

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN BELIZE:
SUCSESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS

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ABSTRACT

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN BELIZE: SUCSESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS

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In Belize, public archaeology and cultural heritage management are carried out via various community and educational outreach initiatives. Cultural heritage management in Belize falls under the purview of government institutions such as the Institute of Archaeology and the Institute for Social and Cultural Research, both under the National Institute of Culture and History. Archaeological projects in Belize also function as cultural heritage managers. Using both interviews and surveys with various sectors of Belizean society, this thesis presents findings on both the successes and shortcomings of carrying out cultural heritage management in Belize. I also offer, in the discussion, views and recommendations for enhancing such initiatives in Belize.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Heritage is, literally, that which has been, or may be, inherited” (O’Keeffe 2014:3258). This, however, is just one of many definitions that exists for this concept, for heritage, and what it stands for, varies from person to person. Likewise, public archaeology differs from archaeologist to archaeologist, region to region, and from culture to culture. To some, public archaeology is/was understood as a branch of archaeology that focuses on cultural resource management (CRM) (Jameson Jr. 2004). Jameson Jr. also described it as a form of ‘educational archaeology’, focusing on the methods of accurately disseminating archaeological information to the public, but in ways the public can understand.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nature of cultural heritage in Belize, with a focus primarily on cultural heritage management centered in western Belize. This thesis aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the cultural heritage management institutions in Belize and what initiatives do they employ in heritage education?
2. What outreach efforts are expended by archaeological projects working in Belize and what is their significance?
3. How do these initiatives help to inform and shape the Belizean cultural identity?

The country of Belize, a small nation located both in Central America and the Caribbean (**Figure 1.1**), has been the locus of archaeological interest and research for well over a century. Western Belize, in particular, has been the locus of archaeological

investigation going as far back as the 1890's with Thomas Gann's work at the site of Xunantunich (1925). Continuing research in Belize has added considerable knowledge to the nation's pre-colonial past, as well as enriching the narrative about the ancient Maya and their civilization. Most of this research, however, has traditionally been, and continues to be, conducted by international teams of researchers and students who bring with them their own research designs, questions, and biases. The sole exception to this foreign directed research agenda did not start until the 1980's with the inception of the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project under the direction of Dr Jaime Awe, born and raised in the western Belizean town of San Ignacio. Over time, Belize has accrued several benefits from archaeological investigations, most notably the establishment of archaeological reserves, and the development of some of these sites as parks and tourist destinations. These reserves and parks have also contributed to the development of tourism in Belize and have led to increase employment of Belizeans in various related industries.

Over time, increased research in Belize has led to the recognition that the country was not peripheral to the ancient Maya world, but that it was actually an important and central locus for the development of Maya civilization (Pendergast 1993). Along with a significant increase in the number of archaeological research projects during the last 25 years, Belize also rapidly developed its tourism potential, resulting with a situation in which approximately one in four Belizeans now work directly and indirectly for the tourism industry. The economic benefit of archaeology is just a part of what archaeology offers to Belize. By examining public archaeology at work in Belize, this thesis aims to illustrate other ways archaeology has impacted Belize beyond

employment. This thesis also hopes to define what public archaeology is in the Belizean context and consciousness.



Figure 1.1. Map of Central America and the Caribbean showing the location of Belize (source Nations Online Project n.d.)

Background

Belize, which is considered both a part of Central America and the Caribbean, is bordered by Guatemala, Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea. Roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts, the country is subdivided into six districts or states. The largest of these districts, Cayo, encompasses most of west-central Belize. The capital of Belize, Belmopan, is in the Cayo district, and is home to the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH). Under the auspices of NICH, and also in Belmopan, are the Institute of Archaeology and the Institute for Social and Cultural Research. Cayo is also home to

several archaeological sites and reserves, such as Caracol, Xunantunich, Cahal Pech, El Pilar, Caves Branch Cave, Barton Creek Cave, and Actun Tunichil Muknal (**Figure 1.2**), all major tourist destinations. The largest town in Cayo, San Ignacio, is the home base for the Cayo Tour Guide Association as well as the Cayo Cave Guide Association. San Ignacio Town is also the location for the annual Belize Archaeology Symposium. The largest number of archaeological projects are stationed in the Cayo district, with work carried out at the sites of Cahal Pech, Xunantunich, Baking Pot, Lower Dover, Pacbitun, Actuncan, Buenavista del Cayo, Caracol, Las Cuevas, Mountain Pine Ridge, and El Pilar.

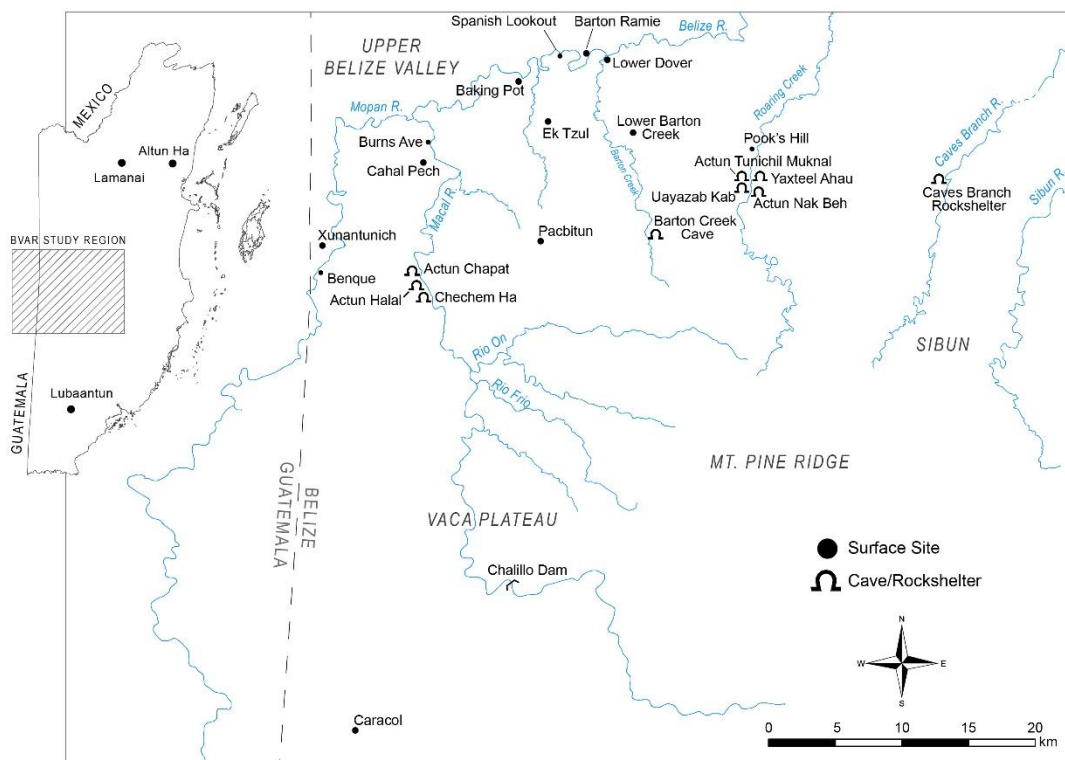


Figure 1.2. Map of western Belize showing location of sites mentioned in the text (source BVAR Project)

While not widespread, academic interest in community outreach and cultural heritage in Belize is not novel. A few archaeologists working in Belize, both in the past

and present, have examined archaeological and cultural interactions of projects and the local populace. As early as 1999 Geralyn Ducady wanted to explore the level of interest and knowledge local people had about archaeology in Belize (Dion 2002). Her initial surveys were conducted in villages near the archaeological reserve of Altun Ha in the Belize district, a major tourist destination. Her limited survey work in 1999 resulted in her returning to Belize in 2016 to conduct further research on the perception of archaeology by the Belizean public, as well as their views on the relations between archaeology and heritage. Though her work in 1999 may have been the first academic attempt at investigating public perception of archaeology in Belize, the work was limited in scope. Though limited, it was clear that archaeological outreach was minimal, and that the public desired greater access to archaeological education and information. Ducady's second attempt, 17 years later, increased the reach of her work by about 160 surveys, and by access to participants in all six districts of the country (Ducady 2019). Time constraints, travel coordination, and not fully understanding the nuances of Belizean culture, however, may have limited the scope of her work. Nonetheless, her 1999 interview with the then Commissioner of the Department of Archaeology (now the Institute of Archaeology) provides insight into how archaeology as an institution in Belize has grown. For example, in her 1999 interview with Dr. Allan Moore, the Commissioner, Moore noted the need for greater public outreach via working with schools and the media. Two decades after, the IA has drastically increased their presence at schools across the country as well as appearing on television and radio programs. These and other initiatives will be discussed in a later chapter.

In the mid to late 2000's Alicia Ebbitt McGill (2011; 2012; 2013; 2015) focused on archaeology in education, outreach initiatives, and collaboration between archaeological projects and local citizenry, and also cultural education and how it influences heritage and the national Belizean identity. Through her work in two Creole (also spelt Kriol) (descendants of British and West African people) villages, Crooked Tree and Biscayne in the Belize District, McGill highlights how an archaeological project in the vicinity of those communities alter archaeological attitudes of the local populace. McGill also examined collaborative efforts between archaeologists and teachers of the local schools. In doing so she points out limitations that can affect how successful archaeological outreach can be based on school curricula (McGill 2015).

More recently, Harrison-Buck and Clarke-Vivier (2020) highlighted the importance of multivocal approaches in archaeology to emphasize community values and voices. Their 2020 article in the journal *Heritage* describes initiatives of the Belize River East Archaeology (BREA) project in the development of a community archaeology museum in Crooked Tree Village. Not only is Crooked Tree one of the oldest Creole (Kriol) villages in Belize but the area where the village is located has a 6000-9000-year history of occupation, extending from the Paleoindian (ca 11,500 BC) through ancient Maya civilizations and culminating in the Colonial period. The museum established in Crooked Tree focuses on human interaction with the environment and highlights ancient Maya occupation and the subsequent colonial period and Creole occupation. Harrison-Buck and Clarke-Vivier explicitly mention the potential for attracting tourism to the village via the museum but state that it “was designed primarily for Belizeans, namely school-aged children” (Buck and Clarke-Vivier 2020:412). The established museum is

the result of archaeological research and ethnographic work started years before by Alicia Ebbitt-McGill, and community involvement that provided historic artifacts and knowledge to the project.

In western Belize, Dr Anabel Ford has expended considerable effort in making sure that community engagement is an essential part of her Belize River Archaeological Settlement Survey (BRASS) Project. As early as 1993 she helped develop, along with community members primarily from the village of Bullet Tree Falls (closest in proximity to the site of El Pilar) the organization known as Amigos de El Pilar (AdEP) (Ford 2006). While the archaeology at El Pilar reveals more about the history of the site, a major part of Ford's dedication is the promotion of "Archaeology under the Canopy", an approach that promotes preservation of the natural landscape as a form of heritage conservation (MARC 2010) and which views the jungle as a Maya forest garden. The work carried out by Ford, in the past and presently, pushes the engagement with community to the forefront of archaeological practice. As Ford (2019:214) notes, the "local community understands these principles, has a long history of experience in the local area, and can bring their knowledge to help conserve valued resources". The promotion of the Maya forest garden concept is perhaps the most well-known cause to emerge from the BRASS Project. Though with limited success, the concept has also become an educational tool taught by Maya forest gardeners themselves, and highlighted by Ford in many academic settings.

In recent years, archaeologists in Belize have generally started to pay more attention to community engagement and to incorporate it in their project goals. To a large degree, this change is partially due to the rising interest of the Belizean people on

such matters. In 2014 and 2015, during the annual Belize Archaeology Symposium (BAS), for example, some Belizean attendees questioned staff of the Mopan Valley Archaeological Project (MVAP) about community engagement on the project. Working in western Belize, under the direction of Dr. Jason Yaegar of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), MVAP conducts research at the site of Buenavista del Cayo. Rebecca Friedel and Leah McCurdy, along with Yaegar, acknowledged the importance in addressing questions of community engagement, and noted that “continued public interest in specific details demonstrates the need for wider reaching communication, and it shows the shared concern in Belize that foreign researchers work more closely with, and for, local communities” (McCurdy et al 2017:12).

In an effort to address such matters, McCurdy et al. (2017) first mapped the history of archaeological work conducted at the nearby site of Xunantunich and the involvement of the adjacent village of San Jose Succotz. What McCurdy et al. (2017) revealed in their research is the complexity of working in a place like Belize, and in villages like San Jose Succotz. Unlike places like the Southwestern United States where descendant communities are largely well defined and have connections to specific sites and sacred places, such as Zuni Pueblo’s connection to Ribbon Falls in the Grand Canyon, or Hopi connection to Chaco Canyon in New Mexico (Byers 2018; Hopkins et al. 2019; National Park Service n.d.), San Jose Succotz, like many other communities in Belize, are not so easily defined. McCurdy et al. (2017:13) state “The community of Succotz, like many others, comprises individuals who identify with different nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities, thus complicating any easy description. Many identify as Maya, while others do not, and therefore, labeling Succotz as a

descendent community captures only part of the picture.” Maxine Oland (2012) faced similar challenges in her work with both descendant and non-descendant communities in a village in northern Belize. Oland’s article reveals her evolving views as an archaeologist working in a foreign country, especially as it relates to decolonizing archaeological practices. Oland recognizes her “colonial gaze” in writing about decolonizing her archaeological practices, acknowledging that she has not yet collaborated with local communities in Belize. She also emphasizes that whether local citizens identify as descendent or not, heritage is a concern for all.

The Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR), working in western Belize, has a long history of working for the promotion of cultural heritage. From its inception in 1988 the project focused not only on archaeological research but also on the safeguarding and conservation of national heritage, public education and outreach, and community involvement. The very first report by BVAR’s senior director, Jaime Awe, clearly stated that the project aimed at halting further site destruction of Cahal Pech, development of the site as a National Park, and publication of a guidebook for tourism and educational purposes (Awe 1992; Hoggarth et al 2020). Awe also started the BVAR Project at Cahal Pech at the request of, and in collaboration with, the San Ignacio Branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (Awe 1992). Awe, born and raised in western Belize, and the BVAR Project, have a long history of community involvement via public archaeology and community cultural heritage initiatives. While the archaeological reports and articles by Awe and other BVAR members are considerable, their publications on cultural heritage and public outreach initiatives are equally extensive, and should not be overlooked. These include highlighting the

historical development of archaeology and cultural heritage resource management in Belize (Awe 2012; 2020), helping women's cooperatives revitalize cultural traditions by improving the quality of their ceramic replicas and slate carvings (Awe 2016), publishing educational and tourism related information (Awe 2005, 2006), or highlighting public archaeology and cultural heritage initiatives over three decades of BVAR's existence (Hoggarth et al 2020). Such publications academically highlight the growth of archaeology in Belize over several decades while at the same time place importance on heritage education and community interaction as well.

In recent years more archaeological projects working in Belize have come to understand the importance of increased community interaction. Community involvement on projects have an increased visibility, particularly on varying social media platforms. The combined efforts between these projects and various cultural heritage managers in Belize have led to the increased realization that public outreach and involvement is necessary, especially for making archaeology relevant in a developing nation. Belize is an ideal place to examine how these initiatives play out, not only as it fits into the category of a developing nation with a strong archaeological presence, but also because it is a multi-cultural society that has 'appropriated' its archaeological heritage and made its stewardship the responsibility of all Belizeans regardless of ethnic or cultural affiliation.

In the Belizean context, public archaeology/cultural heritage is best examined by analyzing the work conducted by cultural heritage managers including archaeologists, anthropologists, tour guides, and teachers. At the institutional level, this also includes efforts expended by the Belize Institute of Archaeology, the Belize Institute for Social

and Cultural Research, and archaeological projects that are affiliated with several international universities. In this thesis, I evaluate the community and educational outreach initiatives conducted by these various institutions in order to document the successes, limitations, and shortcomings of their efforts. Furthermore, the thesis will also examine and critique what has been done in the distant and recent past, evaluate present initiatives, and gauge future successes based on current programs.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

It may be difficult to pinpoint the moment when public archaeology became a concern of any researcher. Gould (2016) and Matsuda and Okamura (2011) all attribute the coining of the term to Charles R. McGimsey III in 1972. The coining of the term rose from archaeology that was vested in public support and interest, whether by financial or political means, or recording and preserving archaeological remains being threatened by development works on behalf of and with support of the public. Moshenska (2017) claims that British archaeologist and TV personality Sir Mortimer Wheeler was the first prominent public archaeologist. As far back as the 1950's, Wheeler (as cited in Moshenska 2017) promoted the idea that there was a moral and academic need to share scientific archaeological work with the “common man”. Wheeler also claimed it is the duty of the archaeologist to make their work accessible and understandable to the public. Moshenska adds that though Wheeler may have been the first prominent public archaeologist, he was not the only or the first to “look beyond the material remains of the past to consider the place of archaeology in the world” (Moshenska 2017:3).

Whatever its origins are, public archaeology can mean different things to different people, depending on where you live, cultural affiliations, or various other demographic markers. Public archaeologists would likely give you different answers when asked what it is they do. Moshenska's (2017:3) definition of it, “practice and scholarship where archaeology meets the world,” is quite broad, encompassing various themes that can arise, such as archaeology's involvement in policies, education, politics, the antiquities market, ethnicity, national identity, the law, tourism, and economics (**Figure 2.1**) (Okamura and Matsuda 2011). Gould (2016:3) also points out that public archaeology is

evolving rapidly and becoming increasingly apparent in projects around the world, with archaeologists “increasingly coming to regard community engagement as an ethical best practice.”

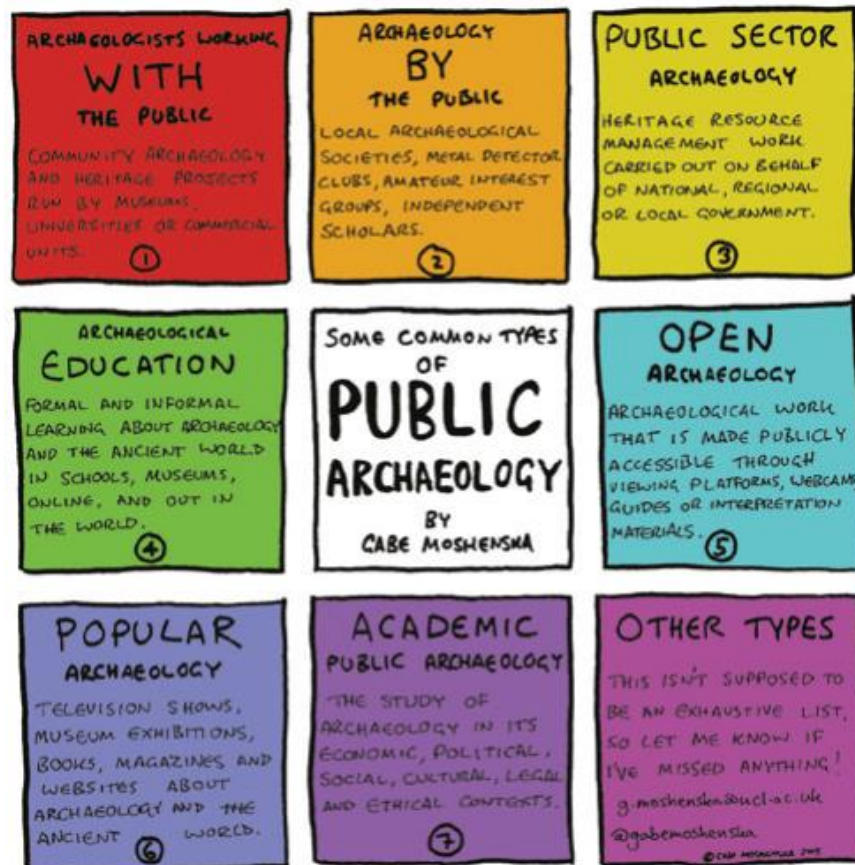


Figure 2.1. Common types of public archaeology as defined by Moshenska (source Moshenska 2017).

The various components of public archaeology, regardless of who defines it, are very important to my study of heritage management in Belize. Indeed, public archaeology in Belize is evident in various forms, many that overlap, including: (1) tourism, (2) public education, (3) preservation of antiquities, and, more recently, (4) an increase in public participation on archaeological projects. This thesis focuses on those topics from two points of view: that of the entities that deliver such services, as well as

those who receive them. Moshenska's (2017) typology of public archaeology will be very useful in categorizing practices within the subfield, and providing examples, show just how varied public archaeology in Belize is. Some of the common types, as defined by Moshenska (2017) (**Figure 2.1**), include public sector archaeology, archaeological education, open archaeology, and others.

A major part of this research examines how young Belizeans interact with their history and archaeological heritage. This theoretical educational approach for public archaeology, as defined by Okamura and Matsuda (2011), lends the expert voice in archaeology to communicate archaeological information to the non-archaeologists. This interaction occurs in varying venues across Belize, including history courses in schools, educational lectures to the public, and especially presentations made at the annual Belize Archaeology Symposium. The impact of these venues shall be discussed and compared to the more hands-on approach of young Belizeans and their experiences on archaeological projects. Discussion of these differing approaches and experiences will help to assess their merit, and allow for suggestions to enhance community and educational outreach. This thesis, in elucidating public archaeology and other cultural heritage interactions in Belize, aims to define what those terms mean in the Belizean context by providing concrete examples. These definitions are important for the future of archaeological practice in Belize, to maintain some relevance in the postmodern world where other concerns, such as cultural heritage and identity, take precedence over archaeological discoveries. Defining such terms in Belize requires examination of various facets of public outreach and public policy, including the concept of 'public ownership' of antiquities, in the attempt to curb illicit trafficking of the archaeological

past. This thesis, then, shall help to shape public archaeology theory, contributing to future archaeological endeavors for Belize and the rest of the world.

As I previously noted, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the nature of public archaeology through cultural heritage management, with a focus on western Belize. Though focusing on archaeology in Belize, the thesis is not archaeological in nature. I will acquire answers to my research questions by using ethnographic methods to obtain qualitative data. These methods include surveys and interviews. The surveys collected data from people who reside within and outside of the region I focused on, but whose thoughts and feedback are equally valuable. Brodie (2012) discusses the benefits of surveys or questionnaires to reach broader populations. As Brodie suggests, the survey participants throughout the country of Belize may not be “direct beneficiaries” (2012:243) but might be knowledgeable about how archaeology operates, including the cultural and commercial benefits of archaeological heritage. Reetz et al. (2019) devised questionnaires for research about archaeological education, and included questions on the Likert scale, true or false questions, and multiple choices. In my research, I combined both the questionnaire and survey methods, thus resulting with structured answers, and with some room for freedom of personal expression.

The surveys used in my study have no truly identifying features, collecting only demographic data that cannot be traced back to any specific person. The collection of such demographic data, including gender, ethnicity, and geographic location in the country, and level of education, has already been used in Belize (e.g., Ducady 2019). For the purposes of this thesis, I will therefore apply a methodological approach that shares some similarities with that of Ducady’s (2019) study in Belize. The major

difference is that as a native Belizean with greater background knowledge of archaeology in Belize, my emic interpretations of the results may differ from Ducady's etic approach. My emic understanding of Belizean culture also allows me to greater understand nuances and attitudes in interpreting data from interviews and surveys. My experience in archaeological educational outreach throughout the country of Belize also provides an insider position in understanding the institutional mechanisms in place.

To acquire data for the thesis, I created three different types of surveys that target very specific demographic groups (See Appendices A, B, and C). While one survey is targeted for general Belizeans across the country, another is focused specifically at tour guides. Tour guides in Belize form a metaphorical cultural bridge between archaeology and the local populace, as they benefit directly from archaeological knowledge. Thus, their insight may vary from the general population's, providing a much-needed critique of how archaeology is practiced in Belize, specifically as it relates to the dissemination of information. The third survey is only geared to non-Belizeans, but for those who have worked in Belize practicing archaeological research, whether for one season or several. Their own insights may provide unique perspectives on Belizean culture, and Belizean interaction with the archaeological past. I created all three surveys using Google Forms, each one similar in form but varying in some of the specific questions asked. I then posted these surveys online as well as sending some out through email to several of my survey subjects, in an effort to cast as wide a net as possible. Nonetheless I acknowledge the limitations of such surveys, as access to internet is limited across the country of Belize. The Covid-19 pandemic, unfortunately,

prevented me from conducting surveys in person which possibly would have achieved a wider reach.

The second method of research is the use of semi-structured interviews. Structure is important for getting direct answers to well-defined questions (Brodie 2012), while less structured approaches provide more freedom for digression. Having both structured and open questions, I believe, can lead to a better understanding of public archaeology in Belize. Ducady (2019) also conducted interviews, both formal and informal, though no one consented to be recorded. With respect to my thesis, in person interviews in Belize were not possible because of the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions placed on travel to the country. Faced with this situation, I had to alter my plans and conduct all interviews online via Zoom. I chose participants based on their relevance to the various themes of cultural heritage management in Belize. The participants thus included staff of the Belize Institute of Archaeology, the Institute for Social and Cultural Research, university students, teachers, and young Belizeans who had archaeological field experience. I recorded verbal consent for both the interview and my recording of the interviews. I recorded interviews in both video and audio formats in order to achieve accurate transcriptions. Following the examples of McCurdy et al. (2017), I conducted semi-structured interviews, with some predetermined questions, prompting the subjects to also share unstructured and personal thoughts and experiences in Belizean archaeology.

The transcription process is two-fold, first uploading the audio files to Otter.ai, an online software that transcribes spoken audio into text. While I conducted most of the interviews in English, some participants spoke a mix of English and Creole. Otter.ai had

some difficulty transcribing Creole and other non-English terms. Thus, after Otter completed the transcriptions, I listened to the interview as I read the text, making corrections as necessary. This helped me separate speakers in interviews with more than one subject, as well as highlighting key and important quotes. All data, including surveys, recordings of interviews, and transcriptions, are stored both on password protected physical and digital drives. These will be stored, as per IRB protocol, for five years, then deleted.

CHAPTER 3 – THE ORGANIZATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN BELIZE

Defining Cultural Heritage

There is no comprehensive definition of what cultural heritage means in Belize. In view of this situation, one of the questions I asked during my interviews was what my interviewees thought cultural heritage meant. Interestingly, in many cases culture and cultural heritage meant the same thing to many of the respondents. For many, cultural heritage in Belize is about self-identification, and this identification is frequently a combination of two identifiers, ethnicity, and culture. Ethnicity, in the Belizean context, is largely created by physical and behavioral attributes, such as skin color and speech. However, ethnicity also, to some degree, is determined on where you were born and where you live. Being born into a Garinagu family for example¹ (an Afro-Caribbean culture), in Dangriga, Stann Creek (predominantly Garinagu town in southern Belize) ethnically makes you Garinagu. The same is true for someone born into a Yucatec Maya family in San Antonio, Cayo, in western Belize. While in both these cases an individual can ethnically be identified as Garinagu or Yucatec Maya, it does not necessarily mean that culturally they are.

Thus, what makes someone culturally Garinagu, Maya, or affiliated with one of the many other ethnic/cultural groups in Belize? As one Belizean worded it, a “set of beliefs or practices for a group of people”. Predominantly, cultural identifiers in Belize include, food, clothing, traditions, and language. These identifiers are not ironclad and can vary between cultural groups, especially as it relates to language and food. Belize

¹ See Appendix D for more information on Belize’s various ethnic and cultural groups

*Kriol*², largely identified with the Creole culture (descendants of British settlers and enslaved Africans) for example, is spoken by Belizeans of varying ethnicities throughout the country and serves more as a national identifier rather than an ethnic one. Belizeans from across the ethnic spectrum also eat foods that are traditionally considered culture specific. While one would identify rice and beans as a Creole dish, and escabeche (spicy and tart onion soup) as a Mestizo dish, these foods are actually eaten across the nation regardless of regional ethnicities. But taken together, with a specific ethnicity, cultural identifiers help to form what is Belizean cultural heritage.

““Heritage” is left largely undefined, although there is a strong emphasis on the dynamics of time, geography, and scale. The exception to this lies in legal instruments, which seek, somewhat out of necessity, to define the relevant typologies and forms of heritage as specifically as possible” (Giovine and Cowie 2014:1). This statement, prepared for the American Anthropological Association (AAA) task force on cultural heritage accurately describes the variations possible in defining heritage. What the AAA is certain of is that cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible heritage, and functions as a collective cultural memory (AAA 2016). Cultural heritage management employs different modes of execution, including community engagement and education. Definitions of what constitutes heritage, and what is protected by heritage legislation, varies from place to place, and culture to culture. In Belize, the revised National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) Act (2000:27) clearly states that “All ancient monuments and antiquities wherever situate, whether upon any land or in any river, stream or watercourse, or under the territorial waters of Belize, shall absolutely vest in the State.”

² Belizean Kriol is a spoken Creolized English with African influences (Young 2007).

Legislation in Belize places all archaeological resources under stewardship of the state, and thus the people of Belize.

The concept of Public Archaeology has been defined by a number of scholars (e.g., Gould 2016; Moshenska 2017; Oland 2012), with each definition based on individual theoretical biases, or influenced by the scholar's academic background and their country of origin. In Belize, public archaeology is largely intertwined with cultural heritage management resulting from archaeological research. Defining cultural heritage in ethnically diverse developing countries, such as Belize, can pose considerable challenges, particularly given the cultural identities of different ethnic groups that make up Belize's population. Partly in response to this challenge, Belize established a unitary system of management in which ownership of all cultural heritage is vested in the people and government of the country. Responsibility for managing the country's tangible and intangible heritage also falls under the authority of the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) (**Figure 3.1**).

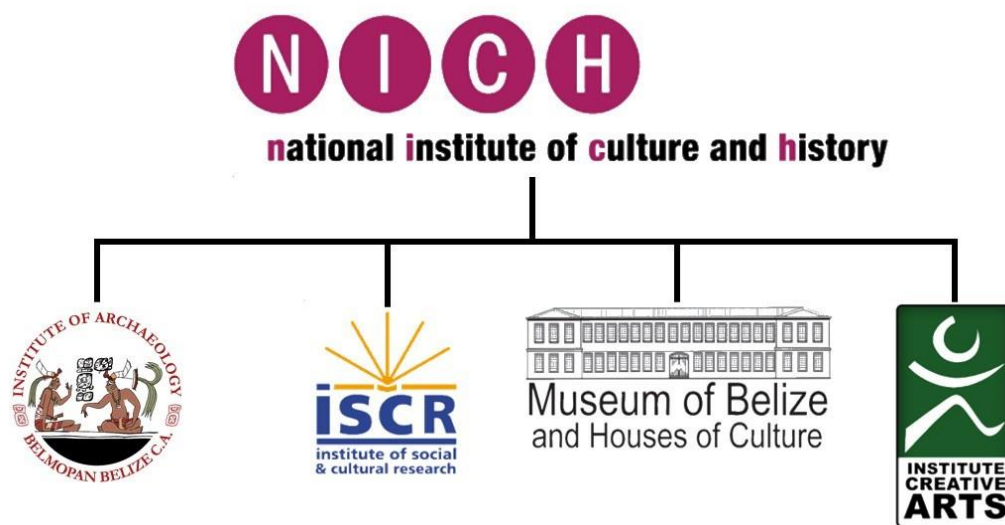


Figure 3.1. The logos for the four branches of the Belize National Institute of Culture and History (adapted from NICH n.d.).

National Institute of Culture and History

The National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) was formed in 2003 and comprises of four institutions, each with their own mandates and missions but subject to Chapter 331 of the Laws of Belize, aptly called the NICH Act. NICH is the premier institution for managing cultural heritage in Belize. Prior to the establishment of NICH, heritage management was vested in separate government departments. The signing of the NICH Act amalgamated those departments, including the Arts Council, which became the Institute of Creative Arts (ICA), and the Department of Archaeology, which became the Institute of Archaeology (IA). The formation of NICH which “allowed for the harmonization of efforts” (NICH 2014:12) and establishment of both the Museum of Belize and Houses of Culture (MOB), and the Institute for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR).

Each institution under NICH focuses on a separate form of culture, history, and expression. The Institute for Creative Arts (ICA), based at the Bliss Center for Performing Arts in Belize City, focuses on artistic expression in all its forms, including dance, theater, and visual arts. ICA has under its manifesto the creation and management of two institutional offshoots, the Belize Film Commission as well as the Belize Youth Orchestra and Choir. The Museum of Belize (MOB) is housed in Belize City, in a refurbished building that formerly served as Her Majesty's Prison, remnants from Belize's days as a British Colony. The MOB's main focus is education through the exhibition of prehistoric and historic period objects and the promotion of other cultural events. The MOB accomplishes its goals not only via exhibitions at the museum itself, but with exhibits and cultural programs at seven Houses of Culture (HOC) spread across the country.

Institute for Social and Cultural Resource

The Institute for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR) is housed inside the NICH administration building in the city of Belmopan in western Belize. ISCR's aim is to "promote, retrieve, supervise, document and carry out historical, social, cultural and anthropological research" (NICH n.d.). Recent initiatives from ISCR include an increased focus on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH). One of the main goals of the ISCR, which is still a relatively new institution, is to promote the teaching Belize's history. ISCR, upon request, delivers presentations and exhibits at schools and other public events, sometimes using regional Houses of Culture as a base for public interaction. ISCR's focus is on social, cultural, and historic aspects of Belize's cultural heritage. For example, a staple traveling exhibit features Belizean heroes, patriots, and benefactors (**Figure 3.2**). This exhibit features prominent Belizean figures in politics, education, literature, and the arts, such as Thomas Vincent Ramos, a Garinagu social activist, and George Cadle Price, first Prime Minister of Belize and father of Belize's independence from Great Britain. Along with the heroes and benefactors exhibit, ISCR also developed an exhibit on various Belizean cultural celebrations, not just to share the cultural heritage that is still practiced, but also in efforts to document them. These celebrations include religious and cultural celebrations, including *Ox'lajun Ba'aktun*, a festival of thanksgiving performed by residents of the village of Maya Center in southern Belize, and *Hanal Pixan*, a religious celebration honoring the souls of the departed that is performed in many communities across the country.

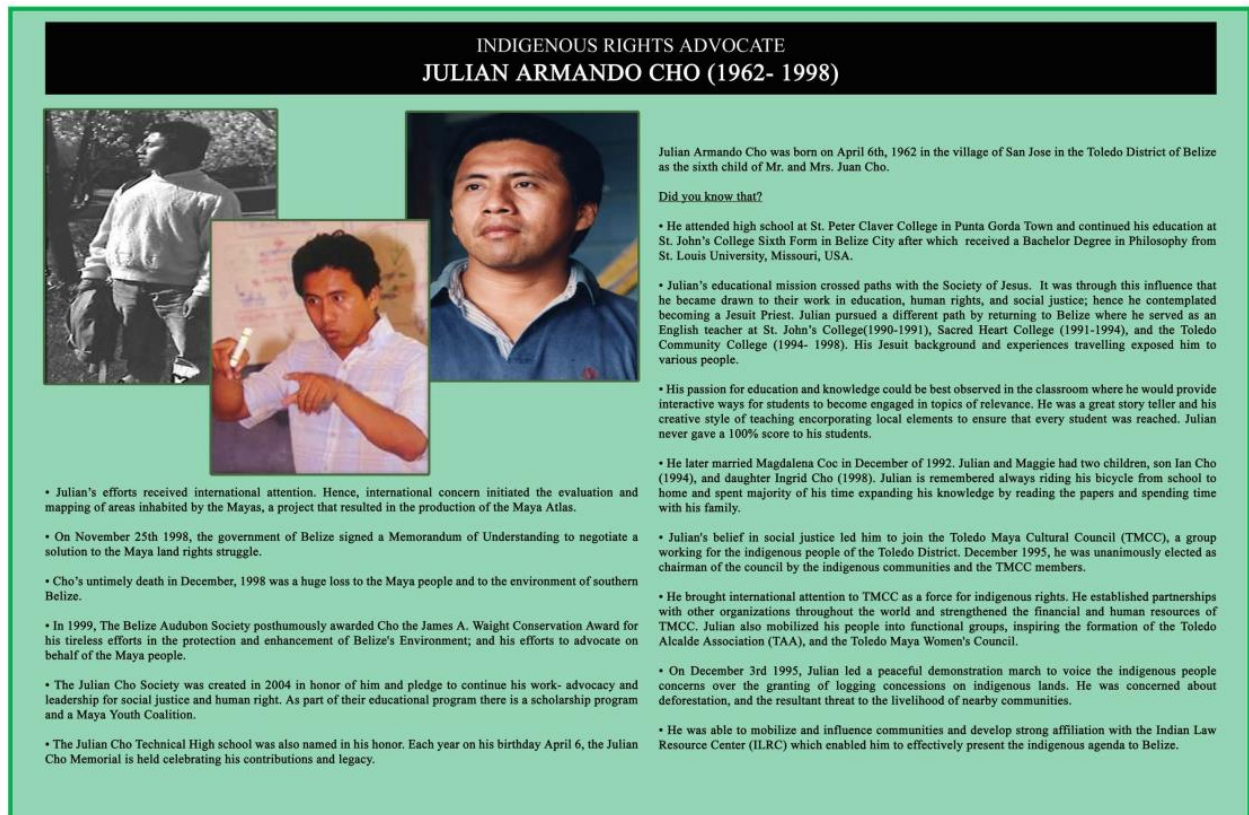


Figure 3.2. A panel of ISCR's Belizean Heroes and Benefactors Exhibit (source ISCR n.d.).

Initially all of ISCR's publications and outreach focused on the historic aspects of Belize's cultural heritage. In recent years, however, ISCR has shifted focus to emphasize greater attention on Belize's "intangible and living heritage" (Pelayo 2020). Working on intangible and living heritage not only grants ISCR the opportunity to comply with and promote the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, it allows for greater interaction and collaboration with communities across Belize. Phylcia Pelayo, Senior Research and Education Officer at ISCR stated, "One component that influenced how we go about promoting and managing the living heritage aspect is focusing on community partnerships. We make sure that communities, their organizations, activists, have a say in how it is that they want to see cultural heritage managed, promoted, and safeguarded" (Pelayo 2020).

ISCR takes the management and safeguarding of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, a step further. As a small institution, ISCR may have some difficulties always being present to document or record aspects of cultural heritage, but by involving interested Belizeans in the process, ISCR gets the work done, and promotes a communal stewardship over cultural heritage. Linette Sabido, Research and Education Officer at ISCR, claims “the ultimate goal would be enabling communities and the people to take full ownership of the safeguarding and promotion of their cultural heritage” (Sabido 2020). In their capacity training regarding the documenting of cultural heritage, the staff of ISCR are also trained to train others. In doing so, the staff of ISCR create greater awareness of the need for documenting cultural heritage (**Figure 3.3**) While such an initiative is important for periodic reports to UNESCO, Sabido believes this “rippling effect” is important in giving communities stewardship over safeguarding their own cultural heritage without the constant need for ISCR’s institutional involvement or intervention.



Figure 3.3. Staff of ISCR conducting a training seminar on intangible cultural heritage (source ISCR n.d.)

ISCR, however, has not moved entirely away from researching and promoting Belize's recent history. Inaugurated in 2015, the Goldson House for Democracy and Patriotism opened its doors (**Figure 3.4**). This House moves a step beyond a heroes and benefactors display, honoring the life of Philip Stanley Wilberforce Goldson, a Belizean hero and first leader of the opposition party. The renovated house was his former residence in the city of Belmopan and is another space for ISCR to create awareness of Belize's history, particularly highlighting the movement towards independence. Created a year before the Goldson House, the Belize History Association (BHA) brings together Belizean students, teachers, tour-guides, writers, publishers, and history enthusiasts, with ISCR as the secretariat. As a non-profit organization, the BHA spearheads, conducts, and promotes research on Belizean history, and its most recent endeavor was a public forum on decolonizing history in Belize.



Figure 3.4. ISCR's Linette Sabido discussing panels at the Goldson House for Democracy and Patriotism (source ISCR n.d.).

Perhaps most successfully in the efforts to spearhead, conduct, and promote research on Belizean history and culture, ISCR led in the creation of the Belize National Research Conference (BNRC). Starting in 2012, ISCR joined the IA in a merged conference called the Belize Archaeology and Anthropology Symposium (BAAS), evolving from the highly successful Belize Archaeology Symposium (BAS). After four years of a joint conference between the institutions, ISCR created their own conference, the BNRC, with the assistance of the premier higher education institutions in Belize, including the University of Belize, Galen University, and the University of the West Indies. The BNRC's goal is to present research in Belize aiming to affect change in "Belize's economic, scientific, social and technological development" (BNRC 2020). All conference proceedings are subsequently published in a volume called *The Research Reports in Belizean History and Anthropology* and become available to the public a year following the conference. Some past research topics in those proceedings include the colonization of the Maya in southern Belize, globalization in Belize, and the impacts of teaching Maya and African history at St. John's College in Belize City. ISCR has spearheaded other publications beyond just BNRC's proceedings. Aimed at documenting cultural landmarks in varying Belizean municipalities, the *A Walk-Through* series captures, with text and photographs, historical snapshots, and social memories. ISCR has already published *A Walk Through* of various Belizean Towns such as San Ignacio and Santa Elena, Benque Viejo, Belize City, and Dangriga, with future publications aiming at documenting the same for Punta Gorda and Orange Walk Towns.

Institute of Archaeology

The fourth institution under NICH is the Institute of Archaeology (IA). Formerly the Department of Archaeology and formed in 1954, the IA's goals are geared to the “research, protection, preservation, and sustainable management of Belize’s cultural and archaeological resources” (NICH n.d.). Seventeen archaeological sites in Belize have been declared reserves and fall under the management of the IA. These reserves (**Figure 3.5**) function not only as open-air museums and classrooms on Belize’s ancient history, but also as means of economic support for many Belizeans. The IA is divided into varying departments, including Parks Management and Research and Education. The Park Management department is responsible for keeping the open reserves operational, including any and all infrastructural developments at the reserves.



Figure 3.5. A plaza at the Xunantunich Archaeological Reserve in western Belize (source NICH n.d.).

Research and Education, though sometimes listed as two separate departments, work in tandem, and are responsible for facilitating all archaeological research in the country, as well as conducting varying forms of educational and social outreach. To this end, the IA participates in events such as International Museum Day with educational booths and activities at the Museum of Belize or Houses of Culture (**Figure 3.6**), annual sessions of Art in the Park and Street Art Fest; Ancient Archaeology Week held at the Corozal House of Culture in tandem with Dr Cynthia Robin and the Aventura Archaeology Project; and celebrating International Archaeology Day with a series of lectures and/or exhibits. Perhaps, however, the largest audience the IA interacts with are students at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, all across the country of Belize.



Figure 3.6. The author at an International Museum Day event hosted by the Benque House of Culture in western Belize (source Author).

The IA reaches thousands of students each year through a varied lectures series coupled with a traveling exhibit of artifacts. At the beginning of the school term in September of each year, the Research and Education department sends out a letter to all schools in Belize, reminding them of available lectures provided for their students. In many cases, however, schools do not necessarily need to be reminded as a lecture from the Institute of Archaeology at their school has become an annual staple. Lecture topics include The Ancient Maya; comparing/contrasting the Maya and Egyptians; Cultural Heritage Management in Belize; Scientific Achievements of the Maya; and Careers in Archaeology. Sometimes schools request specific or tailored presentations, such as discussing archaeology in their geographic locations. Lectures on careers are often combined with an exhibit of varying tools used in archaeology as well as expected artifact types found during excavations.

Much like ISCR's conference proceedings, the Institute of Archaeology (IA) also publishes annual conference proceedings in a volume entitled the Research Reports in Belizean Archaeology (RRBA). RRBA's Volume 1 covers papers presented at the first annual Belize Archaeology Symposium (BAS) held in 2003. Almost two decades later, the RRBA evolved from mere conference proceedings to become essential reading for Belizean and Maya archaeology, featuring not only the evolving narrative of Maya history, but innovative techniques used in the practice of archaeology in Belize. The BAS functions as a venue for the most important aspect of archaeology: dissemination and education. The BAS has grown into an important archaeological conference bringing together archaeologists who conduct research across the country of Belize in varying contexts, including ancient Maya sites, both terrestrial and cave sites, as well as

historic sites, including cemeteries, sugar mills, and old church compounds. The BAS is not only a venue for Principal Investigators (PI) to present their projects latest findings, but is like the first venue for many graduate students to highlight their own research and quite possibly conduct their first public presentations.

The BAS' main priority, however, is in the dissemination of information (**Figure 3.7**). The 3-day event has quite a diverse audience, including archaeologists and their students, but perhaps most importantly, Belizean tour guides, students, and the general public. The Belizean audience increases annually which is perhaps most important, as the BAS provides a venue not only for Belizeans to access new data about their country's history, but also provides direct contact with archaeologists working in their country. Not only does each session have a window of opportunity for asking questions about specific research, but coffee breaks allow for conversation opportunities between community members and archaeologists. This annual event is the hallmark in the IA's social and educational outreach calendar but is far from the only presence the IA makes in social and educational settings.



Figure 3.7. Attendance at the 2018 Belize Archaeology Symposium (source NICH 2018).

Having a setting like the BAS provides Belizeans of all ages to interact with archaeologists, to learn about their projects, and how to get involved. While some projects wrap up just before the BAS, others, particularly in western Belize, still continue for a month after the BAS. Frank Tzib, a young Maya man from the village of San Antonio in western Belize always had interest in learning more about his ancestry and became interested in what archaeology could provide towards that end. While he recalls knowing of the existence of a project at the site of Pacbitun near to San Antonio, he was not sure how to get involved. His brother worked at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel, the venue for the annual BAS, and told Frank to come by and perhaps meet archaeologists working in Belize (Tzib 2020). While attending the BAS, Frank was introduced to Dr. Jaime Awe, and Awe, showing great enthusiasm for young Belizeans wanting to become involved in archaeology, invited Frank to volunteer with the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance at Cahal Pech. Frank accepted, and via BVAR and the BAS, was introduced to a network of other projects working in the country.

Gatekeepers of this history include two other groups of cultural heritage managers, the staff of archaeological reserves, and tour guides. The IA has ensured that both groups are accurately versed in Belize's prehistory by conducting regular training seminars for them. The managing staff of archaeological reserves attended a 2-day training workshop where archaeologists Sylvia Batty and Antonio Beardall provided lectures on several aspects of ancient Maya culture, as well as provided them with further reading that was site and area specific. In this manner, the staff, who are also gatekeepers to the various reserves, are equipped with appropriate knowledge if they are asked questions by visitors. Similarly, Drs. Jaime Awe and Julie Hoggarth of BVAR,

in collaboration with the IA 2012, launched the Belize Cultural Tourism Training Project in both northern and southern Belizean municipalities of Belize (Hoggarth 2020). These seminars provided Awe and Hoggarth with the opportunity to present past and new area specific archaeological information to guides working in those regions.

Both ISCR and the IA include education outreach as fundamental parts of their goals and missions. While the IA and ISCR differ in the temporal factors of what is preserved, promoted, and sustained, their ideologies are similar in how information is disseminated. This makes ISCR and the IA the two most similar sister institutions under NICH. A significant part of the annual budget for both institutions devotes funds to public outreach, whether in schools or other public venues. Being similar in their modus operandi, ISCR and the IA often work in tandem in public settings, with the IA covering Belize's ancient history, while ISCR displays recent history, as well as current cultural expressions.

Facilitated by permits granted by the IA, archaeological projects in Belize also serve as cultural heritage partners/managers in many ways. Primarily, archaeological projects excavating Belizean sites, both ancient and historic, provide new data to the still evolving story of the nation's past. New information, particularly on the ancient Maya, helps to boost the tourist experience, as tour guides become better informed on the narratives of Belize's ancient history. Perhaps most directly, however, archaeological projects are sources for Belizeans to receive training in uncovering their own past. By actively involving Belizeans, particularly the youth, archaeological projects can have profound impacts on shaping cultural identity. Archaeological projects conducting research in Belize have also taken on the dual role of both carrying out

planned investigations as well as heritage management initiatives, with western Belize being perhaps the best locus for examining the results of such actions. Hoggarth et al. (2020) recently published an article briefly describing the history of such initiatives and interaction between the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) and the country of Belize. While the BVAR Project is best known for its scholarly and scientific contributions over the past three decades, the project's significant public archaeological initiatives have largely remained more discrete and less publicized.

Challenges and Successes in Cultural Heritage Management in Belize

ISCR

“My greatest daily challenge is to adequately manage the cultural heritage of Belize with very limited human and financial resources. This is the bane of our existence in the developing world” (Awe 2011:9). This statement is true not only for archaeology in Belize but also the anthropological outreach executed by ISCR. Staff of ISCR realize that human capital in their institution can sometimes be limited, but more challenges arise when management has one set of ideas or goals, and the communities ISCR work in have different expectations. “We’re trying to be responsive to what people’s needs are, to what their aspirations are, to what they see as critical,” muses Rolando Cocom (2020), Senior Research and Education Officer at ISCR. Responding to the needs and wants of communities in how their cultural heritage is safeguarded can be complicated to manage when the staff also has to “manage what the institution views as critical, what has strategic value, or is politically convenient or desirable” (Cocom 2020).

Pelayo (2020) understands that management has benefits in managing cultural heritage but challenges present themselves in balancing what everyone wants. However, in many instances, the challenge comes from the communities ISCR aspires to work in, not being familiar with who ISCR is, as an institution, and what ISCR's mandate represents. This causes some hesitation from some communities to participate in varying ISCR initiatives, or from providing input in the processes of organizing events. This challenge is frequently overcome by nourishing relationships with key figures in communities, especially those that command great respect and have greater influence. Cocom (2020) believes that such interaction has greater benefits in achieving goals than just the distribution of financial resources in planning events or creating relationships with people of various communities. Cocom believes that successfully managing cultural heritage is beyond just accessing funding for such initiatives, but "social interaction" has greater impact, and that the symbol-making infused in social interaction has greater lasting impact (**Figure 3.8**).



Figure 3.8. ISCR staff member, Giovanni Pinelo, interacts with community members (source ISCR n.d.).

IA

“If we keep protecting things for posterity, like our motto says, Preserving the Past for the Future, at what point does archaeology become accessible to the people?” Sylvia Batty (2020) made that statement in addressing some of the challenges faced by the IA in Belize. While ISCR works with living culture in both tangible and intangible forms, the IA is charged with safeguarding past tangible forms of ancient Belizean history. Batty also stated, “Because we safeguard archaeology so much, we place it in a bubble, we make it inaccessible to a large degree. We want people to protect it, to identify with it, and to see it as this far away thing that they don’t interact with. But if the IA wants to be more effective in areas of antilooting and site destruction, we need to work closer with those communities.” Working with communities is of great importance in a small country like Belize, where the human and financial resources are limited. But if the IA does not actively work or maintain relationships with communities, or maintain an active presence, there is a disconnect.

This disconnect between the Belizean people and the Institute of Archaeology is, perhaps, not just based on a lack of interaction, but is coupled with generational attitudes towards archaeology. The legacy of archaeology in Belize can be bittersweet, with great discoveries of artifacts and sites placing Belize as an important setting for the development of ancient Maya civilization. However, such discoveries also carry the tarnish of how archaeology developed in Belize. Prior to the Ancient Monuments and Antiquities Ordinance of 1970, visiting archaeologists on behalf of museums, such as the British Museum, extracted many ancient Maya artifacts and monuments to add to museum collections (McKillop and Awe 1983). The 1970 ordinance, and consequently

the 2003 NICH Act strengthened legislation in Belize regarding archaeological research and forbidding the removal of antiquities from Belize by the visiting institutions.

However, the legacy of the 1924 Ancient Monuments and Relics Ordinance leaves the impression that visiting archaeological projects still acquire 50 percent of their findings, as was common practice prior to the 1970 ordinance (Institute of Archaeology 2017).

The IA faces the challenge of informing and educating Belizean citizens on the NICH Act and what it represents, stressing the policies involved in conducting archaeological research in Belize, highlighting that artifacts no longer leave Belize as they did before. Other misconceptions still exist in the Belizean psyche, including the “ownership” of sites located on private property. Prior to revisions of the antiquities ordinance in the 1960’s, sites and artifacts located on and found on private property were outside the authority of the “the crown”³ (Institute of Archaeology 2017). The 1970 Antiquities Ordinance and the 2003 NICH Act, Chapter 331 of the Laws of Belize, Section 37 changed this situation and now clearly state “All ancient monuments and antiquities wherever situate, whether upon any land or in any river, stream, or watercourse, or under the territorial waters of Belize, shall absolutely vest in the State.” Penalties exist for the destruction of monuments and illicit sale of antiquities, yet they remain problems that the IA continues to address. Batty (2020) of the IA believes this occurs partly because the IA does not really cater lectures to adults. While she acknowledges that youth are easier to interact with, adults can be a challenge. Batty (2020) stated, “I don't think it goes and makes a difference in the lives of parents, in the lives of people who are voters and decision makers in the country.”

³ Legislation prior to 1981 in Belize used “the crown” in regards to the state, a symbol of Belize’s colonial rule under Great Britain.

Josue Ramos of the IA has the most interaction with adults throughout Belize, often during looting and destruction inspections, or being the IA presence during public work projects, such as building of roads. He uses such opportunities to discuss the significance of the NICH Act, the penalties therein, and why safeguarding cultural heritage is important. Ramos (2020) believes that focusing education on youth in Belize is an effective way to change future outcomes of looting, destruction, or other disregards of Belizean cultural and archaeological heritage. He believes that while younger people will pay attention to the benefits of safeguarding heritage ideologically and culturally, adults would likely pay greater attention to stiffer penalties for looting and destruction. However, political intervention at cabinet level can delay amendments to penalties for contravening the NICH Act. Ramos also commented on what is sometimes common practice in Belizean culture, ministerial intervention on behalf of such individuals who have committed the act of looting and destruction. According to Ramos, adults can be hard to reach because they believe there are no financial benefits to safeguarding monuments or antiquities. This perhaps creates some reluctance for some Belizeans to come forward when they encounter antiquities, believing it is perhaps better to sell the pieces.

The expectation of financial gain associated with antiquities poses challenges to the IA in one of their ongoing initiatives, having a private collection. It is common for any Belizean to encounter antiquities while plowing fields, digging for foundation construction, or sometimes just on a hike or swimming in one of the many rivers that traverse the country. According to the NICH Act, such an individual has fifteen days to declare his/her discovery of the item(s) (NICH Act Sec 39-1). The NICH Act also makes

provisions for citizens to register items with the Institute of Archaeology, thus possessing a private collection. These citizens do not own the pieces but act as stewards of them on behalf of the state. What has happened all too often, however, is that some citizens expect to be paid for their discovery. This makes evident the gaps in outreach performed by the IA. Whereas schools receive plenty of attention from the IA, the general public does not, and ignorance of the law regarding monuments and antiquities remains the norm. While the IA's private collection initiative is not new, it is still relatively unknown to many Belizeans who generally only discover this option upon reporting the discovery of an artifact, or bringing an antiquity to the IA hoping for financial compensation.

Other challenges that the IA faces stems from two aspects: lack of resource, and lacking interorganizational and intraorganizational relationships among NICH and other entities. The limited resources prevent IA staff from inspecting reports of looting and destruction in a timely manner, especially in circumstances where distance and transportation remain an issue. While Belize is a small country, accessing certain parts of the country requires adequate transportation that is not always readily accessible to the staff of the research and education department of the IA. When this occurs, those who reported the incident can possibly see this as the IA's disinterest in cultural heritage destruction, which is not the case. Lack of transportation has also prevented the IA from visiting archaeological projects stationed across the country. Staff of the research and education department commented on this issue, viewing project inspections as something necessary to maintain healthy relationships between visiting projects and the IA. However, in their view, transportation issues at the IA also reflects on what the IA

views as important, and site management takes precedence as it is the IA's and NICH's greatest source of income. This shift in institutional importance reflects changing administration and management within NICH. Thus, preferred use of IA transportation goes towards visiting of reserves, delivering supplies, and retrieving of funds from entrance fees.

Inter/intraorganizational interaction and communication also pose issues for the research and education department, affecting how they meet their educational and outreach goals. Recent examples of this include the difficulty of achieving inclusion in discussions for the preparation of a Belizean Studies⁴ curriculum for the country. In the creation of the pilot project for Belizean Studies, the IA had little to no input, even if one entire section of the planned curriculum was archaeology specific, called *Transformations and Connections: Civilization's Sparks* (Ministry of Education 2020). Section 4.2 of this discusses how archaeologists investigate the ancient Maya civilization, while section 4.5 examines Postclassic sites in Belize, such as Lamanai and Santa Rita. Yet, the IA had no effective involvement in this process. Batty (2020) recalls the frustration of involvement requests fairly last minute. ISCR was given the position of point institution within NICH but in this matter did not consult with the IA. However, it is likely possible that both ISCR and the Ministry of Education did reach out to the senior managers of the IA via emails, but no indication of this was relayed to the staff of the research and education department. For Batty, the greatest disappointment was not being able to reach the teachers involved in the Belizean Studies project. She believes

⁴ Belizean Studies: "Belizean Studies focuses on the geographical space contained within and culturally connected to Belize. It uses techniques and concepts of anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, literature and sociology to explore the environmental, political, economic, social, cultural and technological origins and development of Belize in a global context" (2018).

that lecturing students is wonderful, but by lecturing a group of teachers you increase the number of students by proxy. A great part of the IA's mandate is to conduct outreach, to strengthen knowledge of Belize's ancient history as well as increase appreciation for cultural heritage. However, Batty's question (2020) is quite appropriate for the Belizean Studies issue, "If we are saying that the solution is outreach to students, then why are we not more involved in the writing of an entire curriculum?" She believes that the image of NICH and the IA is different on paper than it is in execution. NICH had signed an agreement with the University of Belize (UB) for collaborative work. Batty mused, "How is it being manifested? Are we involved in the history/archaeology class at UB?" Ramos (2020), quite timely and aptly commented, "It's just for the optics."

Preserving cultural heritage in Belize is not just about informing the minds of Belizean citizens, but also includes the careful storage and curation of the many antiquities unearthed in Belize annually. The staff of the research and education department discussed how storage is nearing full capacity. However, storage space is not the only concern, as the objects are stored in less-than-ideal conditions for preservation. This raised some concerns for the staff, as Belize hosts quite a few projects, each using Belize as teaching grounds for archaeological field methods, as well as other research initiatives for graduate and doctoral students. Many of these projects have their own storage spaces for artifacts, and as previously mentioned, the IA does not conduct annual visits to these camps, the state of these storage spaces is left generally unknown. The staff recalls how one storage space at the site of Chau Hiix in Northern Belize was dismantled, leaving the structure without a door or roof, and several hundred bags of ceramic sherds strewn about the building. The staff mused on

the prospect of constructing a storage building and national museum to house incoming antiquities and provide a space for archaeological study. If there is a central repository for artifacts of all sorts, then it becomes possible for many future studies to take place without the need for excavations. Batty (2020) claimed that in Europe there is a push to the archaeological study of existing university/museum collections, thereby limiting the need for further excavations of sites in Europe. Batty believes Belize could benefit from doing likewise until proper storage is constructed.

Despite challenges that present themselves to the Institute of Archaeology, the IA has had increasing success in managing cultural heritage and creating awareness of archaeological history, and the importance of archaeological resources, across the country of Belize. In a survey conducted for this thesis, 78 percent of all Belizeans who took it stated that their primary source for archaeological awareness is the school system. The IA actively reaches out to schools across the nation to remind them of lectures and exhibits available. In doing so, the IA is actively making archaeology accessible to Belizean citizens, by combining lectures and exhibits while conducting school visits (**Figure 3.9**). Lectures are no longer just PowerPoint presentations, but also include artifacts for an in class show and tell. Batty (2020) believes that making artifacts accessible to people removes the symbolic barrier that exists between archaeology and the Belizean people. For in class presentations, the IA carries an artifact assemblage representing a range of artifact types found in Belize. However, what is important about this assemblage, is that they are touched and held. This singular act, whether holding a chert blade, a fossil of a giant sloth, or wearing a jade

necklace, creates great impact, for as Batty believes, Belizeans are “very tactile people, and this will create a deeper sense of connection with it.”



Figure 3.9. Paul Smith, Research and Education Department of the IA, discussing ancient Maya artifacts with students from a high school in Belize City (source Author).

School visits provide opportunities for the IA to create awareness on other important cultural heritage matters. Whether the presentation is on the ancient Maya, careers in archaeology, or any topic in the growing list the IA puts together, looting is always discussed. The antilooting campaign, an ongoing initiative by the IA to raise awareness of illicit trading as well as site destruction, is taken nationwide in all possible venues. Billboards are present at ports of entry into Belize and posters (**Figure 3.10**) are a frequent item in every IA visit to a school or community. Combining the antilooting

campaign, with in-class lectures and exhibits, has resulted in greater awareness of the types of artifacts present in Belize, increased awareness in private collection policies, and also increased awareness in how to spot destruction of monuments and what the best course of response is. Students frequently come forward with stories of antiquities encountered by family members and thus are informed on how to go about applying for a private collection. The IA has also seen an increase in reports, via social media, in site destruction, often with accompanying images (**Figure 3.11**).



Figure 3.10. A poster designed and used by the IA for the antilooting campaign (source IA n.d.)

Increasing measures against looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities led to a bilateral agreement between the governments of the United States and Belize. An IA and NICH led initiative that was negotiated by Awe, the agreement signed in 2013, and consequently renewed in 2018, declares that “Acting pursuant to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property..., shall restrict the importation into the

United States of archaeological material originating in Belize and representing Belize's cultural heritage" (2013). This agreement is a great step further in protecting Belizean cultural heritage, creating a legal framework for the repatriation of antiquities originating in Belize and sold on the antiquities market in the US. The IA remains the Belizean counterpart in this agreement, increasing awareness of looting, site destruction, and cultural heritage appreciation. By working along with the US Embassy in in Belize, Dr. Jaime Awe applied for and received several grants from the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Seven successful grant applications provided funds to excavate and restore a major structure at the site of Santa Rita, to conduct restorative work on historic structures and prehistoric stucco masks at Lamanai, both in northern Belize, the conservation and eventual opening of Serpon Sugar Mill as an historical archaeological reserve in southern Belize, the preservation of the Colonial period Governor's House in Belize City, as well as excavating, restoring, and declaring a site in Benque Viejo, western Belize, as an archaeological park.



Figure 3.11. Photo submitted to IA via social media showing destruction of ancient structure in northern Belize (source IA n.d.).

Restorative work at Serpon, Santa Rita and the Benque Viejo Archaeological Reserve served as successful instances of working with communities. As Awe (2020) recounted, the latter two projects materialized because the communities of Corozal Town and Benque Viejo del Carmen, respectively, approached him as director of the IA to assist in restoring the sites to prevent further destruction. "Ms. Rosita Mai approached me about Santa Rita," said Awe (2020), "asking if there was some way we could help the community protect the site". The work at Santa Rita was particularly important for public archaeology given its location within Corozal Town, for it afforded easy visitation not only schools, but for the entire public, and thrust the importance of preserving archaeological heritage into the public eye via various media outlets. Following the global embarrassment with the destruction of a tall structure at the northern Belize site of Nohmul (**Figure 3.12**) in 2013, the chance to change public perception of archaeology in Belize was and remains critical. "It's a feeling of incredible disbelief because of the ignorance and the insensitivity," said Awe (AP 2013) of the destruction at Nohmul. "It's like being punched in the stomach, it's just so horrendous." While there is still much work to do to repair the public image done to archaeology in Belize by the destruction at Nohmul, the works done by Awe and Jorge Can, IA conservator on Structure 7 at Santa Rita (**Figure 3.13**) has definitely helped to demonstrate that the IA cares about preserving our sites. Following the successful conservation project at Santa Rita, the site is now used as the venue for the reenactment of the first wedding between a captured Spanish European conquistador and the daughter of the Maya ruler of this ancient community. In the eyes of many locals, this event marks an important part of both Belizean and Maya history, for the

children of this couple represent the first members of the Mestizo culture that developed following European contact. Finally, another successful initiative to fight looting of antiquities was the IA's participation in the creation of the *Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico*. Published by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), this list was created “in order to combat looting and destruction of regional archaeological sites” as well as “helping police, judicial and customs authorities in their work, building public awareness and promoting international cooperation to protect the cultural heritage of these countries” (ICOM 2009:2). In the creation of this list, the IA strengthened their existing relationships with Mexican and Central American archeological authorities. While the demand for antiquities on the black market may continue to be a problem for nations like Belize, having bilateral agreements with Mexico and the United States constructs legal avenues for fighting this problem.



Figure 3.12. Dr Jaime Awe talks to the press following the destruction of this tall structure at Nohmul in northern Belize (source Awe 2013)



Figure 3.13. Structure 7 at Santa Rita, northern Belize, after consolidation efforts by the IA (source NICH n.d.).

Archaeological Projects

Facilitated by the Research and Education department of the IA, approximately 20 archaeological projects conduct research in Belize annually. With the exception of one project, BVAR, these programs are all run by international teams and are stationed across the country in varying environments depending on their research interest. While they do not operate under the auspices of Belizean institutions, these foreign projects can be deemed cultural heritage managers in their own right, as they produce the material that informs Belizean cultural heritage. Not only do these projects hire Belizeans, they also train Belizeans in archaeological field methods. Quite a few of these projects also have an active social presence in the communities they work in. Here I will focus on two such projects in western Belize.

BRASS

Archaeological community outreach in Belize is not necessarily novel. Dr Anabel Ford of the Belize River Archaeological Settlement Survey (BRASS) recalls working with the community of Santa Familia in western Belize in 1983. After working with Belizeans from Santa Familia at the site of Bacab Na, Dr Ford set up a slideshow. Borrowing a generator, Dr Ford showed images of the work her project was doing, but more important, what the citizens of Santa Familia were doing. “Even from that point I wanted them to know I couldn't do it without them” explained Ford (2020). Dr Ford recalls how cultural heritage worked in reciprocal efforts. As she told them about ancient settlements and landscapes, the men who worked with her also imparted their own cultural knowledge. “We would be asking about the plants and about the landscape and we get names, you know, things we're forgetting. There's that horrible swamp you go through driving up to El Pilar that's called *Champon Bajo*. I don't know all the names, but those are also part of the heritage, like the names of communities along the river, such as Never Delay, Young Gal, More Tomorrow. I thought it was a story. But these are things also part of heritage” (Ford 2020). More than three decades later, Dr Ford continues her work in Belize and champions the cause of archaeology under the canopy and identifying the importance of trees and plants with cultural and medicinal significance. An interesting and important aspect of Dr Ford's outlook on research in Belize, is that those she works with are not just workers, but collaborators. By using a word like ‘collaborator’, Dr. Ford raises the knowledge received from the Belizean people, whether on plants, or the landscape, or names of places, to being on equal levels as anything learned from scientific archaeological practices. “She (Dr. Ford) was

always very conscious of calling the Belizeans who worked with us the “Belizean staff” instead of the “workmen” claims Andrew Kinkella (2020) who worked with Ford in 1993 and 1996.

Dr. Anabel Ford, along with her Belizean collaborators, most notably Mrs. Cynthia Ellis-Topsey and Narciso Torres, have a long history in Belize of outreach and community engagement. In 1993, members of communities adjacent to the site of El Pilar, with the assistance of the El Pilar Program, formed *Amigos de El Pilar* (AdEP) (Ford 2006). Major goals were accomplished in designating El Pilar and archeological reserve, and forming relations with stakeholders in both Belize and Guatemala in effective management of the reserve. The goal for El Pilar was not only to highlight *archaeology under the canopy*, keeping the flora of the reserve intact and allowing for an interpretive visitor experience, but to use knowledge gained in educational initiatives. In keeping with preserving the flora of the site, Dr. Ford collaborated with Maya forest gardeners from adjacent communities in identifying economically useful plants and trees in both Belize and Guatemala (Ford and Horn 2017). Emerging from this collaboration came an educational platform, *Kānan K’aax*, working with forest gardeners to teach primary school children as well as other communities, the many benefits of certain plants and trees. Though the outreach and educational initiatives are many in both Belize and Guatemala, one of the most tangible efforts of this team was the publication of a coloring book (**Figure 3.14**) first in English, then a bilingual version, for students of both Belize and Guatemala (Ford 2019).

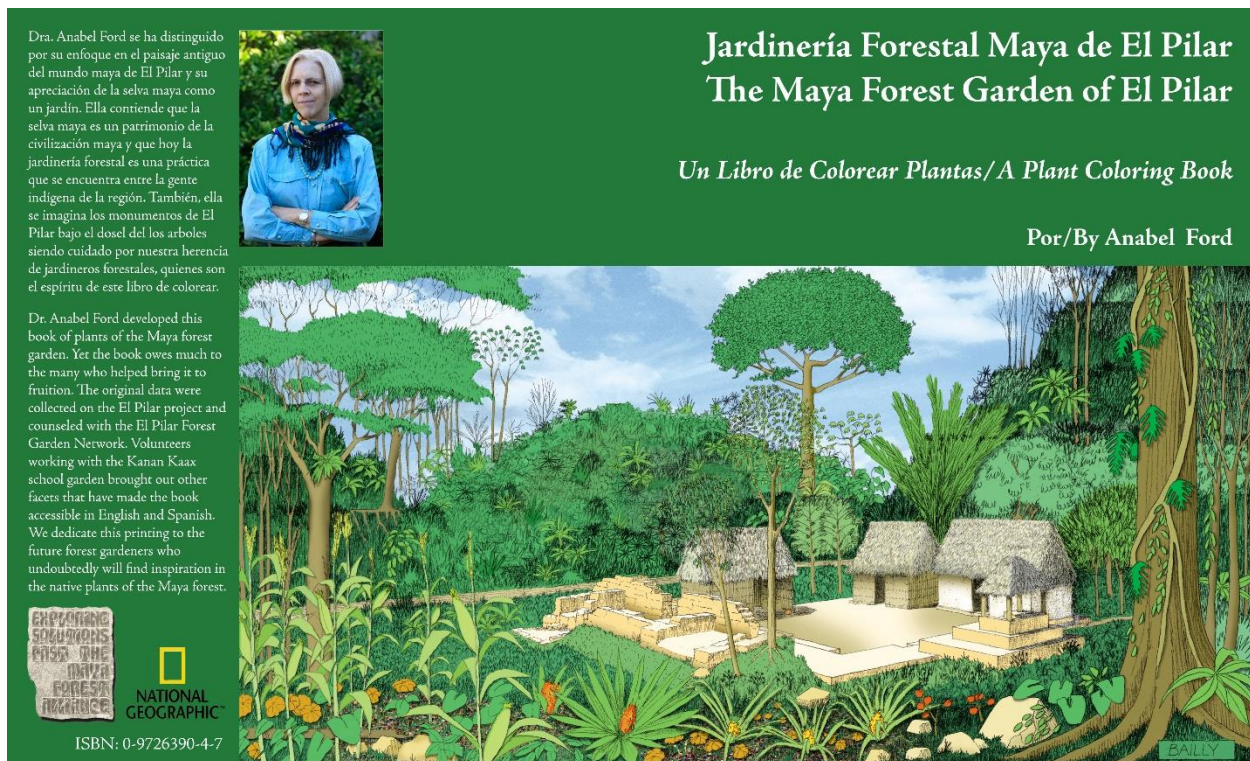


Figure 3.14. Cover of the bilingual coloring book created by Dr. Ford about the Maya forest garden (source Ford 2012).

Most recently, Dr. Ford and Ellis-Topsey collaborated in perhaps the most visually striking form of interpretive outreach conducted by an archaeological project, *Chaya, Dinner with the Maya*. This integrative experience was not just to display imagery of Maya life, but to create an experience that resonated with the visitor. While most exhibits on the ancient Maya highlight elite belongings, *Chaya* focused on the everyday tools of the Maya in a comparative display of Maya household tools to modern ones. The exhibit displayed items, both ancient and modern, that designate status in society (**Figure 3.15**). One goal of the exhibit was to show similarities between the ancient Maya and current Belizean society. “They had the same needs we did and I want to bring that together,” stated Ford (2019). The exhibit also displayed the longevity of indigenous knowledge, as Ford “noted that there are many gardeners who continue

to care and use the forest in a sustainable way as passed down by their ancestors” (Borges 2020).



Figure 3.15. Chaya, Dinner with the Maya display, with utilitarian vessels on display and images of contemporary Maya in the background (source Ford 2019).

BVAR

Western Belize was also the setting for the creation of the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) Project, which today remains the only archaeological project in Belize with a Belizean at the helm. Dr Jaime Awe, born and raised in San Ignacio in western Belize, established BVAR back in 1988 at the site of Cahal Pech. While the project was a response to combat looting of the site, the goals behind it spoke clearly to heritage management. In the very first progress report, Awe and Campbell (1989:1) clearly state that they initiated the project at Cahal Pech to “1) halt further destruction of the center, 2) produce a map of the site demarcating an area to be established as a National Park, and 3) obtain the data necessary to publish a preliminary guidebook for use in schools and for promoting tourism.” Decades later,

BVAR has moved beyond the archaeological reserve of Cahal Pech, and has conducted investigations at sites throughout the Belize River Valley, both terrestrial and cave sites, including Baking Pot, Lower Dover, Xunantunich, Yaxteel Ahau, Barton Creek Cave, Chechem Ha Cave, and Actun Tunichil Muknal (Hoggarth et al. 2020).

But BVAR's most impressive resume is not the long list of sites that were/are venues of research and conservation efforts. Most impressive is the even longer list of publications that have come forth from BVAR, especially the number of graduate theses and doctoral dissertations produced by BVAR students. Furthermore, 'graduates' of BVAR have gone on to form their own archaeological projects in Belize, including Drs Holley Moyes, Gyles Iannone, and Terry Powis to name a few (Hoggarth et al. 2020). But beyond expanding the knowledge of Belize's prehistory, and stimulating the formation of other projects, BVAR has been successful in recruiting and training other Belizeans in archaeology. BVAR and Dr Awe can certainly take credit for the growth of the Institute of Archaeology and its staff. For example, Belizeans Dr Allan Moore received his PhD following his investigations of Baking Pot, Rafael Guerra received his MA and is on track to getting his PhD for his work at the site of Lower Dover, and the author has conducted several years of investigation at Cahal Pech and turned his work into an investigation on public archaeology and outreach. Josue Ramos, another staff member of the IA, got his start in archaeological training as a member of BVAR, as did Phylcia Pelayo at the ISCR. And lastly, Jorge Can, received training in conservation of monuments through his membership in the BVAR staff, training with Awe on the Tourism Development Project, and later as the conservator for the IA.

Awe, as both director of BVAR and the Institute of Archaeology, spearheaded many initiatives to not only increase media presence of Belizean archaeology, but also to economically improve the lives of various groups via archaeological means. Apart from prolifically publishing articles on Belizean and Maya archaeology, Awe also published two books, *Maya Cities and Sacred Caves: A Guide to Maya Sites of Belize*, and *101 Questions and Answers About the Ancient Maya of Belize* (**Figure 3.16**). Both publications serve as specific and comprehensive forms of public education. In his preface to the 101 Questions book, Dr. John Morris, Belizean archaeologist, and current Director for the Institute of Archaeology, declares that the publication is an excellent resource for the non-archaeologist, especially Belizean students and tour guides, who may not be familiar with the “disciplinary perspectives” that archaeologists publish their findings in (Awe 2005). Awe wrote *Sacred Caves* (2006) in similar fashion, publishing a comprehensive glimpse of the open archaeological reserves in Belize, and he also authored the archaeology section of the Belize National Tour Guide Training Manual.

Awe also helped to investigate and establish several sites as archaeological reserves, creating new tourism destinations in Belize and helping to create more jobs for guides. In 1994 Awe established the Western Belize Regional Cave Project. Two of these caves investigated by this offshoot of the BVAR Project, Barton Creek and Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) were subsequently established as reserves, with BVAR training guides in the archaeology of both sites (Hoggarth et al. 2020). Awe (2020) recalls the hesitation by some archaeologists and tourism stakeholders in leaving artifacts in both caves, primarily ATM, which contains the remains of several individuals as well as ceramic vessels. However, Awe stressed the need for guides to take ownership of the

site, and in doing so would ensure its protection. Decades later, Awe's decision to leave artifacts in the caves and in the care of the guides proved a wise decision, especially as ATM is one of the most visited caves in Belize with about 30,000 visitors a year, providing lucrative business for tour guides and tour operators.

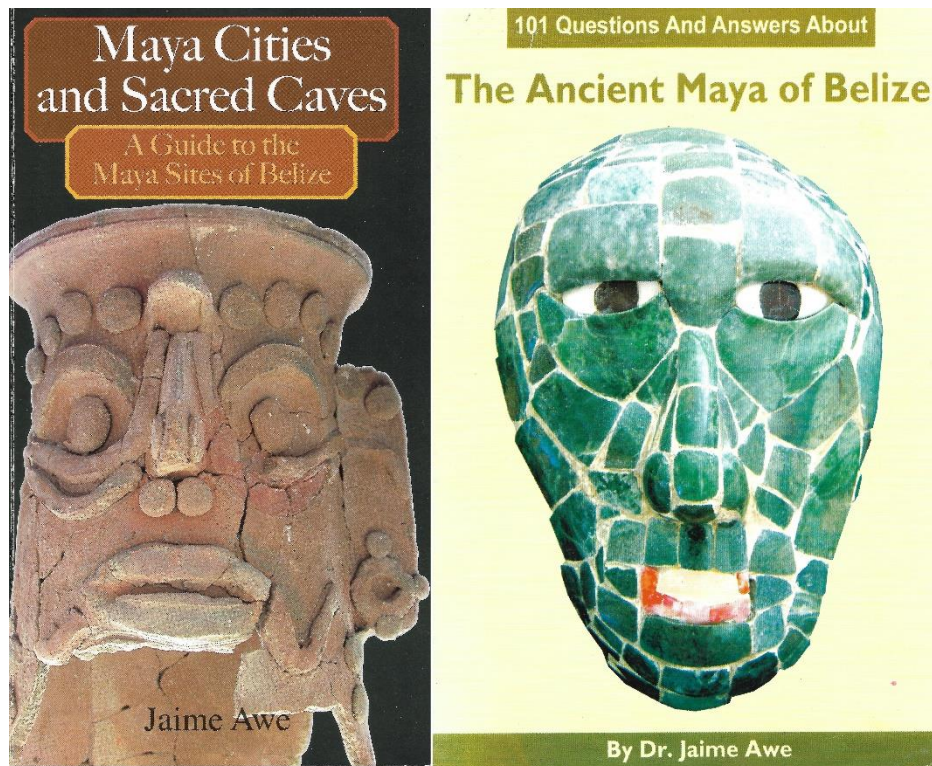


Figure 3.16. Covers of the two books written by Awe on the ancient Maya of Belize (adapted from Awe 2020).

Another great example of how Awe used archaeology to publicly create economic benefits, as well as for revitalizing and connecting Belizeans “to their own cultural identity and historical past” (Donovan 2016), was by working with the San Antonio Women’s Cooperative (SAWC). Established in 2008, the SAWC was established to “preserve and encourage traditional Maya practices” within the community of San Antonio in western Belize. Jeremiah Donovan, of the Art and History Department at SUNY Cortland, met with Dr. Awe, who both approached the SAWC with a plan to help them enhance their pottery making skills. Archaeological research

provided not only a myriad of ancient Maya decorative motifs, but assisted the women in recreating pottery making processes that were practiced by the ancient Maya by utilizing similar clay tempers as well as pigments. This was not the first time, however, that archaeological investigations helped with artistic representation and economic gain. Awe (2016) recalled helping a young woman in 1987, Maria Garcia, to develop her artistry in slate carvings. This followed the discovery of a tomb at the site of Pacbitun, nearby the village of San Antonio. Capping the tomb were large slate slabs, which Garcia asked for so that she could produce carvings in slate for sale to tourists as they traveled through her village *en route* to and from the larger archaeological reserve of Caracol. Not only did Awe deliver the slate slabs to Garcia, but also provided her with copies of ancient Maya art that she could reproduce on slate. Maria and her family, known throughout Belize as the Garcia Sisters, went on to create exquisite pieces of slate art (Hoggarth et al. 2020), a tradition has grown beyond the village of San Antonio, and which has thrived western Belize.

Under BVAR, and starting in 2015, the author has continued the project's tradition of involving young Belizeans in learning about archaeology and the methodologies for excavating Maya sites (**Figure 3.17**). Students from Galen University in western Belize receive field experience and credits working with the author at Cahal Pech, not only receiving experience in field and lab methods, but also in analyzing finds and positing interpretations. However, it is not only Galen students who receive credits that participate, as the author has aggressively recruited high school students in various communities to participate in the project as well. This is important for students who may have an interest to pursue archaeology, and to get a sense of what real fieldwork is like.

It also enhances their own appreciation for their history and cultural identity. As a result of the open volunteering approach, Belizeans as young as seven, as well as those in their 50's and 60's, have volunteered at Cahal Pech, all receiving the same information and education as any university student, foreign or local.



Figure 3.17. Image of young Belizeans conducting archaeological fieldwork at Cahal Pech in western Belize (source author 2018).

Recently, other archaeological projects have begun to include effective outreach methods in their programs, whether it is actively including Belizeans in their fieldwork, or engaging with nearby communities. Dr Thomas Guderjan of the Maya Research Program in northern Belize personally visited the University of Belize to engage with someone from the history department in an effort to recruit Belizean students to work on the project (Martinez 2020). Dr Meaghan Peuramäki-Brown leads the Stann Creek Regional Archaeology Project (SCRAP) and engages the nearby community of Maya

Mopan in all they do, including working with the local primary school in creating an app focusing on oral histories of the site of Alabama (SCRAP 2019). Dr Cynthia Robin, and her staff of the Aventura Archaeological Project (AAP) host an archeological fair each year in the village of San Joaquin in Corozal (northern Belize), sharing information about the site of Aventura which is nearby. It is also a platform for the Belizeans on the project to share their own stories and experiences of their work at Aventura. This starts off a week of archaeological activity in Corozal, a collaboration between the AAP, the IA, and the Corozal House of Culture, and includes lectures, workshops, and a tour of the site of Aventura.

NGO's: Fajina Archaeology Outreach

Fajina, an NGO run by archaeologists who “feel a great responsibility to give back and support the communities in which they work” (Fajina Outreach n.d.), was recently developed in western Belize. The three archaeologists who head the organization, Leah McCurdy, Rebecca Freidel, and a Belizean archaeologist, Sylvia Batty, created the organization while working together on joint central Belize archaeological projects, namely the Mopan Valley Preclassic Project and the Mopan Valley Archaeology Project (MVPP/MVAP), under the direction of Drs Jason Yaegar and M. Kathryn Brown from the University of Texas, San Antonio. Fajina organizes an annual archaeological fair in the village of San Jose Succotz, adjacent to the archaeological reserve of Xunantunich. This archaeological fair, which has now grown to include several other archaeological projects and institutions (e.g., MVAP, MVPP, BVAR, SCRAP, the IA, ISCR, the Cayo Tour Guide Association (CTGA), and Galen

University) has community engagement as its primary goal (**Figure 3.18**). The fair highlights several themes of archaeological work and analysis, with artifact displays, flint knapping, dental modification, glyph reading and writing, and has even displayed the *Ek Balam* Maya ball players from Northern Belize as well as Maya dancers from Guatemala.



Figure 3.18. UTSA student, Jacob Lozano, teaching Belizean student about Maya hieroglyphics at the Fajina annual archaeological fair (source Lozano 2018).

Fajina has branched off into varying other forms of outreach, most recently partnering with the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) to provide projectors and clickers to eight primary and secondary schools in the Cayo District. Fajina also organized a *Books for Belize* campaign, donating over a thousand books to public libraries in the communities of San Jose Succotz and Benque Viejo del Carmen in western Belize (Fajina Outreach n.d.). But perhaps Fajina's greatest achievement is the publishing and dissemination of a children's book, *To The Mountain. To The Mountain*

follows the adventures of two ancient Maya children while incorporating significant Maya plants, animals, and locations, and centered on the ancient site of Xunantunich.

However, the most amazing aspect of this books is it being trilingual, written in English, Spanish, and Yucatec Maya (**Figure 3.19**). The book, along with the audiobook created with help from Frank Tzib and other young citizens of San Antonio Village in western Belize, helps to “promote archaeological and cultural heritage among children in Belize” (Fajina Outreach n.d.).



Little Moon has been helping the women to make rope from henequen leaves. The strings that grow in the henequen are very strong. They make the rope very thick for pulling and lifting. The rope Little Moon is making will be used by her father and his friends to make the Mountain Temple bigger and more beautiful. Little Moon's father is working to improve the Mountain Temple for everyone. Running Jaguar tries to help make the rope but chasing his puppy is more fun.

3

Lunita ha estado ayudando a las mujeres a hacer mecate de hojas de henequén. Los hilos que crecen en el henequén son muy fuertes. Ellas hacen el mecate muy grueso para halar y levantar. El mecate que Lunita está haciendo será usado por su papá y sus amigos para hacer el Templo de la Montaña más grande y bello. El papá de Lunita está trabajando para mejorar el templo de la Montaña para todos. Jaguar que Corre trata de ayudar a hacer el mecate pero se divierte más corriendo detrás de su perrito.

Chichan Uhe' ku yaantik le ko'olelo'obo u beeto'b u suumil kih. U suumil kihe'hach ts'u'uy. Le suum ku beetiko'obo' polok t'ial u kolal yetel na'aksal ba'axo'ob. Le suum ku beetik Chichan xUhe k'a'abeet t'ial u ka'ankunta'al yetel u hats'utskunta'al Noh Muul bin u taat yetel u laak'tsilo'ob. Le u taat Chichan xUhe'tan u meyahtik le noj muulo'yok'lal u k'ambe'ental t'ial tu laakalo'ob. Alkab Chakmo'ole' ku ts'akubah aantal xan ba'ale' ku p'atike' ku bin baaxal yetel u yalak'peek'.

4

Figure 3.19. Trilingual text of *To the Mountain*. (source Batty, Friedel, and McCurdy 2016).

Fajina arose from archaeologists wanting to “give back” to communities they work in. But there was another motive behind the creation of the NGO. Batty recalls realizing there was a disconnect between archaeologists and communities, and in many cases, students working in Belize head directly to their camps or stations from the airport. “There really was no interaction with the community beyond archaeology,” recalls Batty (2020). She went on to encourage her colleagues to visit places beyond the district they were stationed. “We also realized that there wasn't a lot of engagement

with the materials that were produced from archaeological investigations.” Rebecca Friedel (2020), another founding member of Fajina recalls working in Peru. “We were really embedded in the local community. We lived in town, and we went out and had dinner, we could meet up and hang out with people and make friends. So then when I came to graduate school (in Texas), and was on the [UTSA] project [in Belize], we were really isolated, it just seemed like such a stark contrast that I felt.”

Friedel recalls sharing her feelings with Batty and McCurdy, all with similar sentiments, and feeling the need to be part of the community, and for the community to feel they are a part of them (archaeological projects). Batty and her colleagues took a page from another female archaeologist working in Belize, Dr. Eleanor Harrison-Buck, who spent a lot of time working with the community of Crooked Tree in the Belize District. Harrison-Buck, focusing on historic archaeology of the region, worked closely with the community, and together with them, established a cultural museum in Crooked Tree encompassing the history of the region, including the ancient Maya and the Creole occupation. According to Batty, Harrison-Buck claimed this to be the more rewarding experience of her career in Belize thus far. Fajina, with the book drive, launching of the trilingual children’s book, and annual archaeological fair, have accomplished the same, with the fair especially providing an opportunity for students, particularly of MVAP and MVPP, to mingle with members of the community.

Fajina, however, was just the starting point for two of its founding members. Batty and Friedel teamed up with two more individuals, Belizean April Martinez, with a background in archaeology and a history lecturer at the University of Belize, and Ella Békési, archaeology student at the University College of London. Together, these four

women created the Heritage Education Network Belize (HEN). Unlike Fajina, that stresses archaeological outreach, HEN's goal is to "work to support heritage education and the sustainable development of tourism and creative businesses" (HEN n.d.). HEN began amid the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, with the aim to support "Belizean tourism professionals, cultural and heritage organizations, business owners, artists, and artisans" coping with the pandemic. "We saw an opportunity to continue and establish a support system that focuses on education and capacity building by building on practical archaeological, ecological, heritage, and tourism research." To that end, HEN creates spaces online to promote tangible and intangible forms of local culture, including live discussions with artists and musicians. Recently HEN also hosted a live online discussion with young Belizean students discussing their experiences working on archaeological projects, and how it impacted them. Along with their website and Facebook page, HEN offers education resources, online courses, community engagement and capacity building projects, all with the aim to "position local communities as influential and resilient heritage stakeholders" (HEN n.d.).

CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION

Belizean's experience on Archaeological Projects

Archaeological projects have operated in Belize for many decades. Apart from providing jobs for many Belizeans as *ayudantes* (assistants) in the field, Belizeans are trained in fieldwork, as well as get firsthand experience in uncovering ancient history. In this section I aim to discuss the benefits of having Belizeans, particularly youth, working on projects, especially beyond the capacity of an *ayudante*. I also examine other ways that projects can increase their visibility and local engagement.

For young Belizeans, an experience working on a project has the potential for providing many benefits. For some it is a fun summer meeting new people, for others it is about creating a connection to their own history and cultural identity, or a seasonal job that pays fair wages. For Frank Tzib (**Figure 4.1**), a young Maya Belizean from San Antonio in western Belize, the school system did not provide enough information for him about who he was, and where he came from. "They told us the Maya built the temples," Tzib claimed (2020). "But I wanted to know, what did they do? How did they write? How did they build?" Tzib hoped that by learning about ancient Maya history, he would be able to answer questions about himself. "Where do I come from? It is my culture too!" However, lacking a mandatory history class in primary and high school limited how much Tzib could learn about the Maya in Belize. Working with BVAR and other archaeological projects provided firsthand access to his past, learning about Maya architecture, varying artifact types, as well as differing ceramic styles. Working on projects gave him access to people who specialize in different aspects of archaeology. For example, learning about the different ceramic techniques allowed him to share

information with the women of the San Antonio Women's Cooperative in varying temper and firing methods. He also uses archaeological projects to promote his culture, specifically by teaching visiting students Maya words, as well as helping them learn a bit about epigraphy.



Figure 4.1. Frank Tzib conducting archaeological research at Cahal Pech in western Belize (source Author 2016).

While experience on an archaeological project helped Tzib find a connection to his past, for others it provides other forms of education. Adrian Gutierrez (2020) recalls always having an interest in archaeology, and upon learning from his dad that Dr. Jaime Awe and BVAR worked in the summer in Belize, encouraged him get involved. His first experience, however, changed his perception of what archaeology is and how it works. “Archaeology is definitely not just finding an artifact and picking it up,” Gutierrez claimed. “I didn't think it would be as formal. I think I had a misconception there. I didn't think there'd be as much order to it as there was.” Gutierrez is one of many young Belizeans

who have an interest in pursuing archaeology as a career. His misconceptions of archaeology, however, are not unique. Some Belizean students, and visiting ones alike, are often faced with the reality of what archaeological fieldwork entails when they are already part of a 4-year undergraduate program. The benefit of having young students work on a project before going to a university ensures their realization of the work entailed in field research. For Ethon Martinez (2020), a young Belizean that volunteered at the Maya Research Program in northern Belize, participating in fieldwork was about learning teamwork, structure, and his misconceptions of what archaeological fieldwork actually is. “You cannot slack, you cannot just wake up when you want, because things move without you,” claimed Martinez. “But fieldwork helps, even with something as how you use the tools, which you cannot really learn in a classroom.” Learning to work in teams was also an important lesson for Ethon, realizing archaeology can never be a one-person pursuit. But much like Gutierrez, Martinez learned archaeology comes with order, from the creation of levels to careful tagging and bagging of artifacts. This kind of order, he believes, can translate to other areas of his educational career, including better structuring of his writing.

Another young Belizean, Julia Arzu (**Figure 4.2**) wanted archaeological experience, because, much like Frank Tzib, she wanted to unearth history. Unlike Frank Tzib, however, Arzu is not of Maya ancestry. Arzu is Garinagu. However, she believes that Maya history is still her history, because it is important to the nation of Belize, her home. Like many other Belizeans, Arzu believes that all cultures in Belize contribute to a shared cultural identity. So, for her, the stories of ancient cities throughout Belize are part of her too. “I didn't want to sit down in an archive and just read books. I wanted to

be the person who wrote the books,” recalls Arzu (2020). Encouraged by teachers to pursue archaeology, an active form of unearthing history, Arzu enrolled at Galen University in Belize, and via Galen, was placed for summer fieldwork at Cahal Pech to work with BVAR. The experience brought to life what she only read about in books. The most rewarding part of her experience was being able to interpret what she found. By doing so she felt she was writing history, but also learning the points of view of other students, and how different interpretations were always possible. “I was no longer the outsider looking in,” Arzu mused. “I felt a deeper connection.”



Figure 4.2. Julia Arzu (first on left) and other Belizean young women participating in archaeological research at Cahal Pech in western Belize (source Author 2017).

Kareem McKoy (2020), who worked the same season as Arzu, was still in high school. A young Creole from the city of Belmopan, McKoy’s knowledge about history was scant, and his knowledge about the Maya even less. However, at the end of a month of fieldwork, McKoy, like Arzu, felt connected to the site of Cahal Pech, and that

it was also part of his history and his identity. His knowledge of archaeology and history before going to Cahal Pech was limited, but the experience changed his perceptions. McKoy believes that fieldwork can help change other young people's attitudes toward history as well. He recalls an instance when an invited lecturer spoke to them about history and his classmates declared it boring. "I started explaining to them, you know what, it's just boring to you guys because you haven't experienced it, you haven't seen anything of it." It would benefit many young Belizeans to have an experience like McKoy and Arzu, to see history unfold before them, or like Gutierrez and Martinez, to learn the importance of order and method, or even of Tzib, to find a connection to your past. However, what prevents this greatly is a lack of awareness, and while young Belizeans who are interested in archaeology should be able to find ways to satiate those interests, this lack of awareness also falls on the archaeological projects themselves.

April Martinez (2020) and several University of Belize (UB) students were part of the Maya Research Program's work in northern Belize, all thanks to Dr. Thomas Guderjan who visited UB personally to engage with someone from the history department. After his visit, several months before the start of the season, he checked in periodically to ensure that Belizean students were still going to participate. Martinez is no stranger to working on various projects in Belize, but her experiences come from knowing people who could help her get in touch with project directors working in Belize. This was the first time a project director visited UB with the intention of recruiting Belizean students to be part of a project. Martinez recalls (2020) "And he said "Please come to Blue Creek, bring students," and he gave me the research program, the handbook, application forms." What Martinez appreciated most at Blue Creek with Dr.

Guderjan was his welcome of the Belizean students. “One thing that I appreciate about Tom (Dr. Guderjan), which I never ever got at any of the other field schools, even as a student, was an orientation day. He did an entire day of walking around Blue Creek, the lab, and essentially a brief background of everything that they're doing.” The welcome by a project director is important to Belizean students. In an element dominated by the presence of foreign students, Belizeans can be shy and feel inferior, especially in a field that still holds the stigma of being for foreigners, particularly white Americans.

The stigma, that archaeology is a “white person’s” field, still holds to some degree in Belize. There is also some resentment among some Belizeans that “white people” are in Belize to excavate and teach Belizeans about their history (Martinez 2020). This disconnect is evident, for example, in settings like the Belize Archaeology Symposium, where Belizean students remain largely silent and do not interact much with archaeologists. The Belizeans who actively participate in interaction or asking questions tend to be tour guides. But as their livelihood depends on always updating their narratives, this comes as no surprise. It is important that the stigma dissipates, and having more Belizean students on a project can help with this. Showcasing Belizean students during BAS presentations, for example, could go a long way to reducing the disconnect that exists, and showing Belizeans that archaeology is for them too. However, as previously mentioned, Belizeans are shy to approach archaeologists to ask questions, or inquire about participating. Dr. Guderjan’s initiative to actively recruit at UB broke down that barrier, and his welcome at the project site put Belizean students at ease. Making it known that Belizeans are encouraged to reach out and participate is welcomed and can also reduce the anxiety Belizean students may face.

A project like BVAR has plenty of Belizean participation in large part because of considerable Belizean presence in supervisory roles. Dr. Awe, founder and senior co-director of BVAR, has a long history of involving Belizeans on the project. Being Belizean himself, Awe understands the need for encouraging more Belizeans to be involved in archaeology and welcomes students and volunteers. His previous experience as a lecturer at Galen University, for example, created a link between the university and BVAR, creating a space for Belizean students studying anthropology to receive fieldwork and lab credits. Rafael Guerra, a Belizean BVAR fieldwork supervisor, is a direct local connection to many people, including students and guides, who may have interest in doing fieldwork. The author, an archaeologist with the Institute of Archaeology also serves as a Belizean supervisor on BVAR, working predominantly with Belizean students. Jorge Can, the BVAR project conservator who is of Maya ethnicity, also helps to teach young Belizeans the art of conservation. In his work at the IA, the author uses his visits to various schools, particularly in western Belize, to recruit students of all ages to participate in the summer session at Cahal Pech (**Figure 4.3**). Active recruiting via school presentations, even word of mouth, has proven an effective technique for getting Belizean students interested. BVAR also has scholarships for Belizean students, where room and board are covered for the duration of the summer session, or, for those who choose not to board, BVAR provides daily lunches and bus fares to and from their community. Something as simple as bus fare may not seem a big deal, given how inexpensive it is in Belize. But access to bus fare can mean the difference between being able to show up or not, and such an incentive goes a long way in making a Belizean student feel valued and included.



Figure 4.3. Three young Belizeans conducting archaeological research, under BVAR, at Cahal Pech in western Belize (source Author 2017).

Project Experience (Foreign)

Having Belizean students on a project is not only for the benefit of the Belizean, but also the foreign students. One prevailing comment among archaeologist and field school students who have worked in Belize, both in interviews and surveys, is the desire to see more interaction between themselves and local people. One comment stated that visiting projects need “Less separation from local communities, more professionalism from students, more inclusion of local community members as students, instructors, members of the team, not just field-hands and cooks.” Some projects in Belize have been very good about branching into communities, offering their students a chance to engage with local people.

The SCRAP project in southern Belize and the Aventura project in the north both are very active in communities, not only engaging with Belizean students on their

projects, but also community education initiatives about the work the project does. In the west, the Pacbitun Regional Archaeology Project, under Dr. Terry Powis, has been present at the San Antonio Day fair, with artifacts on display and information about the project and the site. This fair also includes a presence from the Institute of Archaeology, and also the BRASS project with Dr Anabel Ford, who uses the opportunity to highlight the knowledge of her Belizean collaborators on the Maya forest garden. Staff of BVAR, as well as MVPP and MVAP have provided lectures to tour guides.

Despite all this, there is a disconnect. BVAR is stationed in western Belize, with most students and staff boarding in the town of San Ignacio. This setting provides a great opportunity for foreign students on BVAR to immerse themselves daily in the local culture, and engaging in something as simple but culturally significant as the Saturday market. Other projects, however, are largely stationed nearer to the sites under investigation, at camps or other lodging venues outside of communities. The physical distance also creates a social one. One grad student, in her attempt to rationalize the distance, mentioned "I think there's a lot of red tape that field schools have to go through when they're interacting with the university. And they're really held liable if anything happens to any of the students. So, I think there's the sense of, they have to protect everyone. And that gets taken to an extreme, where you feel like you have to keep everybody in a bubble, and only allow them to interact with who they (the project) choose." Another grad student commented, "I think that keeping students from experiencing Belizean culture outside of project camps should be reconsidered. I understand the point of having a set camp for students, but I think it is invaluable to treat our Belizean colleagues as more than "field hands" or "workers" and to foster respect by

interacting outside the field day.” These sentiments were common. But how can cross-cultural interaction take place while keeping the visiting students in line with their respective university safety protocols?

Community engagement is a great method for sanctioned cross-cultural interactions. In western Belize, the Fajina archaeological fair is an excellent example of visiting students engaging with locals. However, this may not always be feasible. The simplest way to ensure such interactions is by involving Belizean students on projects and encouraging mixing of groups on both sides. Understanding cultural differences is very important in this regard. Belizean students are largely shy to interact with foreign students and would prefer to cling together. American students (making up most of the visiting field school students), conversely, are largely more initially outgoing.

Encouraging Belizean students to open up about themselves and their culture is a great way to create inclusion and a sense of belonging, while simultaneously educating visiting students about the country and culture they are in. While the general consensus was that immersion in local culture is important for the visiting student, it is a Belizean who probably said it best. Belizean student, Chris Cansino (2020), spoke of an ethnographic project conducted in the district of Orange Walk with both Belizean and international students participating. Cansino recalls having to interact with people from various villages, how it helped the Belizeans to open up and see the importance of anthropological work. However, he believes the greatest benefit was for the visiting students. “I know that all of the Americans who came, they really enjoyed it, they really got a lot out of it, that we (Belizeans) wouldn't have gotten because we're from here.” While it is not exactly possible for all projects working in Belize to have a direct public

component, interaction with locals is essential in helping visiting students understand that archaeology does not occur in a vacuum. They are excavating the history of the people of Belize, and working with or meeting locals will likely increase their appreciation of the experience.



Figure 4.4. Jacob Lozano participating in the Fajina archaeological fair as part of MVAP/MVPP public component (source Lozano 2019).

Community immersion, in some form, is important for a visiting student. Jacob Lozano visited Belize as an undergraduate and excavated at the site of Xunantunich. But it was his experience at the archaeological fair in Succotz that had the biggest impact of his visit (**Figure 4.4**). Lozano (2021) recalls his feelings being in Belize, “It puts it into perspective. I am an ‘other’ going into another culture, land, and I am studying them.” His participation in the fair, however, made him feel less of an ‘other’. “By being in that community, it erased that partition. And it put me into an emic

perspective, being there with the people, playing with the kids, listening to the kids, being immersed in not only just the work of archaeology and anthropology, but actually being progressive in its teaching.” Lozano, like many other students who have worked in Belize, believe that a social component is important. “If you just come in there, and you just do your digs, and you say what this is what it is, you're actually missing a huge part of your work, the human aspects of it.

Dissemination of Information – Access and Comprehension

“Taking into consideration that I've dealt with research papers, I've dealt with reading articles, I've dealt with reading scholarly articles, websites, it was not as difficult. But I think the last year that I went with my dad, and that was how I saw the difference.” Rumari Ku (2020), in recalling her experiences at the Belize Archaeology Symposium (BAS), saw firsthand the confusion in layman's interpretations of archaeological jargon. She recalls being able to understand 80-90 percent of the papers because of her great interest in archaeology and experience with academic writing. “But my dad,” recalls Ku, “on the other hand, he's kind of like me, enthusiastic when it comes to archaeology. But on one of the findings, he was like, what is happening there? What are they explaining there? And I had to tell him “They're doing this one here at the island; they found that little cave.” But it was more me translating.” Comments like that of Ku's father are common for many Belizeans attending the BAS. While enthusiasts like Ku, and history lecturer April Martinez, can comprehend most of the presentations because of their background and exposure to the style of writing, for many the experience is lost on them. Getting access to the abstracts beforehand, Martinez (2020) described the

interest many of her students had on certain topics, only to be left baffled and confused by the presenter. Martinez pointed out that the same level of academic taught in other countries is not prevalent in Belize. Such presentations, thus, can be intimidating not only for Belizean students, but the general audience in attendance. However, a defining aspect of Belizean culture is a reluctance to ask questions for clarification, reducing the impact of papers presented at the BAS.

The Belizean public is curious about what is going on in their communities, but many papers presented at the BAS are jargon heavy, shutting down comprehension. Interesting topics become lost in overuse of technical language with little explanation for the non-archaeologically inclined in the audience. It would seem, to some, that the presenters are speaking to their colleagues in the audience only, ignoring the presence of Belizeans in the audience that largely might not grasp the main points of a presentation. Some presenters, however, are gifted in breaking it down into simpler terms without losing their main points, and without sacrificing the entertainment value. Quite a few people interviewed made specific mention of presenters like Dr. James Garber and Dr. Heather McKillop, and their conversational style approach to presenting. Others, particularly tour guides, appreciated the efforts by researchers like Drs. Jaime Awe and Jason Yaegar for making presentations geared specifically to them. The thread of similarity binding the aforementioned presenters is their knowledge of Belizean people and the best approach to ensuring their information retention. Awe, being Belizean himself, understands the importance of Belizeans understanding archaeological information, and the role it plays in education as well as safeguarding cultural heritage. His experience in writing books and designing other media, such as

brochures and articles for local magazines and newspapers, for public consumption attests to that knowledge.

The realization that simplification is sometimes necessary is by no means an affirmation against technical and jargon-heavy presentations and articles. Larger conferences conducted by bodies such as the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and the Society for Applied Anthropology (SFAA) are largely geared towards professionals in the field of anthropology. The BAS, though focusing on archaeology in Belize, is attended by many non-archaeologists, a factor that some presenters tend to forget. Another often overlooked aspect of dissemination is access to published material. The Institute of Archaeology serves as a repository for reports on Belizean archaeology, with annual submissions of field reports, dissertations and theses, and the annual publications of the Research Reports in Belizean Archaeology. Tour guides and students alike visit the IA to access reports. However, this is not always a possibility for those who live away from the city of Belmopan where the IA is stationed. Even beyond the matter of distance, is accessibility. While researchers in Belize get their BAS presentations published as papers in the RRBA, many researchers prolifically publish articles on their research in various journals, books, and electronic media. "The articles are available however they must be paid for, hence not easily accessible." "Many of the books are not accessible in Belize. Don't have a Credit card to buy online sources." Comments like these on surveys came from many Belizeans, and while 57.1 percent of tour guides surveyed claim difficulty in accessing reports on Belizean archaeology. While access may be available to some, comprehension sometimes proves another difficulty.

“It's not that they're not smart,” claimed Martinez (2020). “We don't teach academia, or research of academia like in other countries. And I've seen that, you know, I wasn't prepared for grad school the way I thought I would.” How is this disconnect in comprehension overcome? Knowing the audience and the culture is very important. Academic articles are fine for other researchers to access and cite, lending greater credibility to their own work. But for the average Belizean interested in their history, or for the tour guide who wants to simply enhance his/her narrative while giving tours? Recommendations by Belizeans overwhelmingly echo the same sentiment: simplify and summarize. Adrian Gutierrez (2020), perhaps the youngest person interviewed for this thesis, worded it perfectly, “I believe it should be the responsibility of the archaeologists because it is their job to be able to explain their findings to the mass population.” Some researchers working in Belize for many years know this fact well, and apart from presenting at the BAS, also give lectures to tour guides and other local communities, that simplify new discoveries and are image heavy. BVAR, for example, hosts lectures at Hodes Place in San Ignacio for visiting field school students, but also invite local students and guides to attend. Gutierrez, among many others interviewed, also recommended producing a concise report especially for guides, removing all the jargon and simplifying the material.

While printouts may work for guides and students interested in archaeological research, other community members may be oblivious to any research happening at all. It does not seem common practice for archaeological projects working in Belize to consult with communities about past or proposed research plans. While this may not seem logistically feasible for some projects, it falls under public education which should

be an important part of all archaeological projects' outreach manifestos. Josue Ramos (2020) of the IA spoke of Dr. Keith Prufer's work in southern Belize, and his involvement of the communities. According to Ramos, Prufer meets with the communities before excavations begin, to tell them what the proposed research entails and what the previous year's research has revealed. In the middle of the season, Prufer meets with them again to discuss the work so far and any challenges met. This act of community involvement goes a long way in altering the perceptions many Belizean still cling to regarding archaeologists, particularly in southern Belize, that archaeologists come to dig, removing artifacts and monuments from Belize. Transparency is key to building trust in communities, ensuring them that archaeologists have Belizean cultural heritage as a priority in their work, helping to strengthen the perceived value of archaeological resources. "They do need to be informed, it is important that they know what's happening," claimed ISCR's Sabido (2020), "in order to establish that this is part of our heritage. I think it's a step in leading people to take ownership of it, and wanting to learn how to take care of it is by knowing about it, understanding what's happening." ISCR's Giovanni Pinelo (2020) believes that projects working in Belize, whether anthropological or archaeological in nature, should consult with communities before any work begins. "I think it's necessary. The people should be properly informed, and that there be a commitment made to the people. If we're talking that culture comes from the community, then it has to start with the communication with the community." Some projects, however, work in parts of Belize without an immediate community, but this should not prevent them (the project) from reaching out. "Find the nearest community," stated IA's Sylvia Batty. "You might not have a community adjacent. But there are

communities nearby, there are tour guide associations, there is a public there.” Having community interaction is important for clearing up misconceptions about archaeology in Belize, but done wrongly, or simply ignored, creates further misconceptions about a lack of care or respect that archaeologists have towards Belize. Paul Smith, IA staff in the Research and Education department, spoke of one community’s negative reaction to an archaeological project’s silent presence. “He (the project director) did not let them in on what was going on in the community. Members of that community claimed ‘he’ also left some structures uncovered, and that is not legal, because someone can fall in and get hurt. The community believes that ‘he’ should let them know when the project is over the year, telling them why certain structures remain uncovered.” Batty commented on such miscommunication, reminding researchers that their actions during their short stay bring their own negative consequences. “Be aware of that don’t make the situation worse,” she suggested, “because you might be here for two months, but we have to deal with that community for 12 months, every single day, every day of the year.”

The IA

The Research and Education Department of the Institute of Archaeology have been proactive in reaching out to the public, going to schools (**Figure 4.5**), attending social events, reaching thousands of people a year. However, those that are the face of the delivery, specifically Sylvia Batty, Josue Ramos, and Paul Smith, all agree that there is more to be done. They believe that information presented needs to be less general and become more regional and culturally specific. “I think we seem to think that just because we are an authority on a topic that people will listen, and people do not care if

you don't make it interesting to them, if you don't make it relative, relative to them, and if they don't feel that they are being represented.” Batty (2020) made this comment when remembering an exchange with a Mennonite man from the community of Springfield in the Cayo District. He had brought in some artifacts he discovered when working his fields and was particularly interested in ancient Maya agricultural techniques. They held his interest until a discussion arose around ancient Maya religion, when the man seemed to withdraw. “It was surprising to me,” recalls Batty, “but it meant that I had to be more careful about what I shared, doesn't mean that I will withhold that information. But it means that it won't be first. And that if I give him information in the future, if he ever returns, I'll make sure to keep it to areas that he's interested.”



Figure 4.5. Josue Ramos, archaeologist at the IA, presenting a lecture at a primary school in western Belize (source Author 2018).

Having conversations, or presenting lectures and exhibits, is essential to educating people not only about Belize's ancient past, but also about current initiatives by the IA. Personalizing the message is a great way to grab the audience's attention. The IA has experience in the delivery of general lectures, but has also presented tailored lectures and exhibits. For example, while presenting on Maya subsistence techniques, the staff demonstrated the use of grinding stones in preparing corn for consumption. Other tailored presentations include lectures specific to regions of the country, such as a lecture about the ancient Maya on the island of Ambergris Caye, featuring only sites located on the island. However, the staff agrees, more can be done. Just like the Mennonite farmer was interested in farming techniques, the staff believes other cultural groups may have their own interests as well. The women of the San Antonio Women's Cooperative, for example, would likely prefer to know about differing ceramic styles and techniques. "If we are not presenting things that are relevant, or to them, or things that they don't understand or are interested in, then they simply don't listen to our information," stated Batty (2020). "And when they don't listen, they don't listen to the entire message, which includes looting and destruction and the illicit trade in objects."

The IA has always been a receptive institution for students and volunteers needing a place to conduct internships. Annually, before and during the Christmas (winter) break, high school students in their junior year participate in a 2-week career placement. This provides high school students a chance to see cultural heritage management from the inside, from management of sites, to cataloguing of artifacts. The IA has also had Peace Corps volunteers as well as foreign student interns. In Belize,

however, beyond the high school career placements, student internships are largely nonexistent. Batty (2020) believes that having tailored internship programs can broaden the reach of archaeology in Belize, and present unique opportunities for local and foreign students alike. Students interested in both art and archaeology, for example, can have a tailored internship program working with artisans that replicate ancient Maya iconography. Having structured institutional involvement and backing can help create these kinds of programs that not only provide credits, but real-world experience. This kind of experience could also extend to visiting students, who could conduct an immersive internship, with community involvement and education as their platform. “Instead of doing something thesis driven, you could do something that’s based on an internship,” stated Batty, “which would include the Institute of Archaeology, identifying a community and with us sort of doing a little bit of background research, and then creating a tailor-made public archaeology program to present to that community. That is absolutely possible.” This “synergistic” involvement, according to Batty, will not only help the IA in their own outreach goals but supplement their limited human resources.

The ‘synergy’ created with institutional collaborations is a form of community archaeology (**Figure 4.6**). Much like public archaeology, community archaeology also has varying characteristics. In Belize, much of the community interaction is under the facilitation of visiting projects and the Institute of Archaeology. Thus, community members in Belize are largely “participant(s) in hands-on opportunities that are nonetheless controlled (and limited) by parameters set out by professionals facilitating or providing the experience” (Thomas 2017:15). There has definitely been an increase in community participation in archaeological work, whether participating in excavation,

processing of artifacts, or helping out in public events such as lectures and exhibits. However, just how involved should communities be in how projects are executed? Should they have some say in the narrative addressed or the questions asked that prompts the excavations? Batty (2020) stated, “I think that is the way that some countries approach public archaeology. They have communities be the decision makers, especially descendant communities, but the question then becomes, what if they want to do something that is detrimental to the site?”



Figure 4.6. Belizean students working along with the IA in processing of artifacts (source IA 2019)

The idea of community driven archaeology, Batty believes, is an ethical issue that requires further study and discussion. “Who is then the decision maker, or the authority figure and why? I know the Institute of archaeology is for posterity and

preservation. But really, should we be? Should the government be the decision maker? Or should the communities be the decision makers? And if so, only descendant communities? Do we really have descendant communities in Belize?" The discussion on descendant communities, and what constitutes one, is not to be taken lightly. McCurdy et al. (2017) warns caution when designating archaeological remains to particular "descendant" communities, and in a place like the village of San Jose Succotz in western Belize, not all community members identify as Maya.

Shared Cultural Heritage

During the many interviews conducted for this thesis, as well as surveys, the concept of a shared Belizean cultural identity arose. While a deeper conversation on this concept is necessary for greater understanding, the picture of a shared Belizean cultural heritage emerges, in some cases blurring the lines between culture and ethnicity, with nationality becoming central. "Ethnically is one, you know, culturally is different," claims Josue Ramos (2020) from the IA. "When I see the Garifuna attire, hear the Garifuna music, it makes me feel proud. I don't think of it as just Garifuna music, but Belizean music." While in many specific ways certain foods and music and celebrations are ethnically/culturally designated, those very aspects are appropriated into the larger amalgamation that is Belizean cultural heritage. This also includes the belief that recent and ancient history in Belize belongs to all Belizeans. Julia Arzu (2020) identifies ethnically and culturally as Garinagu, but while excavating at Cahal Pech, a Maya site, felt it was her history as well. Kareem McKoy (2020) identifies as Creole and also felt that his experience at Cahal Pech was important as he connected to his history. This

history was not always a part of a shared Belizean cultural identity. According to Batty (2020) many of these nationalist ideals of a shared cultural identity and shared history came about during and after the push for Belizean self-government, an initiative that saw fruition in 1964 (Britannica n.d.). “When you look at how Maya archaeology was incorporated into the education system,” stated Batty, “is to find the one thing that we shared commonly, that we could have united around, because that happened right after the push for self-government when social cohesion was a big was a big area of interest for the government of Belize.”

This shared history narrative has also influenced a shared identity, where one can be a specific ethnic group, a mixture of different groups, and still also claim being Belizean as a cultural identity. What may seem like an alien concept in other parts of the world, is enshrined in the laws of Belize as well as the consciousness of her people. The NICH Act makes it legally clear that all of Belize’s archaeological resources belongs to all Belizeans. The narrative in schools, even if just a general overview, continues to state that the ancient past is an essential part of Belize’s story. Paul Smith (2020) recalls being in school and taught about the ancient Maya, and the nationalist view of social cohesion, and thus feels as connected to other cultures as he is to ancient Maya history. In Belize, cultural and historical appropriation is frequently viewed as cultural appreciation. To dress as another culture, to speak like them, to eat their foods, is not a sign of disrespect but quite the contrary. Frank Tzib (2020) got “chills” recalling how he felt seeing a Chinese woman wearing a Garinagu dress, and a Garinagu woman wearing a *huipil*⁵. “Few people would wear that Maya dress,” recalled Tzib. “It made me

⁵ A *huipil* is a traditional Maya garb worn by women. They come in varying patterns and designs based on the region the Maya woman lives.

happy because it I can see how they appreciate other cultures. I really love this ambient where there is a lot of traditions, others would like to learn about that culture. It shows how much they appreciate, tradition and culture. I've seen people use a lot of different ethnicities using other peoples' dresses. And it really makes me very happy."

Julia Arzu (2020) also commented on perceived cultural appropriation in Belize. "I don't want to say it that a lot of Belizean culture and traditions are dying, because culture doesn't die it just evolves. But I feel like a lot of people are losing their traditions and some aspect of their culture and taking one that is more modern, or first world country, or as most Belizeans would say "American", so they want to be more Americanized or just something other than Belizean. I'm Garifuna. When I see a Mestizo girl wearing a Garifuna outfit, I was like, "thank you, thank you for helping to keep my culture and my tradition alive". Because it's not Belizeans stealing each other culture, it's Belizeans trying to uplift each other cultures." Arzu's comment about culture evolving is essential to understanding Belizean cultural identity. While it may seem that some cultures no longer practice or exhibit cultural traits, it is likely due to the evolution of that culture and an amalgamation into the larger Belizean cultural identity. This may mean that individuals of particular ethnic/cultural groups don't only celebrate or practice their own, but also celebrate others. Remembering the dead (Dia de los Muertos), for example, celebrated via *Hanal Pixan* for the Maya, and *finados* for Mestizos, has carried over into other Belizean groups. Garifuna Settlement Day⁶, which started out as a day of celebration in 1941 in Stann Creek (southern Belize), eventually became an official holiday for Garifuna communities, and a national holiday in 1977 (Roessingh and Bras

⁶ November 19th is set aside as Garifuna Settlement Day to commemorate the arrival of a large group of Garinagu to Southern Belize in 1832 (Roessingh and Bras 2003).

2003). Roessingh and Bras (2003:7) claim that “This celebration is so strongly entwined in the historic and cultural background of the Garifuna that it is practically impossible to transform this day into a national Belizean celebration, which could be shared by all ethnic groups in the country.” While this day is rooted in the arrival and struggle of the Garinagu people, its celebration has transcended ethnic and cultural lines, and has become one of Belize’s most prominent cultural celebrations. A large part of the shared Belizean cultural identity is to celebrate Garifuna Settlement Day by either heading to southern Belize and participating in parades, or to witness the arrival reenactments carried out in most major towns across Belize.

As mentioned before, culture in Belize evolves. Different groups borrow from each other, celebrate each other’s customs, and sometimes even dress in each other’s traditional garb. *Punta*, a traditional Garinagu dance, evolved into a Belizean favorite across ethnic lines. Corn-based Mestizo dishes, or Creole bread, are made and enjoyed across the country. *Kriol*, a language that was originally indigenous to the Creole, is now the *lingua franca* of the country and the most commonly spoken tongue across Belize, transcending all ethnic and cultural lines. Giovanni Pinelo of ISCR (2020) asked, “Biologically, socially, there has been interaction between the different peoples from different ethnic backgrounds. And that is what makes Belize truly multiethnic. Where does the Garifuna who had relations with the Mestizo or a Creole, where does that put their children? Where does the East Indian who had a child with a Maya, where does that put them? Beyond this categorization that stratifies us and boxes us in, we have to look beyond that, because that was precisely one of the tools that has kept us divided.” With ethnicities mixing together, and cultures sharing their customs and borrowing from

others, Belize remains an example of how many cultures collectively represent a national identity. While not perfect, the shared national identity, as well as embracing a shared history, has helped Belize move past colonial stigmas and wounds. One aspect left wanting in Belize is a deeper venture in our shared history, in particular precolonial narratives of Maya history.

“The relationship between cultural diversity, heritage, and education in Belize is quite complicated.” Alicia Ebbitt-McGill (2013:9) made that statement following her study of heritage, particularly archaeological heritage, in Belize. “Social studies education that teaches children about heritage and diverse groups and practices is a prominent form of cultural policy that emphasizes certain forms of heritage, promotes national unity, and manages cultural difference.” This idea of promoting cultural heritage and identity via social studies continues with the implementation of Belizean Studies. “Belizean Studies is not Belizean History, and it’s not geography, politics, or economics. It is, in fact, a COMBINATION of all of those, particularly what does it mean to be Belizean” (Newport as cited on Belizean Studies n.d.). But while this may seem a great step towards creating an all-inclusive manner of promoting Belizean cultural heritage, some feel that it shortchanges the importance of history, and the role history plays in understanding who we are as Belizeans.

History Courses in Belize

All the interview participants generally agreed that a comprehensive and accurate history program is lacking from the system of education in Belize. A young Belizean Maya man, Jeremiah Chiac (2020) was asked, “A part of archaeology builds a

connection with history for some people. Do you personally think that learning the history of Belize is something important?" He replied "As an indigenous person? Yeah, I think it is. For one, I'm an adjunct for the University of Belize now. And a lot of the papers I get are something they've seen in *Apocalypto*⁷ or other films that depict indigenous people. You understand?" This statement shows how lacking a history program is across all levels in the Belizean education system. At the general primary school levels, history is general and is incorporated into social studies. Even now with revamping of social studies into Belizean studies, the program remains an amalgamation of courses, such as history, geography, and other social sciences. So just like in social studies, only snippets of relevant Belizean history will make it into a curriculum. Delmer Tzib (2020), history teacher at Saint John's College High School in Belize City, recalls his disappointment with the Belizean Studies initiative. "I had the vision at the beginning, that when we were getting into this program of the Belizean studies that it was going to be history centered." He soon found out that history was not the major focus of the program, and instead other topics such as climate change and sovereignty are considered more important. "We're going to teach about all of these things. Fine. I love that idea," stated Tzib. "But there is no driving element there. In other words, what I thought was history is the driving element, I can talk to you about the Maya, and talk to you about climate change. I can talk to you about the Africans (in Belize) and talk to you about community about sovereignty. Belizean Studies is basically a training book for tour guides."

⁷ *Apocalypto* (2006) is a film directed by Mel Gibson depicting a portion of ancient Maya civilization.

A stand-alone history class is not a requirement in Belize as it once was. The basics of major events are taught to students in primary school, such as a glossing over of the Battle of St. George's Caye that occurred on September 10th, 1798. It is celebrated with a national holiday each year in Belize, and it is around this time that the event receives mention in a primary school social studies class. The experiences varied across the interviewees, giving the indication that education curricula are not standard and are affected on the school's status as either governmental or church run. All schools teach social studies, however, even less so at the high school level. Some high schools teach history, but not until the junior year, and only in certain department of studies, such as general studies, or business. Those in the sciences, focusing on chemistry, biology, or physics, do not take history. Some junior colleges offer a history class, once again dependent on the department a student is in. This seemingly unstandardized method of imparting history creates unequal learning outcomes, and unequally educated Belizeans about their history. And while history may be a mandatory subject at the University of Belize, how well can a student fare having been deprived of history in primary and secondary school? Chiac (2020) believes starting off Belizean students with history at the primary level is important: "The clarity first begins in the primary level. I think there should have some sort of foundation there. And then when he/she moves on into high school, it's a little more in depth. And when you move on until junior college, I think it should be a more in-depth look. And so, it has to do something with probably building a curriculum that would start off from primary school. And then it just goes deeper and deeper as you go through the secondary level and the tertiary level."

April Martinez (2020) is a history lecturer at the University of Belize and she has seen the detriment of a lacking history curriculum in primary and secondary schools. “We assume that because they are Belizean, they know their history and it becomes worrisome when you get to certain points in in Belizean history, something like our Independence Day, and they really, honestly, have to think about it, which is weird!” She also commented on the introduction of Belizean Studies and its synergistic combination of social sciences, but stating that a history class should be in the core of every school curriculum in Belize, starting at the primary level. “There is a lot of history, again it goes back to the accuracy of the history. You want to get it and to retain it. You cannot be focusing on other things, which is why social studies doesn't work for history because you're learning about the weather and then also learning about Maya temples.” Delmer Tzib (2020) concurs with Martinez, that social studies, as comprehensive as it tries to be, failed the Belizean people in educating them about their history. While Belizeans know the national symbols, the important Maya sites, and some of the heroes through history, unless a Belizean actively seeks it out by doing one’s own research or taking history classes, Tzib believes that largely Belizeans are ignorant of many important aspects of history. It was this lack of history that prompted Tzib to teach in the first place. “It reached such a point that others within my generation were looking at me saying, “Why are you even trying so hard to think? Why are you trying so hard to tell me about this story, when it doesn't really matter to me?” And there is where an issue occurred. Because what you see there is a lack of consciousness in our society. That's precisely what pushed me towards teaching. I never knew I wanted to teach. I always

knew I loved to study people. I always knew I love to study the past. I love to see and try to understand why people are behaving the way they are.”

There is overwhelming agreement that history is an important subject to stand alone in a Belizean curriculum. There is also overwhelming agreement that precolonial history is lacking in the history classes across Belize. While social studies classes gloss over the development of the ancient Maya civilization, history classes largely tend to ignore this era of Belizean history, starting off with the coming of the European colonial powers. At St. John’s College High School, both Yasser Musa and Delmer Tzib were instrumental in establishing a history program that examines both African and Maya history. As the Maya are indigenous to Belize, and the Creole emerging from the mixture of enslaved Africans and their British masters, Musa (2020) believes that those cultures deserve a deeper focus in Belizean history classes. He also believes archaeology can be of great benefit to support this cause. Musa claims “I think that's a very important question about the root line issue that we try to deal with. At the first form⁸ level, in terms of trying to link what we're seeing, that the teaching of African and Maya history is a logic because underneath the soil, the African and Maya civilization join up as a result of history. But to explain how those roots came about, the origin, I think that's where the richness of archaeology can strengthen it.”

There is great importance in teaching these histories in Belize to help Belizean people understand how these cultures emerged and became prominent. “It is extremely important,” said Martinez (2020). “They (history students) asked “How did they even get here in the first place?” I had a student ask “How did the Maya become the Maya, and

⁸ In Belize, the first form level is the first-year level at high school.

what made them Maya?" I actually really liked that question. Because when people think about Mesoamerica, they think all of it is Maya. And then you have to tell them there are other groups. "But they all look the same. The colors are the same for the pattern on the pottery." No, it's actually not, here are the details. So, yes, we absolutely have to start from the very beginning."

Chelsea Cruz (2020), a tour guide from western Belize commented on her Belizean history class. "Our Belizean history class was basically mostly about 13 *chapters of Belize*⁹, which did not emphasize on Maya civilization, didn't emphasize on the origin." While her history class touched upon the colonial era of Belize and the Guatemalan Claim¹⁰, Cruz felt that she needed deeper history. "At the tertiary level, we know certain things about this Guatemalan treaty, but that that isn't the only thing that we would want to hear." Pedro Cruz (2020), a senior tour guide in western Belize, also believes that learning about precolonial Maya is of importance to Belizeans. His knowledge on the Maya comes from his own reading and interest. "My knowledge I learned about the Maya came from thirteen books I read like hell to understand it." Cruz believes given the importance of the ancient Maya to tourism in Belize, and to a shared national history and identity, it is an important and necessary subject for a Belizean curriculum. "The things these people did, there is no other culture that was supposed to be emphasized more than them because that's the growth of this area we live in. That's the growth of the region. We need to focus on that first to know where you came from. And if we have five countries of the Mundo Maya complex, Belize being one, hosting the

⁹ 13 *Chapters of a History of Belize* is a Belizean history book, authored by Assad Shoman, first published in 1994.

¹⁰ Guatemala claimed sovereignty over Belize as an "inheritance" from Spain following their independence, and based on a broken treaty with Great Britain (Perez, Chin-Ta, and Afero 2009).

oldest archaeological sites in the region, we are doing good. But who is teaching our people?" Cruz took it upon himself to get access to books on the ancient Maya, as well as archaeological reports, all which not only helped him get a deeper connection to his own history, but also helps his tours, being able to create detailed narratives of ancient Maya cities. He believes that lacking a comprehensive history program that includes precolonial Belize does a disservice to the Belizean people and continues to create a disconnect between our past and present.

Conclusions

This study is just the beginning of understanding cultural heritage in Belize and requires more detailed analysis. While this thesis presents some of the important aspects of cultural heritage and public archaeology for western Belize, it does not provide a total and comprehensive picture of all work carried out in this area of interest. Where this study differs from previous work is in its emic perspective, allowing for greater understanding of the many nuances of Belizean culture that affect the interpretations of survey and interview results. This thesis is also the result of work carried out during a pandemic that inhibited my being in Belize. The recommendations and discussion of the results reflect the ideal conditions of carrying out archaeological research in Belize, and all other forms of outreach and community interaction. Thus, it is important to consider the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic when reflecting on changes that are necessary in all forms of cultural heritage management. Though more research is required to make a clearer assessment of heritage management in Belize, it is evident that within the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH), both the Institute

for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR) and the Institute of Archaeology (IA) have great successes in conducting outreach across Belize, cementing their places as important gatekeepers in Belizean cultural heritage management. With their successes also comes limitations brought about by a lack of human and financial resource, as well as political intervention, the occasional lack of proactive leadership, and instances of public resistance. Both institutions recognize the work ahead but understand the great importance of the outreach conducted and the lessons learned from those initiatives. There is also great success via archaeological projects in Belize in regards to public outreach and education. The Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) project is just one of many in Belize that holds cultural heritage management and public education as important tenets of their work. Both archaeological projects and young Belizeans attest to the importance of involving Belizean students on excavations, but the research shows that greater outreach and interaction is necessary. Many other changes are also necessary to enhance the experiences of the visiting students as well as for the local citizenry. These include greater interactions between both groups, particularly for the visiting students, to allow them greater insight into the culture of the country they are working in. It is also recommended that researchers in Belize alter the ways in how they disseminate information, remembering the target audiences and the relevant information needed to reach that audience. This tailoring of dissemination is also important to the IA, who understand the need for topic/area specific lectures and exhibits. By tailoring presentations to specific audiences, the IA has a greater chance of getting other important messages across, especially the issues of looting and destruction, and the availability of Belizeans acquiring a private collection.

Belize is a multi-ethnic nation, with a shared cultural identity. While some traits are culture specific, these traits cross ethnic and cultural lines, becoming parts of the lives of Belizeans across the country. These traits include food, music, dance, language, and a shared history. Both the pre- and post-colonial history of Belize is shared by and belongs to all Belizeans, a concept and situation that is enshrined in the laws of Belize. The NICH Act clearly vests the archaeological resources of Belize in the hands of all Belizean people. The notion of a shared cultural identity and connections to all ethnic groups in Belize stems from the nationalist instruction of Belizeans in social studies classes starting in primary school. Recent shifts in the education system in Belize brought the introduction of Maya and African studies at the primary school level, but these changes also impacted the previous system which had a dedicated history program in most curricula across Belize. This leaves many current Belizean students unprepared for greater detailed history classes at the tertiary level.

In conclusion, the research for this thesis clearly demonstrates that while Belize can be proud of many novel and successful heritage management initiatives, there is still much to be done to further improve the country's efforts to sustainably manage and disseminate its rich and diverse cultural heritage.

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APPENDIX A

I created a survey to be completed by Belizeans over the age of 18. The survey was semi-structured and created using Google Forms. The survey was then shared via social media. A total of 164 participants fully completed the survey. Discussed below are some demographic information as well as answers to the various questions.

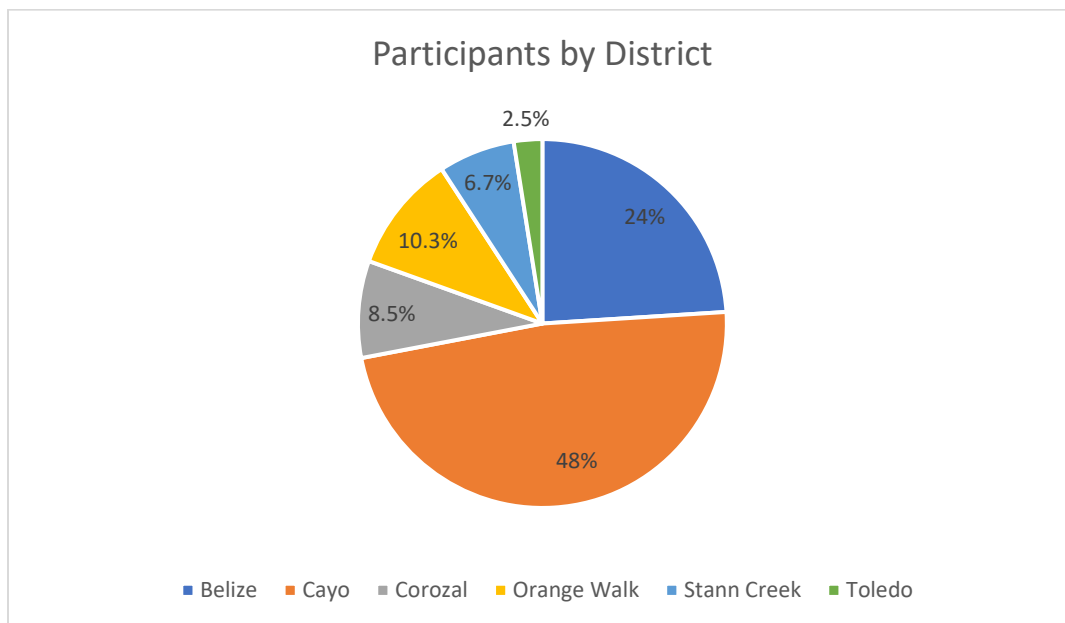


Figure A1. Percent of participants by district

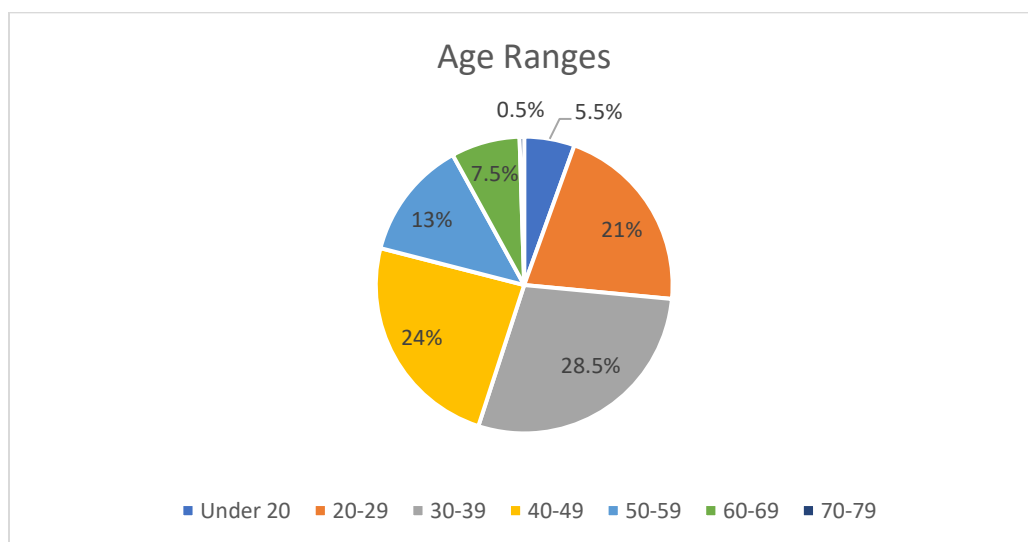


Figure A2. Varying age ranges of participants

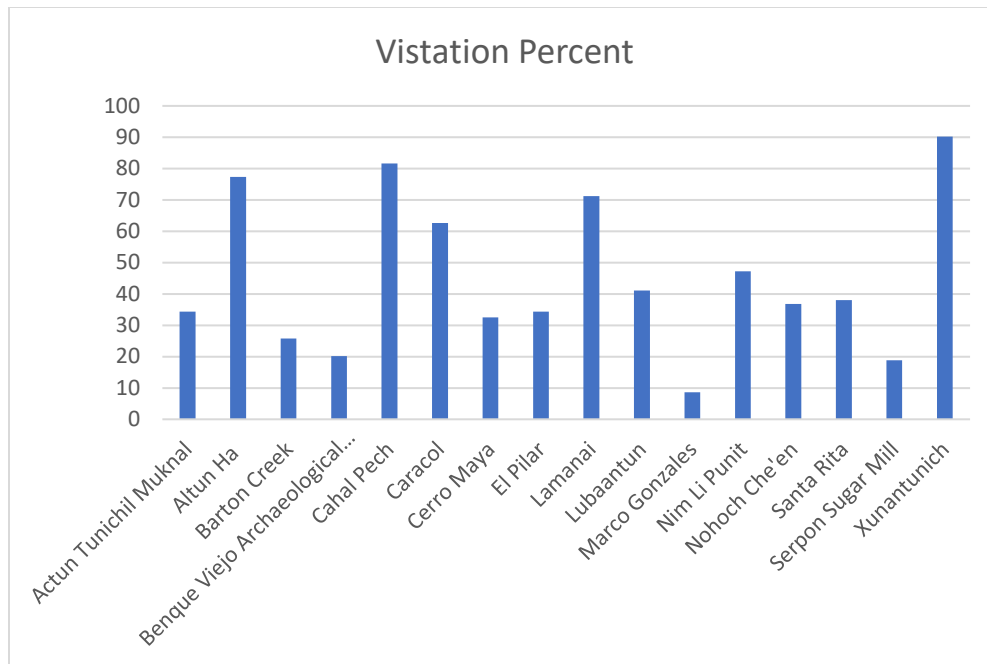


Figure A3. Archaeological reserves visited by participants of the survey

Participants also listed other sites they visited that are not reserves and not mentioned specifically in the survey, in some cases indicating that they likely have worked on an archaeological project before. These include Cuello, Uxbenka, Mayflower, Baking Pot, Alabama, Pacbitun, Actuncan, Ruinas de Arenal, Offering Cave, Che Chem Ha, Las Cuevas, Rio Frio Cave, Pusilha, El Pozito, Buenavista del Cayo, San Lorenzo, La Milpa, and Aventura. Archaeological reserves, sites designated for tourism and managed by the Institute of Archaeology, serve as open-air classrooms. Of the participants, 88.4% believe that the reserves are educational places. The remaining 11.6% believe that the reserves are educational but need some improvement. These improvements include an increase in artifact displays at the visitor's center, an increase in audiovisual and printed informational media, and more signs around the reserve with

reference to the structures and possible uses. Overall, the participants believe that archaeological reserves function as a “visual representation of our shared history”.

Only 84.8% of the participants claimed awareness of archaeological reserves having free entrance for Belizeans on Sundays and on public and bank holidays. Of the 164 participants, 69.8% feel more sites should be declared as reserves and open for tourism, 24.1% chose ‘maybe’ while the remaining 6.2% choosing ‘no’. Those who chose ‘yes’ generally think that Belize has many “small beautiful sites” that can be opened, providing Belizeans a greater chance to know their history. Others claimed more practical reasons, such as reducing overcrowding at other sites, or having alternatives to visit when other sites, like Xunantunich, Nohoch Che’en, or Actun Tunichil Muknal, are closed due to flooding after heavy rains. Those in opposition claim the possibility of damage to sites through vandalism, as well as citing the lack of resources to properly manage the reserves that are open. Of the participants, 76.4% of them claimed to have visited the Museum of Belize, another entity under the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH). Ninety-five percent of them also knew what the acronym NICH stood for.

The following section was open-ended word associations. For this, the word is stated, followed by the most common, and in some cases, the most striking associations. **Archaeology**: ruins; history; knowledge; science; career; excavations; jade; monument; underfunded; looting; foreigners. **Artifact**: pottery; carvings; treasure; tools; jade; black market; looted; culture; heritage; evidence. **History**: past; knowledge; heritage; ancestors; foundation; wisdom; education; Maya; identity. **Culture**: Maya; traditions; identity; lost; assimilation; diverse; heritage; tangible; intangible; ideology;

fluid. **Looting:** criminal; loss; disrespectful; stealing; easy; remote; Europeans; Smithsonian.

Following the word associations came statements with Likert scales from (1) signaling strong disagreement, to (5) meaning strong agreement. When asked if archaeology in Belize should be practiced by foreigners only, only 77.8% fully disagreed, with 2.5% agreeing. The following statement claimed that archaeology contributes to Belizean history, with a strong 93.3% agreeing, and only 0.6% in disagreement. The third statement claims that archaeology in Belize is only about the Maya, with 31.5% in disagreement, followed by 24.7% being unsure. Following this, the statement that Maya history is Belizean history had only 50.6% agreement, with 5.6% disagreeing. The statement that all artifact found in Belize belong to all Belizeans gathered 73.6% agreement, with 3.1% disagreeing. Following this, 89% of all participants disagreed that selling artifacts is permissible, with 1.2% in agreement. Seventy four percent of the participants agreed that archaeology should be taught in schools in Belize.

When asked where they learned about archaeology in Belize, almost 80% of the participants mentioned school, with 56.9% claiming television as a source, followed by the news, at 54.4%. News media is the most common source for learning about new archaeological discoveries in Belize, at 63.1%. Only 59% of the participants were aware that an archaeological project focuses on the Creole culture in Belize. Of the 164 participants, 75% were aware that archaeology is offered as a subject in a Belizean university. All participants believe that archaeology, culture, and history, are important for a successful tourism industry in Belize

APPENDIX B

A second survey created, using Google Forms, was specifically targeted at tour guides from Western Belize. It was much shorter than that mentioned in Appendix A, and had only 14 participants. No demographic data was collected from this group. The first section of the survey dealt with defining words. The first word was 'culture', and generally the definitions were similar. These include "passed on from generation to generation", "influences behaviour and gives an identity", and "learning about the other ethnicities that make up our national cultural heritage". The second word for definition was 'archaeology'. The definitions were similar, including "study of ancient and recent human activity through material remains", "tied to the past and often in the more tangible material form", and "study of human activity through the recovery and analysis of material culture".

The next section featured questions with follow-up responses. The first question queried about the ease of accessing reports and/or articles about archaeology in Belize. Of the 14, eight claimed difficulty in access. General comments mentioned the Institute of Archaeology being a repository for access. However, others claimed difficult in access due to pricey journal subscriptions or lack of a credit card. Comments also included the difficulty in understanding the material because of the technical language of many reports and/or articles. The question following directly related to tourism, about the opening of more archaeological sites as reserves. Only one of 14 chose no, claiming that the sites should be protected from human interaction and foot traffic. Overwhelmingly, however, the other guides believe that to declare sites as reserves is a way to protect them, as the flora and fauna at the site would come under legal

protection as well. Other reasons for declaring more sites as reserves include the creation of more jobs, a better way to gain knowledge and understanding of Belizean history, and some even mentioned the possibility of co-management of reserves between the Institute of Archaeology and other private entities.

The next question was open-ended, asking the guides what changes they would like to see in regards to archaeological practice in Belize. Generally, the answers spoke to no damage done at sites, stressing the backfilling of open units. Quite a few specifically mentioned the importance of having Belizean students and tour guides receiving archaeological experience by working with projects. Another point raised is to have guides involved in decision making processes regarding the management of sites. All the guides agreed that archaeology has contributed greatly to tourism. Not only has archaeology assisted in sites declared as reserves and opened for tourism, continued archaeological investigation adds to the ever-evolving narrative of Maya and Belizean history. They believe archaeology has helped place Belize as a major destination in the Maya world, and with continued promotion can attract visitors from around the world.

APPENDIX C

The third survey gathered data from foreign archaeology students who had worked or continue to work in Belize. This was important in order to understand their experience working in Belize. This survey was completed by 39 students, most of them having worked, or still work, in western Belize, at sites like Xunantunich, Cahal Pech, Buenavista del Cayo, and Baking Pot. Others worked in northern Belize at the sites of Lamanai, Ka'kabish, Blue Creek, and La Milpa. Though not specifically asked, it was easy to determine those who worked in Belize for just one season compared to many seasons. This realization came about when asked what sites they have visited. Those who worked just one season listed one or two, and are the easier to access reserves such as Altun Ha or Xunantunich. Those with more than one season listed many sites.

The following section were definitions. I will provide those words in this section, followed by the common themes along with some that stood out. The first word was **cultural heritage**: tangible and intangible ties to our ancestors; the products of a culture; things, ideas, and worlds that define a group's shared identity; and educational tours of sites and expanded areas with knowledgeable trained guides. **Public archaeology**: involving the public or different stakeholder communities in the development of cultural heritage frameworks; archaeology that puts the community we serve at the forefront of our project goals; public participation in excavations, consulting with a community as to what they would like to learn about the past; specific educational goals and involves constituent communities in the entire process, from planning to excavation and analysis, goals of disseminating resulting information to the public, and

for the public good; and its primary goal should be to give back information to the public through accessible materials, exhibits, and events.

Of the 39 participants, 28.9% claim to have some difficulty in accessing reports/articles on Belizean archaeology. Most responses claimed some ease of access using platforms like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, or Academia. Some claimed the Research Reports in Belizean Archaeology, the Belize Archaeology Symposium proceedings, to be the most important to have access to but many are blocked because of the price. Some participants believe that all projects should post their reports, theses, and dissertations online, citing BVAR as an example. Some participants believe that the Institute of Archeology should become a central digital repository for all reports in Belizean archeology, especially as some of the older reports may prove harder to access. Following this, the participants were asked about alternative ways of disseminating archaeological reports beyond academic journals. All, except for one, believe that other forms of disseminating archeological information is needed. These include project websites, public presentations, but perhaps the most frequent suggestion was a project blog. The blog, and other social media postings, are geared at the public, and would be written in a non-academic manner, while retaining archaeological fact.

Almost 75% of the participants believe that more archeological sites should be declared reserves in Belize. Those against this notion believe that enough accessible sites are already open, and opening up sites as reserves in hard to access areas can have negative impacts on the surrounding environments. They also consider the cost of creating and maintaining a reserve reflecting on the amount of visitors and revenue

produced at some reserves. Those in favor of more reserves cite greater economic benefits for tour guides as well as adjacent communities. Others believe that declaring sites as reserves could curb looting, and provide greater educational opportunities for Belizeans to learn about their cultural heritage. All 39 participants believe that Belizeans need greater involvement in projects beyond just the field-hand capacity. While some suggest the need for greater Belizean student involvement, one participant stated that Belizeans can be hired to assist in the archaeology labs as well. This participant claimed that some projects are not thorough in processing artifacts in the lab, such as the washing, cataloguing, photographing, and leave untold number of items unprocessed and in storage. This would be an excellent way to involve more Belizeans in archaeology as they learn about lab procedures, and secure some financial compensation.

The following two questions involved the operation of field schools in Belize. The first question was whether or not projects should share their proposals and plans with communities before commencing excavations. While all agreed this is something necessary, some pointed out that there is not always a community nearby to consult with. Others commented that some projects get permission from and consult with landowners, and this should be extended to the community at large. One participant suggested that individual supervisors, for example graduate students, can speak about their research goals for a few minutes, not only informing the local community of proposed research, but giving the students an opportunity to work on public speaking. Generally, most participants concluded that community consultations are important as it is their cultural heritage under investigation. The second question asked reflected

proposed changes to field schools in Belize. Overwhelmingly, the response was to include more Belizean students, with a few participants suggesting that project directors can find ways to fund scholarships to ensure Belizean student participation. Other frequent suggestions involved greater exposure to Belizean culture beyond just food and drink, by including a public component to projects, and possibly even having cultural speakers, such as Maya, coming to projects to talk about their own cultural heritage. Lastly, a few participants mentioned the need for more workshops on topics such as ceramic or lithic analysis, helping students in their analysis and possibly kickstarting an interest in specific areas of archaeology.

Lastly, the participants were asked to share ways that visiting projects can increase their community interaction and inclusion. While most participants voiced that inclusion of Belizean students is necessary, others spoke of community engagement via public volunteering initiatives, and public events such as lectures. One participant mentioned an example of an archaeological magazine done in the American Southwest, with articles from archaeologists, as well as members of the community, as a way to highlight both tangible and intangible forms of a culture. Another participant mentioned that students coming in should also be spoken to about how to interact with the local citizenry. The specific example given was of a curious Belizean family that walked by an archaeological lab where students were washing ceramics. Upon asking questions about the sherds, one student “in a very militant way” shouted that they (the Belizean family) are not allowed to touch the pieces or take photos. The participant elaborated saying that it is important “to remind US (United States) students we do not own the archaeology material but Belize does and it’s their culture, not ours.”

APPENDIX D: MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS OF BELIZE

While this appendix is not representative of all cultural groups in Belize, it offers a brief introduction to the major ones represented in Belizean culture and cultural identity.

Creole – In the 1800's, British pirates in Belize, called the Baymen, established log cutting camps in Belize. Many of them took enslaved African women as mistresses and common-law wives. Their offspring became the Creole people of Belize, who speak *Kriol* (National Kriol Council 2019). They make up about 26% of the population.

East Indian – In the 1930's, political unrest, famine, and poverty in India caused many Indians to migrate to other countries to become indentured laborers. These Indians came to Belize to replace the enslaved Africans after slavery was abolished.

Descendants are called 'East Indians' to differentiate themselves from other Indians. In Belize they colloquially referred to as 'coolie' or Hindu' (COEICH n.d.). They make up about 4% of the population.

Garinagu – In 1635 two Spanish slave ships sank in the Eastern Caribbean. Enslaves Africans who were aboard escapes to St. Vincent, mixing with the native Arawak. While the offspring had African features, they retained the Amerindian language, traditions, and culture. These were and are the Garinagu. Exiled in the 1700's by British colonists, they arrived in Honduras, Guatemala, and Belize. They are also called Garifuna, though Garifuna is the language they speak (Buttram 2007). They make up about 6% of the population.

Maya – There are three Maya groups in Belize, identified by the language they speak. The **Mopan Maya** originally inhabited parts of central Belize but were driven out by British colonists, only to migrate back in the 1800's fleeing enslavement in Guatemala.

They settled mostly in the south and some central parts of Belize. The **Yucatec** originated in Yucatan, Mexico, and fled to Belize as refugees of the Caste War in the 1800's, settling primarily in the north, with some in the west. *Mopan* is in the same language family tree as *Yucatec*. Lastly, the **Q'eqchi'** (also spelled K'ekchi') migrated to Belize in the late 1800's, fleeing enslavement and being displaced in Guatemala. They settled in southern Belize (UNHCR 2017). Collectively they comprise 12% of the population of Belize.

Mennonite - Fleeing social pressures in other nations, including Mexico, the Mennonites settled in Belize in 1958. Two distinct colonies, the Old Colony Mennonites, settled in Shipyard and Blue Creek in northern Belize, like the Klein Gemeinde Mennonites settled Spanish Lookout in western Belize. In their communities they speak a form of "low" German, but are also fluent English and Spanish speakers when interacting outside their communities (Roessingh 2007). They collectively make up about 4% of the population.

Mestizo – A Mestizo is someone of Spanish and Maya descent, called *Ladinos* in other places. Mestizo ancestry in Belize can be traced to refugees fleeing the Caste War in Yucatan, Mexico, where natives threatened the lives of anyone with European descent. The Mestizo settled predominantly in northern Belize. About the same time, Mestizos fleeing a dictatorial regime in Guatemala settled in western Belize. Mestizos speak Spanish but most are versed in English and Kriol as well (McNab Editorial Team 2019). They make up about 53% of the population.

These are far from the only ethnic and cultural groups in Belize. Belize is home to communities from both Asia and the Middle East, including Chinese, Taiwanese, and

Lebanese Belizeans. Belize is also home to growing American and British 'expat' communities.