



**Good Practice Story Title:** [Loving Cayo, the heart that gives life to the bio-cultural heritage of Belize](#)

**Destination:** Cayo District, Belize

**Country:** Belize

**Submitting Organization:** BELIZE TOURISM BOARD / Riviera Maya Sostenible

**Category:**

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition**
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

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## **LOVING Cayo "The heart that gives life to the Bio-cultural Heritage of Belize"**

### **Destination description:**

The Cayo District in Belize is located in the western part of the country and is the largest district in terms of land area. It is known for its scenic beauty, diverse ecosystems, and rich cultural heritage. The district's landscape is characterized by lush rainforests, rolling hills, rivers, and caves, making it a popular destination for eco-tourism and outdoor activities.

The district's main town is San Ignacio and its "twin" town Santa Elena, which serves as a hub for travelers exploring the surrounding area. San Ignacio offers a mix of traditional and modern amenities, including markets, restaurants, and accommodations. The town also serves as a gateway to popular attractions such



as the Maya archaeological sites of Caracol and Xunantunich, as well as the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve.

In addition to its natural beauty, the Cayo District is home to a diverse population, including a mix of indigenous Maya communities, “expats”, and “Belizean” local residents. This cultural diversity is reflected in the district's cuisine, music, and traditional practices.

Overall, the Cayo District offers a blend of adventure, culture, and natural wonders, making it a must-visit destination for travelers seeking an authentic Belizean experience.

Cayo District is one of the six districts of Belize. The district is located in the west of the nation and its capital is the city of San Ignacio. The district is the border with Guatemala.

### **Geography**

Within this region is the national capital, [Belmopan](#), the capital of the district, [San Ignacio](#), the city of [Benque Viejo del Carmen](#), the villages of [San Antonio](#), [Valle de Paz](#), [St. Margret's](#), [Roaring Creek](#), [Albaina](#), [San José Succotz](#), [Arenal](#), [Buena Vista](#), [Bullet Tree Falls](#), [Calla Creek](#), Chorro, [Dry Creek Bank](#), [Garbutt's Falls](#), [Spanish Lookout](#), [Toro](#), [Vaca](#) and [Providencien](#).

The district of Caius also has in its territory the archaeological mayan zones of [Xunantunich](#), [Cahal Pech](#), Caracol and [El Pilar](#). Some important rivers of Cayo are the [Macal River](#) and the [Mopan River](#).

### **Economy**

The district of Cayo is mainly an agricultural area, with its main crops being the [Citrus fruits](#), (oranges, grapefruits, and [Tangerines](#)), as well as bananas. Oil has recently been found in [Spanish Lookout](#) and is currently in production.

In the district there are Mayan archaeological sites and [important nature reserves](#), such as the [Blue Hole National Park](#) and the [Guanacaste National Park](#). [Ecotourism](#) is also an integral part of the region's economy.

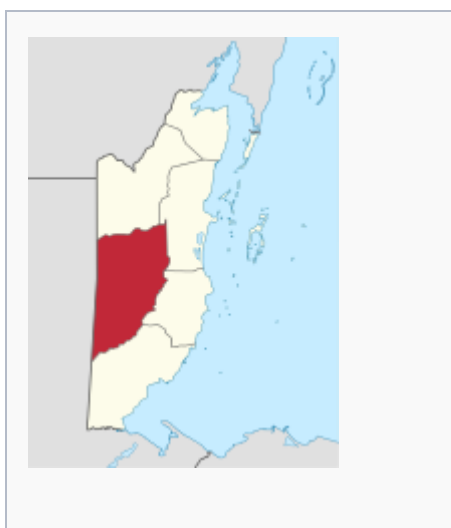


## Demography

According to 2010 census data, 75,046 inhabitants lived in the district, while in the 2000 census, the district had a population of 54,197 inhabitants, which represents an intercensal growth of 38.5%, being the district with the highest growth in the country.

Of the total population of the district, 44,445 were of Hispanic origin, representing 63.4% of the population.

- [Coordinates: !\[\]\(cdf2842d82858164c68c92720a337fb9\_img.jpg\)  \$16^{\circ}50'00''N\$   \$88^{\circ}55'00''O\$](#)
- Capital: San Ignacio
- Most populous city: Belmopan
- Official language: English
- Other languages: Spanish. Mayan, Creole
- Country: Belize
- District: Cayo
- Total area: 5338 Km<sup>2</sup>
- Altitud media: 654 m.s.n.m.
- Population (2022): 99,105 inhabitants





## Summary of Good Practice Story:

The deep ties that different groups have kept alive to revitalize the best of the past, transform what is needed in the present and create a future that vibrates at the heart of its bio-cultural heritage: CAYO DISTRICT, WESTERN BELIZE.

"The identity and cultural practices of the Mayan community in Cayo have been threatened in recent years by external influence. Maya women and children, especially in this region, face limited opportunities to explore their biocultural heritage, which impacts their economic and personal development. At some point, groups emerged that felt deep down a significant loss of traditions, artistic techniques, ancestral knowledge and traditional recipes of gastronomy.

Faced with this scenario, multiple entities in Belizean society, specifically in the district of Cayo, have initiated productive initiatives focused on the restoration, conservation and promotion of cultural manifestations, as well as the preservation of the environment. These projects cover aspects such as traditional gastronomy, artistic expressions, dissemination and community training, as well as the promotion of cultural and commercial values and spaces, all with the aim of revitalizing and conserving the cultural biodiversity of Mayan communities.

Various initiatives and social organizations in Cayo, such as [San Antonio Women's Cooperative](#), [UPE NAÍ LIVING MAYA IMMERSION](#), [Benque Marimba Los Hijos del West](#) and [Belize Raptor Center](#), are developing projects based on the recovery of the foundations of their culture and the care of the ecological balance.

**UPE NAÍ LIVING MAYA IMMERSION** is a family business conceived as a cultural center and traditional Mayan cuisine, which offers a cultural and gastronomic immersion that aims to recover the culture, language, traditions and traditional Mayan gastronomy. Philip and Nila, along with their family, offer a cultural immersion that involves a unique gastronomic experience, excursions and hiking for the observation of birds, fauna and medicinal plants, in four languages, Spanish, English, Mayan and Creole, which welcomes and attracts local and international people, to admire the pride of their culture and living Mayan identity in a concept of traditional gastronomy from their open kitchen.



"At UPE NAÍ LIVING MAYA IMMERSION we help counteract the decline of our mother culture through the creation of a cultural center and traditional cuisine and also our Mayan farm. We want to be a source of inspiration to recover our culture, food and traditions and we want people of all ages, Belizeans and foreigners, to benefit from it." The idea is very simple and at the same time very innovative and visionary. It is about opening a space of genuine and natural coexistence, in which the visitor becomes another guest of the family, in its open kitchen/dining room, surrounded by lush vegetation of the Belizean Mayan jungle, where the preparation of food is carried out in full view of everyone, at shared tables, in the company of the family, and during a pleasant family conversation.

**SAN ANTONIO WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE** also offers a simple and innovative concept of an open kitchen, in which visitors have the opportunity to participate in the traditional techniques of Mayan gastronomy, such as the preparation of corn dough and tortillas and habanero pepper sauce. The concern of its founders, who seek to offer paths of opportunity to the young women of the community, to change what was their own childhood and youth, brought them closer to investigate a new discipline, pottery in the traditional techniques of clay and Mayan painting, to open paths of development: pottery workshop to produce pieces for sale, Tourist experience workshop, where the visitor can make pieces of their own ceramics, painted with plant colors extracted from local plants, with ancestral techniques and everyday scenes.

This cooperative provides great windows of opportunity in the rescue of traditional Mayan artistic and cultural values, while representing for Timotea, Josefa, its founders, and a dozen women who have joined the initiative, a space for development and opportunities to find in the promotion of their gastronomy, culture and art, the source of their subsistence and a window to the world of their culture and pride of belonging. **In San Antonio, Women's Cooperative also offers training courses** in embroidery, beading and pottery that not only preserve these traditional trades, but also equip women with trade skills. It has also been possible to revitalize traditional painting techniques with natural pigments, a sustainable and culturally significant practice.

Almost accidentally, after its incursions into so many traditional disciplines, tourism has been an activity that has resulted from the interest of the locals and visitors themselves, of the managers of high-end resorts that are stranded in the surrounding natural beauties, and all have marveled at the quality of experiences they offer because of their attachment to their culture and origin. and their determination to provide







themselves and other women, opportunities that a few decades ago, no one would have dreamed of in Cayo District, which makes their tourist experience a transformative and revealing impact on the visitor.

**BENQUE MARIMBA LOS HIJOS DEL WEST** is an initiative of Mayan musical renewal, based on the rescue and revitalization of marimba music as part of the cultural heritage and identity. Led by Ian Yacab, guided by his passion for this instrument instilled by his teachers and exponents in his community, he feared the loss of this tradition of Western Belize, due to the advanced age of the only musicians specialized in Marimba until that moment, he wondered, What will happen to marimba music? his restless spirit and the support of the House of Culture of Benque Viejo del Carmen, has led him to form a group of 20 young musicians between 8 and 20 years old, and taught courses to about 120 children and young people from all over the region, integrating elements of innovation, such as bass and drums. Today he has become a highly successful reference in this traditional art and feeling, with concerts in resorts, restaurants, concerts in the park, cultural experiences at the Benque Casa de la Cultura and representing his country at international events.

"We are not afraid or shrink in the face of difficulties and challenges: we lack space to rehearse, we need more instruments, but we have plenty of effort, heart and love for Mayan music. We are grateful for the collaboration of the OAS with our largest donation of a marimba set valued at 15,000 Belizean dollars."

**BELIZE RAPTOR CENTER**, on the other hand, is an initiative founded and promoted by Sarah Mann, dedicated to the rescue, lodging and protection of birds of prey from the jungle in Cayo, and from there, to the construction of a community of guardians of this land. In the last 12 years they have dedicated themselves to educating an average of between 6,000 and 10,000 people a year. In the last 11 years they have given off-site presentations (in schools) and then on-site, off-site, at booths, presentations, conferences and private programs on-site and throughout the country.

All these initiatives have received from the ancestors these knowledge, these feelings, a rhythm that marks the passage of the heart, words, stories, essences and flavors that are determined to continue beating in the hearts to come in Cayo, throughout Belize. And so it will be, it is in their hands to achieve it.





## Issues faced:

The Maya population of the Cayo district of Belize faces a number of significant challenges and difficulties that affect their cultural identity, language, traditions, and economic development. These challenges can be categorized into two broad areas: the threat to their cultural identity and poverty along with the lack of opportunities, especially for women and young people.

### Threat to Cultural Identity

#### 1. Loss of the Mayan language and culture:

- **Disuse of Language:** Globalization and the influence of dominant languages, such as English and Spanish, have led to new generations of Mayans not learning or using their ancestral languages less.
- **Education:** Formal education systems in Belize often prioritize English and Spanish, leaving little room for the teaching of Mayan languages.

#### 2. Erosion of Traditions:

- **Change in Values and Customs:** Modernization and the influence of external cultures have caused many traditional practices to be seen as obsolete or irrelevant.
- **Lack of Intergenerational Transmission:** With young people's disinterest in traditions and migration to urban areas, there are fewer opportunities for older generations to pass on their knowledge and customs.

#### 3. External Threats:

- **Tourism and Development:** Increased tourism and economic development can alter and commercialize cultural practices, turning them into mere spectacles for visitors.
- **Territory and Natural Resources:** Pressure on indigenous lands by companies and the government for agricultural, mining or tourism projects can displace communities and make it difficult to practice their traditions.

### Poverty and Lack of Opportunities

#### 1. Economic Conditions:

- **Dependence on Agriculture:** The subsistence economy and dependence on agriculture, which is subject to inclement weather, leave communities vulnerable to poverty.

#### 2. Job Opportunities:





- **Scarce Jobs:** The lack of industrial and commercial development in rural areas means that there are few jobs available, forcing many to migrate to cities in search of work.

### 3. Challenges for Women and Youth:

- **Discrimination and lack of employment:** Mayan women and youth often face discrimination which limits their employment opportunities, so many are forced to migrate to the cities, contributing to community disintegration.

## Solution:

Initiatives such as San Antonio Women's Cooperative, UPE NAÍ LIVING MAYA IMMERSION, Benque Marimba Los Hijos del West, and the Belize Raptor Center are addressing the challenges facing the society of Cayo, Belize, in a variety of innovative and effective ways. These initiatives contribute to addressing the problems of cultural identity, poverty, and lack of opportunities:

### San Antonio Women's Cooperative

#### 1. Economic Empowerment:

- **Productive Projects:** This women's cooperative has been involved in the production and sale of handicrafts, textiles, and other goods, generating sustainable income for its members.

#### 2. Capacity Building:

- **Training and Education:** Provide training in entrepreneurial skills, financial management, and production techniques, improving women's ability to run their businesses and generate income.

#### 3. Promotion of Cultural Identity:

- **Preservation of Traditions:** They encourage the production of handicrafts and products that reflect the Mayan culture, helping to preserve and promote ancestral traditions and knowledge.
- **Cultural Events:** They organize festivals, exhibitions, and other activities that celebrate and promote Mayan culture and traditions.
- **Documentation of Traditions:** They work on the collection and documentation of stories, rituals and cultural practices to ensure their preservation.



## Upe Naí Living Maya Immersion

### 1. Linguistic and cultural revitalization:

- **Teaching Indigenous Languages:** They offer experiences that promote the use of Mayan languages among new generations and visitors.

## Benque Marimba Los Hijos del West

### 1. Youth Development:

- **Recreational Activities:** Involve young people in the rescue and renewal of the Mayan marimba, providing positive and constructive alternatives to free time.
- **Educational Programs:** They offer tutorials and workshops to young people to learn how to play the marimba.

### 2. Community Empowerment:

- **Youth Leadership:** Foster leadership and community engagement among young people, motivating them to get involved in the development and well-being of their communities.
- **Community Service Projects:** Promote the realization of projects that improve living conditions in their communities, creating a sense of responsibility and belonging.

## Belize Raptor Center

### 1. Environmental Conservation:

- **Rescue and Rehabilitation of Birds of Prey:** They work on the protection and rehabilitation of birds of prey, contributing to the conservation of local biodiversity.
- **Environmental Education:** They carry out educational programs to raise awareness in the community about the importance of the conservation of birds and their natural habitat.

### 2. Sustainable Tourism:

- **Ecotourism:** They promote ecotourism activities that not only generate income but also educate visitors about conservation and local culture.



- **Community Participation:** They involve the community in conservation and tourism projects, creating local economic opportunities and promoting respect for the environment, changing deep-rooted beliefs, especially about birds of prey, some, such as that their appearance would cause anyone who looked at an owl to lose their spirit... to a deep scientific knowledge about its vitality in the ecosystem balance, its beauty and profound usefulness to the human being.

### 3. Promotion of Cultural Pride:

- **Cultural Interaction:** They use conservation and tourism as platforms to highlight and celebrate local culture and traditions, strengthening community pride and identity.

### Overall Impact

These initiatives, each from its own scope of action, contribute significantly to facing the challenges of the society of Cayo in Belize by:

- Empower women and young people, providing tools and opportunities to improve their economic and social situation.
- Preserve and promote Mayan culture and identity, ensuring that ancestral traditions and languages are kept alive, while creating spaces that contain and provide opportunities for children in vulnerable situations to encounter a sense of purpose.
- To promote sustainable development and environmental conservation, integrating these efforts with community well-being and education.

Together, these initiatives represent a holistic, multidimensional approach to addressing the complex challenges faced by the Maya population of the Cayo district.

## Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

### Methods and Steps: (Common to San Antonio Women's Cooperative & Upe Nai)

#### 1. Identification of Needs:

- To know how to recognize their own concerns, challenges and dreams, and to dare to seek how to make generational changes, from the RESCUE AND HONOR OF THE PAST, to an unknown world, but also fascinating of discovery of new disciplines and local leaders willing to support this transformation, based on the FEMININE restlessness.



## 2. Organization and Formation of Groups:

- Create women's groups based on common interests and available resources.
- Facilitate training workshops in community organization and leadership.

## 3. Development of Productive Projects:

- Identify local products that can be marketed (handicrafts, textiles, agricultural products).
- Train women in production techniques and quality control.
- Rescue of ancestral traditions, such as clay and the engraving of situations of daily life, just as the Mayans of the past did, to be able to LEAVE TESTIMONY of living Mayans in 2024, transmitting knowledge to future generations, from the pride of a glorious past

## 4. Marketing and Sales:

- Develop marketing strategies to promote local products.
- Establish local outlets and seek access to wider markets, both domestic and international.
- Commitment to training and dedication to tourism projects that requested their experience

### Tools Applied:

- **Training Workshops:** In production, business management, and leadership.
- **Marketing Networks:** Points of sale and local fairs.
- **Digital Platforms:** For the promotion and sale of products online.

### Methods and Steps: Upe Naí Living Maya Immersion

- Family support for a dream that makes everyone vibrate, based on the sustainable use of the family's natural capital, in pure balance with the rescue of Mayan knowledge and values that their blood calls them to revitalize
- Reappraisal of the family's natural capital – which seemed forgotten because it was in the middle of the mountain
- Collaboration for the creation of a concept, which respects, from its name, the origin of that project, A DREAM of the oldest woman in the family:
  - Open kitchen in the Mayan style to share with visitors
  - Local garden for own consumption
  - Interpretive trails in the jungle
  - Bird watching



- Spaces for the protection and conservation of hummingbirds as endemic species of great importance in the ecosystem
- And all this, creates tourist attractions of high environmental and cultural value, while creating deeper and deeper ties in the family, and offers new employment opportunities related to the deep knowledge of the past and the appreciation of the present, in:
  - Promotion of traditional culture and gastronomy
  - Birdwatching training workshops given by Specialist Guides
  - Community Collaboration for Infrastructure Construction
  - Sustainable use of natural capital (Interpretive trails for observation of flora and fauna)

#### **Tools.**

- Family Togetherness, Support and Support
- Discipline and tenacity. Joy and love for one's own
- Constant innovation
- Construction with ancestral knowledge of an open kitchen
- Training for the creation of experiences
- Creating Birding Trails
- Creation of a museum/training center for nature guides
- Presence in networks and direct relationship with Belize Tourism Board

#### **Methods and Steps: Benque Marimba Los Hijos del West**

##### **1. Youth Program Development:**

- Create artistic programs for young people of musical renewal based on the interpretation of the marimba.

##### **2. Education and Training:**

- Offer soft and technical skills workshops.
- Implement tutoring and school support programs.

##### **3. Fostering Youth Leadership:**

- Develop leadership and community engagement initiatives.

##### **4. Community Service Projects:**

- Involve young people in projects that benefit the community.
- Foster a sense of responsibility and belonging.





#### Tools Applied:

- **Educational Workshops:** Training in skills and academic tutorials.
- **Leadership Platforms:** Youth leadership development programs.
- **Community Projects:** Youth-led community improvement initiatives.

#### Methods & Steps: Belize Raptor Center

1. **Rescue and Rehabilitation:**
  - Establish procedures for the rescue, care and rehabilitation of birds of prey.
2. **Environmental education:**
  - Develop educational programs for schools and communities on the importance of raptor conservation.
  - Organize talks, guided tours and workshops on ecology and conservation.
3. **Community Engagement:**
  - Involve the local community in conservation projects.
  - Train local guides and volunteers in conservation techniques and environmental education.

#### Tools Applied:

- **Rehabilitation Centers:** Infrastructure for the care of injured birds.
- **Educational Programs:** Talks, workshops and guided tours.
- **Promotional Materials:** Brochures, guides and digital platforms.

#### Integrated Impact

These initiatives apply a combination of methods and tools focused on community empowerment, cultural preservation, education, and environmental conservation. In doing so, they are creating positive and sustainable change in the society of Cayo, Belize, addressing both the immediate needs and long-term challenges of their communities.





## Achievements and Results:

### 1. Economic Empowerment:

- **Increased Income:** Many women have managed to generate sustainable income through the sale of artisanal and agricultural products, improving their living conditions.
- **Successful Microenterprises:** Several women have established successful microenterprises that have grown and employed other members of the community.

### 2. Training and Development:

- **Entrepreneurial Skills:** Participants have acquired skills in business management, leadership and production techniques, increasing their self-confidence and ability to manage business.
- **Reduction of Economic Dependence:** Through productive projects, many women have reduced their economic dependence on other family members.

### 3. Cultural Preservation:

- **Promotion of Traditional Handicrafts:** Cooperatives have helped keep Mayan craft traditions alive by promoting products that reflect the cultural identity of the community.

## UPE NAÍ LIVING MAYA IMMERSION

### Achievements and Results:

#### 1. Linguistic Revitalization:

- **Increase in the Use of Indigenous Languages:** There has been a significant increase in the use of Mayan languages among the new generations, both at home and in the community.

#### 2. Cultural Strengthening:

- **Popular Cultural Events:** Cultural experiences have attracted a large number of participants, promoting greater pride and recognition of Mayan culture.
- **Documentation of Traditions:** A large number of cultural histories, rituals and practices have been preserved, ensuring that they are kept alive for future generations.

## Benque Marimba Los Hijos del West

### Achievements and Results:

#### 1. Youth Development:





- **Active Youth Participation:** An increasing number of young people are actively involved in marimba performance, which has reduced their involvement in criminal activities.
- **Improved School Performance:** Tutoring and school support programs have resulted in a marked improvement in the academic performance of the young participants.

## 2. Community Empowerment:

- **Strengthened Youth Leadership:** Many young people have taken on leadership roles in their communities and participated in decision-making.
- **Successful Community Projects:** Youth-led community service projects have significantly improved the environment of local communities.

## Belize Raptor Center

### Achievements and Results:

#### 1. Environmental Conservation:

- **Successful Bird Rehabilitation:** A large number of injured birds of prey have been rescued, rehabilitated and released, contributing to the conservation of these species in the region.
- **Effective Educational Programs:** Educational programs have increased awareness of the importance of raptor conservation among local people and tourists.

#### 2. Sustainable Tourism:

- **Growth of Ecotourism:** The Belize Raptor Center has attracted numerous tourists interested in birdwatching and conservation, generating additional income for the community.
- **Community Engagement:** Local community involvement in conservation and ecotourism projects has strengthened residents' connection to their natural environment and created economic opportunities.

#### 3. Promotion of Cultural Pride:

- **Conservation and Culture Events:** Conservation activities have been combined with the promotion of local culture, strengthening the community's sense of pride and belonging.

### Overall Impact

These initiatives have made a significant impact on the community of Cayo, Belize, by:

- **Improve Economic Conditions:** Provide sustainable economic opportunities and reduce poverty.



- **Preserve and Promote Culture:** Strengthen cultural identity and revitalize indigenous traditions and languages.
- **Empowering Women and Youth:** Providing tools and opportunities for personal and community development.
- **Promote Environmental Conservation:** Promote the protection of biodiversity and environmental education.

These achievements demonstrate that, through integrated and collaborative approaches, it is possible to address the complex and multifaceted challenges affecting indigenous and rural communities.

## Lessons Learned and Advice:

### 1. Importance of Cultural Identity:

- **Preservation of Traditions and Languages:** Initiatives that integrate local culture and traditions into their programs have been successful in revitalizing and keeping these practices alive. It is essential for the identity and sense of belonging of the community.
- **Community Engagement:** Involving community members in the planning and execution of projects ensures that projects are relevant and well-received.

### 2. Sustainable Economic Empowerment:

- **Local Productive Projects:** Promoting economic activities that take advantage of local resources and knowledge, such as crafts and agriculture, creates sustainable sources of income and strengthens the local economy.
- **Access to Microfinance:** Providing access to financing for small businesses has proven to be an effective method of empowering women and other local entrepreneurs.

### 3. Capacity Building:

- **Education and Training:** Offering training in technical, business, and leadership skills is crucial for personal and professional development. This also fosters self-confidence and the ability to self-manage.
- **Educational Programs:** Formal and informal education is essential for the development of young people, improving their future prospects and preventing their involvement in criminal activities.

### 4. Environmental Conservation:





- **Community Integration:** Conservation projects that involve the local community in their activities promote a sense of responsibility and care for the natural environment.
- **Environmental Education:** Increasing awareness of the importance of conservation among local people and tourists contributes to long-term environmental protection.

## Recommendations for Other Destinations

### 1. Fostering Community Engagement:

- Support local initiatives that are charged with good faith, a genuine sense of collaboration and support for the common good, **on the part of the authorities**
- **To follow the call of the heart**, when a group of citizens feels a call, to follow, to support, to build, to CREATE COMMUNITY. The cohesion of the community is the HIGHEST TOURIST ATTRACTION, as it shows love for the local, to impact on the care for the global.
- **Consultations and Diagnoses:** Carry out broad consultations and participatory diagnoses to identify the needs and priorities of the community.
- **Local Leadership:** Support and train local leaders so that they can guide and sustain development projects.

### 2. Economic Development Based on Local Resources:

- **Promote Productive Projects:** Develop projects that use local resources and knowledge, ensuring the sustainability and relevance of economic activities.
- **Access to Financing:** Facilitate access to microcredits and other financing mechanisms to support local entrepreneurs.

### 3. Continuing Education and Training:

- **Training Programs:** Implement training programs in technical, business, quality and sustainability, and leadership skills, adapted to the needs of the community.
- **Educational Support:** To offer school support and educational programs to improve the academic performance and opportunities of young people.

### 4. Integration of Conservation and Sustainable Development:

- **Community Conservation Projects:** Develop conservation projects that involve the community and promote environmental protection.
- **Ecotourism:** Encourage ecotourism as a source of income that also educates and sensitizes visitors about conservation and local culture.

### 5. Valorization and Promotion of Local Culture:



- **Cultural Events:** Organize events that celebrate and promote local traditions, languages, and cultural practices.
- **Documentation and Dissemination:** Document and disseminate ancestral traditions and knowledge to ensure their preservation and transmission to future generations.

#### 6. Integration of scientific research in the development of Tourist Experiences.

- **The inspiring example of the Belize Tourism Board,** as an instrument of promotion, bases its exercise on multidisciplinary from pure promotion and marketing, to marketing based on unique cultural, natural and social attributes - sustainable marketing -, through the area of business-product development from local productive vocations and with a base of anthropological and human studies that the local Institutes of Culture, provide inputs for the development of the grand strategy

#### Specific Examples

##### 1. Implementation of Productive Projects:

- **Handicrafts and Agriculture:** Focus on the production of local handicrafts and agricultural products, establishing local markets and online sales platforms.

##### 2. Education and Training Programs:

- **Skills Workshops:** Offer regular workshops in business management, production techniques, leadership, and soft skills.
- **Support for Formal Education:** Provide resources and tutoring to improve the school performance of young people.

##### 3. Conservation and Ecotourism:

- **Development of Ecotourism Routes:** Create ecotourism routes and activities that integrate the observation of fauna, flora and local culture.
- **Environmental Education:** Implement educational programs on conservation for schools and tourists.

By applying these lessons and recommendations, other destinations can effectively address similar challenges, promoting sustainable development and community well-being while preserving their cultural identity and environment.





Recognitions and Additional References:

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UPE NAÍ

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