a key role in reinforcing the national importance of the collection, allowing the public to engage directly with Belize's heritage while highlighting the value of responsible collections management. As the Belize National Collection continues to expand, the achievements of 2025 represent a major step forward and a strong foundation for continued growth, preservation, and public access.



Electrification Of Archaeological Reserves

The IA and NICH have been investing in necessary electrification at the archaeological sites across the country. These efforts allow us the opportunity to improve visitor services and experiences, and to expand the use of our electronic ticket sales platform, thereby reducing security risks for visitors and staff by facilitating paperless transactions for visitor entry. These electrification efforts also assist in significantly enhancing the living conditions for our staff on site, and for improving our management operations.

At the end of 2025, significant investments in the upgrading of the solar power systems at Caracol, Nim Li Punit and Lubaantun was completed to ensure optimal performance. Electrification of the Serpon Sugar Mill has been prioritized and is scheduled for completion in the coming weeks. This will see the site having electrical power for the first time since its establishment as an archaeological reserve in 17 years. Additionally, in early 2026, the IA established a major partnership with the Belize Electricity Ltd. to address an electrification pathway and energy solutions for other archaeological sites, with priorities aimed at electrifying Xunantunich and the ATM Cave Reserves for 2026. We expect to make official announcements on this very soon.



Archaeological Research Highlights

In 2025, the Institute of Archaeology achieved significant milestones in archaeological research, which substantially advanced Belize's standing within the broader Mesoamerican region. Foremost among these is the recent discovery of the tomb of Te'Kab Chaak, the founding dynasty at Caracol. This extraordinary finding reaffirms Caracol's central role in Maya political history and strengthens Belize's position in regional and international Maya scholarship. This discovery represents not only a major academic contribution but also a point of national pride. The discovery made it in the Archaeology Magazine's Top 10 discoveries for 2025¹, and was also in the National Geographic Top 6 archaeological discoveries that amazed the world in 2025². The IA has taken deliberate steps to ensure that the public is informed and engaged, translating complex archaeological findings into accessible knowledge that deepens public appreciation for Belize's ancient heritage, including the digitization of several of the artifacts from the tomb.

1: Archaeology Magazine, Top 10 Discoveries of 2025, Editors. <https://archaeology.org/issues/january-february-2026/collection/return-of-the-king/top-10-discoveries-of-2025/>

2: National Geographic, 6 archaeological discoveries that amazed the world in 2025, Nicholas St. Fleur, 2025. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/6-archaeology-discoveries-2025>



Archaeological Research Highlights

Equally important in 2025 was the commencement of formal archaeological research within the capital city of Belmopan, at the Riviera archaeological site. Through collaborative efforts between the Institute of Archaeology and Dr. Lisa Lucero, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the engagement of University of Belize (UB) and Galen University students, the first year was a success. Additionally, through the pilot phase of the *Maya Mapping Project*, a collaboration between the IA, Auburn University and UB, and supported by a University of Illinois PhD student, the site core of Riveira was surveyed using LiDAR technology. This marks a critical step in ensuring that the site is systematically and responsibly studied for the first time, contributing valuable data to Belize's archaeological record while enhancing the site's long-term protection, preservation, research potential and tourism opportunity. The Riviera archaeological project has also played a key role in expanding Belizean capacity-building, providing meaningful training and field experience for University of Belize students. Through these research initiatives, the IA continues to strengthen national expertise, promote responsible heritage management, and position Belize as a leader in Maya archaeological research.



Food Heritage Project launched

In 2025, NICH-ISCR kicked off its UNESCO Belize Food Heritage Project to support Belizeans to document and safeguard our rich food traditions. The programme started with a national workshop held on 2-4 July 2025.

The workshop brought together participants from across the country, including the House of Culture Coordinators and community advocates, for a training on how to document our food heritage through interviews and audio-visual documentation.

After the national launch, ISCR has since been rolling this work across the country. The first district training took place in Orange Walk Town from 27-29 November 2025. The training brought together 20 participants to begin identifying local food traditions that people in the district consider important. The participants were able to actively deploy their new skills and knowledge in the documentation of the delicious hand-made corn tortillas and the pork *horneado*.

This phase of the Belize Food Heritage Project has set a high caliber and we look forward to conducting more community-based workshops in 2027. We are grateful to the Belize Ministry of Culture and the UNESCO International Assistance Fund for making this initiative possible.

Bram and Sambai



In 2023–2024, NICH–ISCR advanced the documentation of the *Krismos Bram* and *Sambai* of Gales Point “*Malanti*” Village as part of an application to be nominated to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The nomination was submitted to UNESCO in March 2024 for consideration. In 2025, Belize was invited to attend UNESCO’s 20th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and preparations were made to send a delegation consisting of partners who contributed to the success of the nomination. The delegation was comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, the Institute for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR–NICH), the National Kriol Council (NKC), and cultural leaders from Gales Point Village.

The delegation travelled on 6 December 2025 to New Delhi, India, where the UNESCO Meeting was held, and the approval of Belize’s nomination was announced on 9 December 2025. The Director of the Institute for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR–NICH), Rolando Cocom, accepted the nomination on behalf of Belize, and the Belize team proudly waved our flag in unison as we were greeted by various friends and allies of Belize.

At the IGC, Belize engaged with international partners and reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding living heritage as a foundation for cultural identity, resilience, and sustainable development.

On 11 December 2025, Belize received its world-renowned certificate, which officially recognizes the *Krismos Bram* and *Sambai* on UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The delegation returned on 13 December 2025.

The buzz surrounding the inscription proved fruitful, as the ISCR–NICH team ventured to Gales Point Village on 25 and 26 December 2025 to document and support the community in hosting the *Krismos Bram* and *Sambai*. The community welcomed one of the largest crowds it has ever hosted.

The *Krismos Bram* and *Sambai* traditions hold deep significance for the Afro-descendant community of Gales Point, a village renowned for its cultural resilience, environmental stewardship, and heritage. The inscription recognizes these traditions as expressions of communal identity, generational knowledge, and cultural continuity. Now that the traditions are inscribed, we hope not only to strengthen ongoing efforts to safeguard Belize’s living heritage, but also to support cultural transmission and youth engagement in Gales Point Village.

This inscription is also key to empowering other cultural groups across Belize to document and safeguard their own cultural practices. A special thank you to the Honourable Francis Fonseca, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Education, Culture, Science and Technology, the National Kriol Council, the Gales Point Village Council, and the Belize Tourism Board.

NICH Culture Fund



In October 2024, NICH launched the second cycle of the Belize Culture Fund. In this round we received 88 applications and 9 were awarded based on their eligibility and having met all the criteria of the grant.

The Belize Culture Fund is a micro-grant of BZD\$30,000. From this, 4 major grants of BZD\$5,000 each were disbursed by the NICH institutions (Living Heritage, Archaeology, Museums and Creative Grant), and 5 dynamic grants were given at BZD\$2,000 each.

The 9 winners were awarded certificates and their first disbursement of funds were carried out in July 2025, which gave them a jump-start to their respective projects. Of the 9 projects, 6 have been completed and the others are still in progress.

Each division within NICH has played an active part in coordinating with the grantees that coincide with the objectives of each institute:

Safeguarding Belize's Living Heritage Grant - Awardee: Stanley Pech – Mopan Maya Cultural Mentors and Apprentices

Cultural Conservation Initiatives Grant - Awardee: Hugo Carrillo – U Chan Muul Ya'ax Museum

Making Museums Vibrant Grant - Awardee: Guillermo Paz – Eco-Museum Belize

Children and Youth Arts Education Grant - Awardee: Damian Moore – Cultural Printmaking Workshop

NICH Dynamic Micro-Grants

Elington Cayetano – Kai Books

Kendrick Gonzales – Abby's Collection Simply Natural Organic Soaps

Andre Habet & Lee McLoughlin – Safeguarding & Documenting Indigenous Practices

Juan Caal – Kok Che Son – Harp Music Album by Mr. Jose Chun & Sons

Claver College Extension – Cultural Murals Project



History In Focus: The PUP @ 75



In 2025, NICH-ISCR worked with the People's United Party Secretariat to deliver the exhibition "*The PUP at 75: Serving the People, Continuing the Revolution*" as part of the People's United Party Diamond Jubilee, marking the period September 29, 1950, to September 29, 2025.

The exhibition was designed as a travelling public display that brings history to communities in a way that is easy to access. It presents key moments from the party's journey and the journey of Belize from colonization to independence drawn from archival records and photographs.

Since its launch in Orange Walk Town, the historical exhibition has travelled to a large part of the country. It has been hosted in Corozal Town, then moved through Belmopan, San Ignacio and Santa Elena Town, Benque Viejo del Carmen Town, Dangriga Town, Punta Gorda Town and Belize City. Each stop has allowed residents, students, and visitors to view the display and to reflect on how politics, organizing, and national development shaped everyday life.

NICH-ISCR remains committed to making Belize's history accessible and to supporting public education activities where people, especially young Belizeans, can learn from the past, ask questions, and carry those lessons forward.





Living Heritage + Sustainable Urban Development

The ISCR-NICH led a groundbreaking workshop on living heritage and sustainable urban development in the City of Belmopan in 2025. Organized under the auspices of UNESCO with funding from the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the initiative brought together city officials, planners and community members. Key national partners included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Culture and Immigration, the City of Belmopan, and the University of Belize. This project forms part of a broader vision to strengthen capacities for resilient communities through sustainable tourism and heritage safeguarding in Central America.

The workshop took place from August 25th to 29th, 2025, at the UB Conference Center at the University of Belize in the City of Belmopan. The five-day intensive program provided a dedicated group of 30 participants with the knowledge of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention and on the critical intersection of urban development and heritage safeguarding.

The workshop featured expert presentations from multiple sectors and disciplines. Josue Ramos, Archaeologist from the Institute of Archaeology, delivered insights on understanding the links between heritage and development, while Carlos Sanchez Otero from UNESCO presented findings from the 2022 UNESCO Survey on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Urban Contexts. Giovanni Pinelo explored the historical origins and heritage of Belmopan, and Delmer Tzib, University of Belize Lecturer, shared perspectives on living heritage and sustainable urban development within the university context.

Additional contributions came from workshop facilitators, Carren Williams and Rolando Cocom. Participants included University of Belize lecturers and students, city planners, community members, cultural practitioners, youth coordinators and employees of the Belmopan City Council, creating a rich interdisciplinary dialogue on heritage safeguarding in urban environments.

Building on the momentum generated during this pilot initiative, plans are underway to expand the project's reach to other municipalities across Belize and throughout the region, fostering broader engagement with sustainable heritage practices in urban planning. We extend our sincere gratitude to UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their generous support, and to all partners and participants who contributed to the success of this important capacity-building initiative.





Safeguarding Intangible Heritage

Building on Phase One of the UNESCO project “*Capacity Building for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies in Small Island Developing States in the Pacific and the Caribbean*”, NICH-ISCR has implemented a series of refresher trainings, community capacity-building workshops and ICH inventorying activities in November 2025.

These initiatives were conducted in the communities of Gales Point, Sarteneja and in San Antonio, Cayo District, with a focused emphasis on identifying and documenting ICH practices that contribute to disaster preparedness and community resilience.

Through this project, NICH-ISCR actively engaged community leaders and cultural practitioners in each community, strengthening their capacity in safeguarding, use of ICH practices in times of disasters and recovery from disasters.

In Gales Point, a capacity-building workshop was held on 2 November, followed by community inventorying activities on 8 November. In Sarteneja, the capacity-building workshop took place on 15 November, with inventorying conducted on 16 November. In San Antonio, Cayo, the capacity-building workshop was held on 22 November, followed by community inventorying on 23 November.

In Gales Point, the community’s close relationship with fishing traditions and the use of coconut resources reflects a strong ethic of environmental respect and stewardship. In Sarteneja, the transmission of traditional boat construction and fish-trap practices across generations highlights a deep connection to fishing heritage and plays a central role in shaping the community’s northern Belizean identity. In San Antonio, Yucatec Maya traditions through traditional home-building practices demonstrate that is woven in the community’s way of life.

Collectively, we trained more than 80 individuals who gained valuable insights into how traditional knowledge and cultural practices contribute to strengthening resilience and supporting communities in times of disaster as they engaged in inventorying of practices within their communities along with the NICH-ISCR team.

This project aims to strengthen national efforts by integrating cultural resilience and embedding culture within disaster risk reduction plans. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Culture, UNESCO, and the UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust for their invaluable support and funding.



Summer programs were implemented at the Museum of Belize and various Houses of Culture from June to August, offering participants a range of educational and creative activities. Programming was structured around key thematic areas, including Visual Arts, Traditional Culture and Music, Science and Technology, and Expressive Arts.

The programs emphasized hands-on learning, creativity, and cultural engagement, supporting the development of critical thinking, artistic skills, and an appreciation of Belizean heritage. Collaboration with local schools, educators, and community groups strengthened participation and outreach, while interactive activities encouraged teamwork and experiential learning.



Train Tour

The EBO Town Historical Train Tour was successfully conducted with strong public attendance and positive overall feedback. The guided experience focused on the history of colonial Belize, with particular emphasis on the institution of slavery and the historical significance of EBOE Town as a community formed by formerly enslaved Africans.

The tour provided participants with contextual insight into EBO Town's role in Belize's social and cultural development, fostering historical awareness and reflection. Promotional efforts through Facebook and other social media platforms supported outreach and contributed to community engagement and participation.



Outreach and Programs

Throughout the year, the Museum of Belize and the Houses of Culture delivered a range of outreach initiatives and cultural programs. These activities included educational workshops, community exhibitions, youth engagement sessions, and hands-on learning experiences in visual arts, traditional culture and music, science and technology, and expressive arts. Programs were designed to be inclusive and accessible, promoting cultural awareness, creative expression, and skill development among participants of all ages. Partnerships with local schools, educators, and community groups strengthened participation and extended outreach across Belize. These initiatives contributed to increased community engagement and reinforced the role of arts and culture in education and national heritage preservation.



A People's History: From Enslavement & Indigeneity to Kalinago & Garifuna

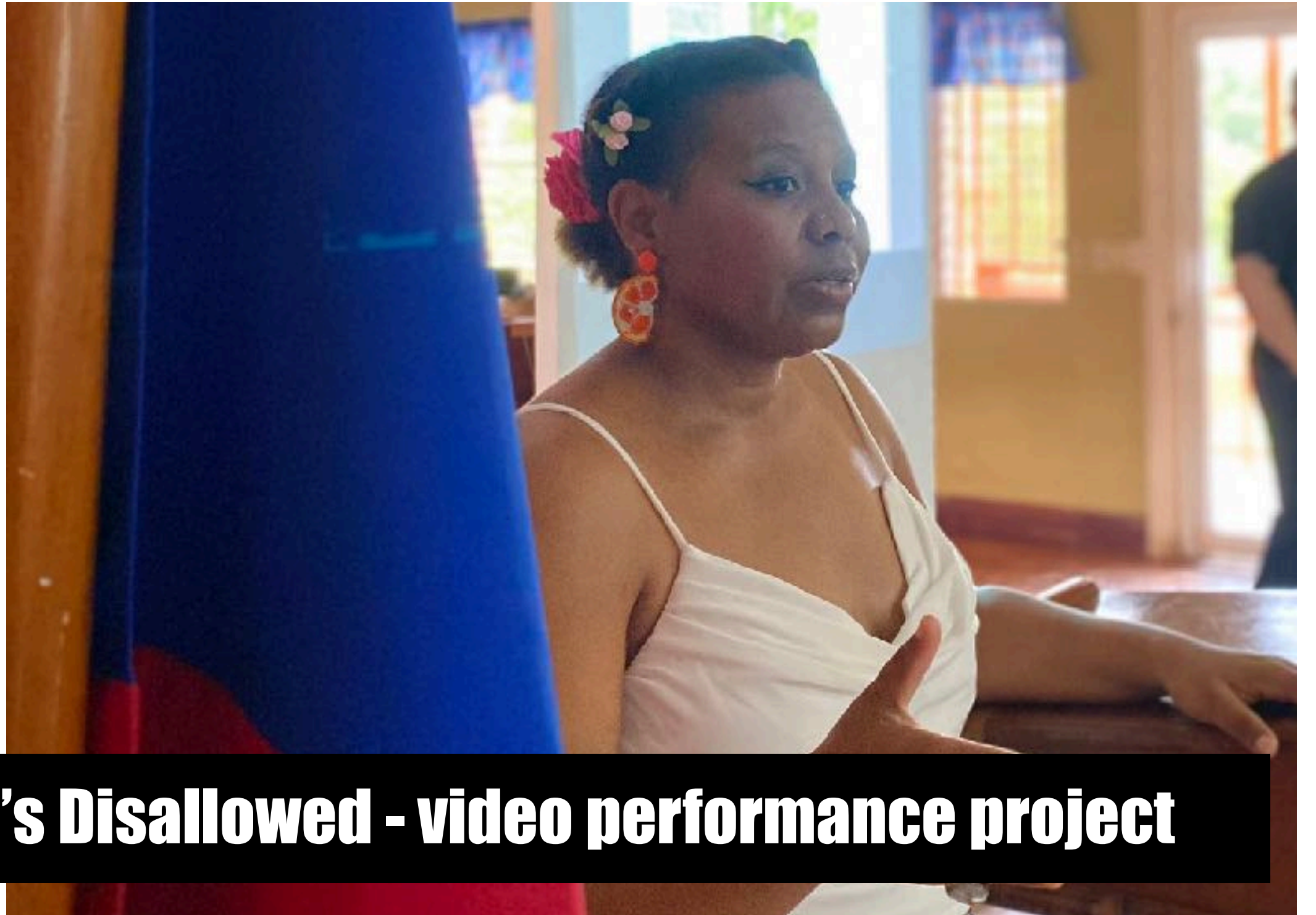
A People's Story: From Enslavement & Indigeneity to Kalinago & Garifuna was a collaborative exhibition presented by the Museum of Belize, Houses of Culture, and the National Library Service, in partnership with Mrs. Myrtle Palacio. Hosted across all Houses of Culture and at the Ignacia Cacho Library in Dangriga, the exhibition ran from September 15 to December 10. It explored the historical experiences of enslavement and indigeneity, highlighting the resilience, cultural continuity, and contributions of the Kalinago and Garifuna peoples.



Voices Of Earth Hour

Earth Hour 2025 was observed at the Corozal House of Culture through a community program highlighting environmental awareness, women's leadership, and poetry under the theme Voices of Earth Hour. The event included participation in the global Lights Off (60+) initiative and featured Women in Poetry.

Ms. Andreina Acosta Noh was recognized as the 2025 Environmental OWL (Outstanding Woman Leader) Award Recipient for her contributions to environmental advocacy. The observance was made possible through the support of partners including OCEANA, NICH, CTC, The Bookworm, Dioni Marin Photography, and DJ E-Flow, reinforcing a shared commitment to sustainability and community engagement.



Silence's Loud Because Sound's Disallowed - video performance project

Belizean conceptual and contemporary artist Katie Numi Usher partnered with the Museum of Belize, Houses of Culture, and The Imagination Factri to present her latest work, “*Silence's Loud Because Sound's Disallowed: a video performance project.*” The exhibition explores themes of voice and silencing both self-imposed and socially enforced—through collaborative performances with Carlos ‘Lito’ Quiroz, Yasser Musa, Nelita Castillo, and Ivan Duran.



Emilio Thomas: Portraits

As part of the “Portraits of Belize” photography exhibit by Emilio Thomas, the Benque House of Culture in Benque Viejo del Carmen hosted a cultural engagement session attended by students and teachers from Mopan Technical High School and Mount Carmel R.C. Primary School. Participants had the opportunity to hear directly from the photographer about his work, creative journey, and his appreciation for Belize’s hidden beauty. The exhibition and engagement were made possible through collaboration with The Imagination Factri and Emilio Thomas, providing accessible cultural experiences or the community.



Big Choon



The *Big Choon Music Empowerment Forum* brought together over 120 musicians, producers, DJs, educators, and cultural stakeholders for a two-day national gathering focused on strengthening Belize's music ecosystem. Day One opened with a high-energy ceremony and music mixer, creating space for connection, recognition, and community.

Day Two centred on capacity building through presentations and panel discussions on industry development, music business, innovative developments and cultural genres, offering practical insights and shared learning. "Big Choon" forms part of wider creative ecosystem development efforts supported by the National Strategy and Roadmap for the Cultural and Creative Sector (NSAR-CCS).



Roadmap for Cultural and Creative Sector

Supported by UNESCO and the European Union, the National Strategy & Roadmap launched on 10 July 2025 with 150 practitioners and stakeholders in attendance. The launch marked the formation of Belize's National Team and introduced a structured process toward developing the country's first evidence-based framework for the cultural and creative sector.

A Technical Work Group was established comprising NICH and key government partners -BELTRAIDE, Belize Tourism Board, Belize Intellectual Property Office, Statistical Institute of Belize, Ministry of Education, National Women's Commission, and Economic Development Council. To support the diagnostic phase ICA continues to engage in countrywide consultations and listening sessions to ensure broad sector participation and input.

Capacity-building began through the *Understanding Creative Enterprise & Economy* training and the *Big Choon Music Empowerment Forum*. The year concluded with the Technical Work Group convening to develop drafting framework for the national strategy.



Handmade by Belize

Handmade by Belize launched its national exhibition on 20 February 2025 at the Museum of Belizean Art, featuring 26 artisans and engaging over 200 students and teachers, before embarking on a success tour to the Houses of Culture and other creative spaces. The exhibition featured 23 handcrafted pieces created from traditional materials including jippi jappa, cohune, bamboo, slate, and titai vine.

In July, ICA advanced its development agenda through a six-month capacity-building programme with the San Joaquin Santa Ana Women's Sewing & Embroidery Group. Seven women were trained to create embroidery using adapted sewing machines, culminating in a new exhibition at MOBA - strengthening production skills while supporting rural women creatives.

National Festival Of Arts



The National Festival of Arts continued to serve as Belize's largest youth arts development platform, engaging students across visual art, music, dance, drama, and literary arts. In 2025, ICA recorded improved participation at the secondary school level and successfully reintroduced Literary Arts, through its Creative Writing Publication. The Creative Writing Publication featured work from 44 students across 17 primary and secondary schools and was uploaded to the 501 Academy, expanding access while showcasing Belize's emerging young writers. The Festival supports confidence-building, creative growth, and cultural expression, nurturing students from preschool through secondary.



Puppetry With Purpose



Delivered from June to August at the Bliss Center for the Performing Arts, *Puppetry with Purpose* engaged 33 children and teens in interactive puppet theatre and cultural storytelling based on the children's book *Wanaragua* by Ingrid and Malí Cayetano. The three-week programme, led by Mexican instructors Raquelin Pacheco and Jesús Cosío, emphasized creativity and performance training, while the facilitators also produced a set of puppets that remain with The Bliss to support ongoing programme development.

Additionally, over 30 librarians received training in puppet-making, puppetry, and three-dimensional character masks, strengthening their capacity to support community programming and literacy outreach across Belize. The Summer Arts initiative culminated in a Showcase featuring participating children, alongside a magic and comedy performance by Payasita Raquelin and Belize's Ozzy The Clown.



Bliss Center For The Performing Arts: National Creative Platform

The Bliss Center for the Performing Arts continued to operate as Belize's national performing arts hub, hosting over 25 plays, films, dance and music recitals, and concerts throughout the year. To ensure accessibility, The Bliss subsidizes use of its facilities and technical services, creating an enabling environment for youth initiatives, artist development, and community-led activities.

In addition to external programming, The Bliss hosted its own creative community experiences, including its annual *World Theatre Day* event, which introduced over 60 children to the magic of technical theatre through an interactive session exploring how lighting, sound, and stage design bring stories to life.



Womxn In Art

Womxn in Art reached its highest participation since its revival in 2022, featuring 45 Belizean women artists from across the country. The exhibition showcased works in painting, photography, textile, fashion design, and mixed media, alongside literary arts integration including a spoken word performance. The creative platform continues to build a supportive and nurturing creative space highly valued by artists for visibility, and peer support.

Womxn in Art also now includes the popular annual *Painting in Pairs* community event, celebrating collaboration, bonding, and the shared ways women use art for expression and connection. Increased artist participation and artwork sales reflect *Womxn in Art's* growing national relevance and its role in supporting women as both artists and entrepreneurs.



Belize National Orchestra

The creation of the Belize National Orchestra is more than just a musical project; it is a cultural initiative designed to establish an orchestral ensemble that truly reflects the rich musical tapestry of Belize. We are not simply recreating a traditional Western orchestra. Instead, this formation will blend traditional Belizean instruments and rhythms with standard orchestral instrumentation. The result is a sound that is both familiar and entirely new.

Our mission is a grand one. The Orchestra will serve as a dynamic platform for youth engagement and cultural innovation. We will be showcasing Belize's rich musical heritage through original arrangements of Belizean classics, folk traditions, and contemporary compositions. By weaving our own stories into the grand orchestral form, we are building a bridge between our past and our future.

The musicians and singers are a testament to the diverse and vibrant talent of our country. They are a true cross-section of our community, from High School school students to retirees who have dedicated their lives to music. The program tonight features many tunes you know and love, but this is only the very beginning.

The **Belize National Orchestra** is on a journey of purpose. We are here to:

- **Revive a lost orchestral culture** and introduce it to a new generation.
- **Affirm our Belizean spirit and identity** by giving it a grand, symphonic voice.
- **Tell our stories**—all our stories, traditional and modern, tragic and celebratory. We will tell them with our languages, our rhythms, and now, with our orchestra.



Carifesta



Belize participated in the 15th Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA XV) held in Barbados from August 22 to 31, 2025. The festival operated under the theme "Caribbean Roots; Global Excellence".

Belize's involvement in the festival featured several highlights:

Delegation: The country sent a 13-member delegation led by Kim Vasquez, Director of the Institute of Creative Arts.

Showcases: The group represented Belize's rich culture through visual arts, music, and the "Handmade by Belize" initiative.

Regional Networking: Delegates had the opportunity to participate in the parade of nations, network with regional artists, and advance Belize's creative industries on the global stage.





2025-26