

RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Keeping Independence Alive: Belize @ 45

30 September – 1 October, 2026

Conference Centre, University of Belize
Belmopan, Belize

WEDNESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

- 08:30 **Registration**
- 09:00 **Opening Ceremony Commences**
■ Moderator: Dylan Vernon, Executive Director, Belpri-UB
- 09:05 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
■ Dr. Vincent Palacio, President, University of Belize
■ Mr. Albert Vaughan, President, National Institute of History and Culture
- 09:15 **Opening Address**
Assad Shoman, historian, writer, activist, diplomat
- 10:00 BREAK
- 10:15 **Panel One: The Unfinished Work of Decolonisation**
Moderator: Rolando Cocom, Director of ISCR-NICH
■ Delmer Tzib: *Indigenous Language Rights, Coloniality, and the Unfinished Decolonization of Belize*
■ Nicole Hober: *Language Ideologies in Mopan Language Reclamation Efforts: Between Colonial Legacy and Post-Colonial Agency*
■ Ardelle Sabido: *Sovereignty, the Balancing of Rights and the Implementation of the Maya Customary Land Tenure Consent Order*
- 11:30 **Panel Two: The Economy and You**
Moderator: Devon Paulino, Policy Analyst, Belpri-UB
■ Arden Cayetano: *Belize's Economic Performance Since Independence*
■ Hero Balani: *Skills Demand and Workforce Adequacy, Belize's Financial Service Sector*
■ Delreo A. Newman: *From Independence to Digital Sovereignty: Modernizing Belize's Telecommunications Regulations*

12:30 **LUNCH BREAK**

13:30 **Panel Three: Environmental Justice and Resilience**

Moderator: Jake Snaddon, Director, UB-ERI

- Lee McLoughlin: *45 Years of Conservation in Belize - Persistent Colonial Roots and Decolonial Possibilities*
- Alson Ovando: *New Perspectives on Belize's Policies Affecting Biological and Geological Collections Used in Research: With a Focus on Paleontological Resource Management*
- Arlenie Rogers: *Environmental Justice in Belize: Balancing Conservation, Development, and Community Rights*

14:45 **Panel Four: Education Then and Now**

Moderator: Joyanne De Four Babb, Director, Research Office-UB

- Mikio Nishizu: *And So It Began: Belizean Education, 1816-1892*
- Monica Manzur: *I Matter: A Qualitative Investigation of the (In) Validating Experiences and Perceptions of Belonging of Nontraditional Adult Learners in Belize*
- Delmer Tzib, Filiberto Penados, Lynmara Rosado and Joy Lee-Shi: *Intersecting Barriers: Indigenous Students' Experiences of Access and Participation in Higher Education*

16:00 **END OF DAY ONE**

THURSDAY 1ST OCTOBER

09:00 **Panel Five: The US and Us**

Moderator: Dylan Vernon, BELPRI-UB

- Ottawa Sanders: *Belize-US Relations: 45 Years in the Making*
- Melissa Espat and Delmer Tzib: *From Missionary Leadership to Community Agency: The Evolution of Jesuit Social Development in Postcolonial Belize*
- Keith Fredlund: *Breaking Points in Belize's Remittance Economy: A Change point Analysis*

10:10 **Panel Six: Culture and Identity**

Moderator: April Martinez, ISCR-NICH

- Jasmine Anderson: *The 1980's Cohort: Identity Narratives Across Belize's Birthday Generation and Its Former British Subjects Who Taught Them Freedom*

- Melissa Johnson: *The Bonners: A Glimpse into the Social Worlds of Belize 250 years ago*
- Ardelle Sabido: *The Independence Generation and the Maturation of the Belizean State*

11:15 **SPECIAL EVENT: Book Launch (BELPRI)**
Enduring Diplomacy: Belize 1971 to 2026
 By Assad Shoman and Alexis Rosado

Moderator: April Martinez, ISCR-NICH

- Book Review Comments, *Delmer Tzib and Dylan Vernon*
- Words from the Authors: *Assad Shoman and Alexis Rosado*
- Q&A
- Book presentations, signing and sale

12:30 **LUNCH BREAK**

13:30 **Panel Seven: Securing the Nation**

Moderator: Avekadavie Mano, Assistant Professor, FMSS-UB

- Gian Cho, Roque Blanco and Jessica Perez: *National Identity vs. Human Identification – How Efforts toward the Identification of Missing and Unidentified Human Remains Shed Light on Belize's Post-Independence Identity*
- Lauren Young and Joy Lee-Shi: *Boots on the Ground, Cracks in the System: BDF Mental Health and Wellbeing*

14:45 **Panel Eight: Community and Development**

Moderator: Giovanni Pinelo, ISCR-NICH

- Alexandra C. Sheldon: *Come for the Monuments, Stay for the Monkeys: The Potential for Eco-centered Tourism to Support Howler Monkey Conservation in Central Belize*
- Robin Zappin et al: *Service Recipients' Perspectives on an Interprofessional International Service-Learning Program Informed by Community-Based Global Learning Principles*

16:00 **CLOSING**

RECEPTION FOLLOWS
UB-Regional Language Center
