



NATIONAL GARIFUNA COUNCIL

P.O. Box 359, Belmopan

Head Office: Pablo Lambey Garifuna Cultural Center
59 Commerce Street, Dangriga

Email: nationalgarifunacouncil@gmail.com

President: *Mr. Alex Nolberto*

PRESS RELEASE

The National Garifuna Council (NGC) presents revised MOU to Minister of Constitution & Religious Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and Transportation and commences a series of branch visits

August 4, 2025 — The National Garifuna Council (NGC) Executive met with the Minister of **Constitution & Religious Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and Transportation, Hon. Dr. Louis Zabaneh**, to share and discuss a revised Memorandum of Understanding between the NGC and **the Government of Belize (GOB)**. This revision builds on a previous MOU that was signed in 1999 between then Prime Minister of Belize Said Musa and then NGC President Roy Cayetano. This revision strengthens the ten agreements in the previous MOU by incorporating relevant references to Belize's Constitution as well as international **conventions** and declarations related to indigenous peoples in Belize. Present at today's meeting along with Minister Zabaneh were CEO Chester Williams, Director of Indigenous People's Affairs Gustavo Requeña, and Director of Research and Planning Anna Loague. Representing the NGC were President Alex Nolberto, 1st Vice President Raphael Martinez, Assistant Secretary Sharrie Ciego Gordon, and Assistant Treasurer Ifášinà Efunyemi.

During the discussion with Ministry officials, recommendations were made to further amend and enhance the revised MOU. These included more specific attention to sustainable agricultural and economic development initiatives in Garifuna communities. The revised MOU has seven articles covering areas of recognition and representation, land and environmental rights, cultural and linguistic rights, non-discrimination, inclusive development, and institutional strengthening. Minister Zabaneh explained that after the recommendations from today's meeting are incorporated in the document, it will be shared with the Attorney General for further scrutiny before it is presented to Cabinet for approval.

Today's MOU presentation occurred on the heels of the commencement of a series of branch visits that the newly-elected NGC Executive is conducting in all of NGC's 12 branches across the

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country. This past weekend, the NGC Executive met with Garinagu in Hopkins, Dangriga, Seine Bight, and Georgetown, not only for familiarization but also **to promote** awareness of the history, structure, mission, and vision of the NGC.

The visits also provide the opportunity for Garinagu to raise concerns about what is happening in their communities. The meetings are open to all Garifuna residents of each community.

These initial visits will continue for the remainder of August and are scheduled as follows:

Punta Gorda - Friday, August 8, 2025

Barranco - Saturday, August 9, 2025

Belmopan and San Ignacio - Saturday, August 16, 2025

San Pedro - Saturday, August 23, 2025

Belize City - Sunday, August 24, 2025

Orange Walk and Libertad - Saturday, August 30, 2025

Community members are urged to attend these very informative and interactive sessions as the new Executive officers illustrate their commitment to moving the organization forward and, more importantly, the interest of Garinagu across the country.

Contact Raphael Martinez at 610-3280 or Ifášinà Efunyemi at 611-1474 for additional information.

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