

RESEARCH CONFERENCE¹

Keeping Independence Alive: Belize @ 45

30 September – 1 October, 2026

Conference Centre, University of Belize
Belmopan, Belize

WEDNESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

- 08:30 Registration and Morning Snacks
- 09:00 **Remarks**
- Dr. Vincent Palacio, President, University of Belize
 - Mr. Albert Vaughn, President, National Institute of History and Culture
- 09:15 **Opening Address**
Dr. Assad Shoman, Historian, writer, activist
- 10:00 BREAK
- 10:15 **Panel One: The Unfinished Work of Decolonisation**
- 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: *From Aspirational Independence to Constitutional Coexistence*
- 11:30 **Panel Two: The Economy and You**
- Mr. 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**

- 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**

- 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

19:00 Evening Round Table (TBC)
Land, Legacies and Rights in an Independent Belize

THURSDAY 1ST OCTOBER

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

- 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*

- 10:00 **Panel Six: Culture and Identity**
- 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 Evolution of Constitutional Identity*
- 11:00 BREAK
- 11:15 **SPECIAL EVENT: Belpri Book Launch**
Enduring Diplomacy: Belize 1971 to 2026
By Assad Shoman and Alexis Rosado
- 12:30 LUNCH BREAK
- 13:30 **Panel Seven: Securing the Nation**
- 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**
- 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
