



National Assembly of Belize

Office of the Clerk

P.O. Box 139, Belmopan, Cayo District, Belize Central America

Tel. 501-822-2141/2142 or 2144

E-mails: ClerkNA@bna.gov.bz CEO.NationalAssembly@bna.gov.bz

www.nationalassembly.gov.bz

REF: NA/16/21 (29)

PRESS RELEASE

The National Assembly Marks the 40th Anniversary year of Belize's Independence

--15th September 2021--The National Assembly of Belize commemorates the celebration of Belize's Independence through a few initiatives designed to signify this important milestone in the history of Belize.

It was 40 years ago commencing in February 1981 that Belize embarked on countrywide consultations on the proposed constitution of Belize which culminated with the debates in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. The House meetings on 14th and 28th August 1981, were presided by the Speaker of the House, Hon. Charles Hyde, M.B.E. and the presiding officer for the Senate meeting of 1st September 1981 was Hon. William Coffin. All national symbols of the country, the national seal and membership as an independent country in key international organizations such as the Commonwealth Nations and the United Nations among others were affirmed. The Commencement Date was 21st September 1981. The Father of the Nation, National Hero Rt. Hon. George Price, led the country on this journey to becoming a sovereign, independent nation with its territory intact and he led the discussions in parliament to establish Belize's constitution. The architects of the Belize Constitution Bill, 1981 were Hon. V. H. Courtney, team lead, and members, Hon. Said W. Musa, Hon. Assad Shoman and Hon. C. L. B. Rogers.

Today, the National Assembly has digitized the White Paper on the Proposed Constitution of Belize, the Report of the Joint Select Committee on the proposed terms of the constitution of an independent Belize, the countrywide consultations by district and the subsequent debates in the House and the Senate. These historical records are now publicly available and easily accessible to all Belizeans, at home and abroad, academia, and organizations through the website of the National Assembly (www.nationalassembly.gov.bz).

Hon. Carolyn Trench Sandiford, President of the Senate, stated *"The Constitution of Belize is the most important document in our history. It is the essence of who we are. Its ideals define us. It is the raison d'etre of our very existence. It is only fitting and timely therefore, that on the 40th year of independence, as we reflect on the Belize of the future, that this document, the process that led to the drafting of it, and the people who made their contributions to it, be known, and that it be accessible by all. Now, this and the next generation, can appreciate its genesis, and the powers contained in it, to deliver on the promise of a better quality of life for all Belizeans"*.

Additionally, the National Celebrations Committee through the National Institute of Culture and History (**NICH**) in partnership with the **imaginATIOn factri** and the National Assembly of Belize commissioned two (2) works of visual art for the 40th anniversary of Belize's Independence. These are now prominently displayed at the entrance of the Assembly Building. One of the works is a multi-media quilt using fabric and mixed media entitled **"Independence da EVERYDAY People"** which is the collaborative effort of artists Mercy Sabal from Dangriga Town, Stann Creek District, and Katie Numi Usher from Ladyville Village, Belize District. Mercy Sabal has been making art since the early 1980s and is part of the first generation of Belizean visual artists post 1981 independence. Katie Numi Usher is one of the leading contemporary artists in the creative landscape of Belize.

The other visual artwork is a flint stone sculpture entitled **"Flint Humans"**. It was created by Anthony' Rojo" Vacaro Sr, Anthony Vacaro Jr and Mark Vacaro from Maskall Village, Belize District. The piece is made from CHERT flint, a unique type of rock specific to the Maskall area in Belize along with marble and limestone. The Vacaro family has been doing sculpture art in Belize for over 40 years. The visual artworks form a part of the national art collection of Belize.

Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives, stated *"The visual art demonstrates the diversity and richness of our Belizean identity. And digitizing the debates and consultations on the Constitution brings 1981 alive and accessible to all. There is much to be learnt from the pages of the past. It is particularly instructive for our young people and future leaders of Belize on the importance of finding that balance needed in development. As we look ahead to the next 40 years, history has taught us we all have a shared responsibility in building a better nation, a more resilient one and a more inclusive one"*.

--The End--

