

National Women in Fisheries Association established



Women in Fisheries Association elected council

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Thurs. June 20, 2024

After eight years of dedicated efforts, Belize has officially established a National Women in Fisheries Association on Tuesday, June 18. This achievement comes as seven women have been elected to serve on the executive body, including a president.

“The whole idea started in that women wanted this space for them to be able to share their concerns and their issues regarding a sector that they’re not fully recognized in as being an active participant,” Ralna Lamb-Lewis, the Assistant Country Director - Marine at the Wildlife Conservation Society told *Amandala*.

Historically, women’s roles in fisheries have often been overlooked, primarily because the act of fishing itself is predominantly performed by men. However, women play crucial roles in preparing for fishing trips, processing the catch, and managing sales once the product returns to land.

Despite their contributions, women have been largely excluded from management decisions and advisory boards within the fisheries sector.

“Because of the mere fact that when people think about fishing, it’s only the act of fishing you’re thinking about, and how those regulations would impact that set of persons. But in reality, any type of regulations and management decisions will impact all the persons involved in the sector, since all of them are playing a role within the sector,” Lamb-Lewis emphasized. This exclusion pointed to the need for a dedicated association to ensure women’s voices are heard and their contributions acknowledged.

Though it took years of discussion and planning, the journey has been a positive one with supportive feedback and even visits from numerous associations, ministries, and non-governmental organizations, including the Ministry of Blue Economy, the Fisheries Department, the National Fishermen Cooperative Association, and even a regional association called the Caribbean Network of Fisher Folk Organization.

The new group is currently working on finalizing the memorandum of association as well as being registered

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Indian Creek residents protest in Belmopan to keep their alcalde



Chairman of Indian Creek, Ernesto Choc

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Wed. June 19, 2024

This week, on the heels of the Toledo Alcalde Association’s (TAA) request last week for judicial review of the Attorney General’s decision to replace Indian Creek’s alcalde and deputy alcalde, residents from Indian Creek, along with their village council chairman, traveled to the country’s capital to express their discontent with the judicial review request in front of the National

Chairman Ernesto Choc voiced his frustration, stating, “I heard that MLA and TAA are saying that the village council elected the alcalde by itself, which is not so. This is the message that I really want to send to Ms. Christina, Mr. Pablo, and the TAA: ‘Leave Indian Creek alone.’ We do whatever we have to do [within] our village. We don’t want people from outside, from different villages. They don’t have any say in our village.”

Indian Creek resident Donicio Sam



Assembly Building.

In 2023, the villagers of Indian Creek had applied to the Attorney General’s Ministry to have their alcalde and deputy alcalde removed. They were unhappy with decisions made by these officials, which they claim were made without consulting the community. It is reported that the Attorney General then appointed new officials on the recommendation of the village council.

In response, representatives from various southern villages, including some residents from Indian Creek, along with the Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) and the TAA, then traveled to Belize City to challenge the Attorney General’s decision. They claimed that the appointments were undemocratic and did not reflect the will of the people.

On Wednesday, however, another group of Indian Creek residents, led by village council chairman Ernesto Choc, staged a peaceful protest in Belmopan. They argued that the current alcalde, Manuel Ack, was fairly elected by the majority of villagers, and without any influence from the village council. The protesters called for an end to external interference in their community’s affairs.

throughout May there were countless reports of wildfires happening in those parts above which were reportedly caused by farmers implementing the

explained the community’s right to self-governance, stating that the ongoing conflict has disrupted peace and created division among the villagers. He criticized the MLA for causing problems rather than forging harmony, and even inciting similar issues in other villages like Laguna and Emery Grove.

“If you can look at what is happening right now, not just Indian Creek, but look at what happened with Laguna and Emery Grove. It’s the same because MLA is bringing problems, not peace. If you know that you are the head of MLA, trying to help the people, then be specific, and come to the people. Tell them what is going on, what kind of assistance or help that you are giving, what kind of opportunity that you are bringing into the community,” Sam explained.

The protest lasted for about two hours, with protesters marching in circles within Independence Hill, peacefully demanding that their voices be heard and respected. They expressed the hope that their demonstration will reach the government and lead to a resolution that honors the will of the Indian Creek community.

slash-and-burn method. Those fires were left untamed, causing many acres

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Taiwan helps with wildfire relief efforts



(l-r) Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Amalia Mai and H.E. Lily Li-Wen Hsu, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to Belize.

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Thurs. June 20, 2024

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the National Emergency Management Organization received a generous donation from the

Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to alleviate the effects of the wildfires that recently affected the country’s western and southern parts.

The rainy season is now well under way, but readers may remember in previous articles of *Amandala*,

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Women in Fisheries Forum participants

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formally, as the first thing on their list would be to secure benefits for fisherfolk, both women and men, with a particular focus on health and retirement funding, given the various health risks associated with the fishing industry.

Supported by the Climate Adaptation in Protected Areas Initiative, the association also plans to strengthen its membership by applying for grants and funding opportunities. These efforts will enable them to embark on community development projects.

“A lot of them live in these coastal communities that are being impacted by the effects of climate change. As fisher folk, obviously, they’re heavily reliant on the sea, which is impacted by warming

seas and coral bleaching and so on. So that is another aspect of it that they’re really looking at — how they could help to diversify the income base for their communities, which would make them more resilient to the impacts of climate change,” Lamb-Lewis added.

Another key goal for the association is capacity building. This will be achieved through partnerships with women-focused terrestrial and marine groups, providing training and opportunities for peer learning exchanges.

The association will be registered in Belize City, with virtual meetings held to accommodate its dispersed membership. The first official meeting is scheduled for August, where the focus will be on setting the association’s vision, goals, and mission.

Membership in the association is open

to women engaged in any aspect of the fisheries sector. This inclusivity means that one does not need to be a licensed commercial fisher to join. Women involved in various roles, such as the spouses of fishers, those in processing and marketing, lionfish jewelry makers, and seaweed farmers, are all welcome.

Currently, the association’s membership represents eleven fishing communities, including Barranco, Punta Negra, Placencia, Seine Bight, Riversdale, Hopkins, Dangriga, Belize City, Lemonal, Chunox, and Sarteneja. The newly elected executive committee includes Chairwoman Paula Jacobs Williams, Vice-Chairwoman Ms. Veronica Tun, Treasurer Ms. Sherene Miranda, Secretary Ms. Isela Martinez, and Councilors Ms. Olga Colon, Ms.

Karen Belgrave, and Kristalee Valerio.

The formation of this association was a highlight of the 7th annual Women in Fisheries Forum (WIFF) held in Hopkins Village, Stann Creek, under the theme, “Leave No One Behind in Building an Enabling Environment for Our Small-Scale Artisanal Fisheries.”

The forum brought together approximately 70 women from various coastal communities. The annual event aims to recognize the diverse roles women play in Belize’s small-scale fisheries sector and provide a platform for them to voice their challenges and opportunities. The vision for WIFF is to ensure that women’s contributions are recognized and that they have equal access to resources and involvement in managing their livelihoods.

Belize Diaspora Summit 2024



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theme, “Power in Unity”, is the first of its kind to be held for Belizeans living in the US and other parts of the world. The purpose of the summit is to stir up the intellectual, economic, and inspirational resources of people of Belizean heritage living worldwide, to optimize their influence and impact on both the diaspora community and the Belizean homeland.

Before the Summit began, from June 17 to 19 in Santa Monica, California, Belizeans living in the diaspora got the opportunity to apply for a passport in the Belize Diaspora Passport Hub hosted by the Ministry of Immigration.

After the opening ceremony, several Belizean organizations and ministries, such as the Belize Investment Forum (Chamber of Commerce), Business Showcase, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Immigration, began

showcasing and offering their services to Belizeans in the diaspora.

“Today makes a significant milestone in our ongoing journey to strengthen the ties between Belize and our Belizean diaspora community. Our diaspora is a powerful force, with knowledge and resources; through gatherings like these we harness our collective strength and make a meaningful impact. This Summit is a celebration of our shared heritage, a testament to our unity and a platform of collaboration,” said Sandhya Murphy, Ambassador for Diaspora Relations.

“There’s one thing we all have in common: we all love Belize. It doesn’t matter where you live; if you live within the boundaries of Belize or outside the boundaries, we all love Belize; we want the best for Belize [and] we all want to move Belize forward. That’s what

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INAUGURAL
BELIZE DIASPORA
SUMMIT

JUNE 19-22 2024
LAX Marriott

WED 6/19 2024 7:00 PM SOCIAL MEET AND GREET

PANEL DISCUSSIONS
(BELIZE DIASPORA SUMMIT)

ROOM 1
9AM-5:30PM
THUR 6/20 2024

BELIZE INVESTMENT FORUM
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
ROOM 1
9AM-5:30PM
FRI 6/21 2024

BUSINESS SHOWCASE
ROOM 4
9AM-5:30PM
THUR 6/20 2024
FRI 6/21 2024
SAT 6/22 2024

LAND CLINIC
(MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES)
Land applications and land inquires

ROOM 2
9AM-5:30PM
THUR 6/20 2024
FRI 6/21 2024
SAT 6/22 2024

IMMIGRATION CLINIC
(MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION)
Passport applications, renewals and citizenship registration for children

ROOM 3
9AM-5:30PM
THUR 6/20 2024
FRI 6/21 2024
SAT 6/22 2024

GALA
ROOM 1
7PM UNTIL
SAT 6/22 2024

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