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PRESS RELEASE

Minister Zabaneh and CEO Williams Engage Garifuna Leaders in Meaningful Dialogue

Belmopan, July 3, 2025.

The Ministry of Constitution and Religious Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and Transportation hosted an important meeting on Monday, June 30, 2025, with distinguished members of the Garifuna community to discuss pressing issues and explore opportunities for collaborative action.

Held at the Ministry's Headquarters in Belmopan, the meeting created a platform for open and productive dialogue. Participants included respected Garifuna advocates and leaders such as Roy Cayetano, Conrad Lewis, Mayor Robert Mariano, Cynthia Ellis Topsey, Ifásínà Efunyemi, NGC First Vice President, and Sharrie Ciego Gordon, NGC Secretary. Representing the ministry alongside Minister Dr. Louis Zabaneh and Chief Executive Officer Mr. Chester Williams were Mr. Gustavo Requena, Director of Indigenous People's Affairs, and Ms. Anna Loague, Director of Policy, Planning, and Research.

Discussions focused on deepening engagement with the Garifuna community and advancing indigenous affairs through inclusive and sustained collaboration. Specific areas discussed included:

1. Rights of access to ancestral lands and the demarcation of community boundaries
2. Recognition of the invaluable contributions the Garifuna people continue to make to Belize's development
3. The role of academia in the preservation and advancement of Garifuna rights and cultural heritage

A key outcome of the meeting was the shared commitment to establish a dedicated working group for the Garifuna community that will support ongoing dialogue, policy development, and the advancement of the rights of the Garinagu as an indigenous people.

The Ministry reaffirms its dedication and commitment to honouring the contributions of the Garifuna people to Belize's national development and cultural heritage.

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