



Alba and Allan at a Mayan archaeological site

Mayan Culture in Mexico and Central America: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Time: 7-8pm, Wednesday 18 March 2015

Venue: 1103, conference center

Speaker: Allan Burns, Visiting Professor of DKU, Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology University of Florida

The over 10 million Mayan people living today in southern Mexico and Central America make up an ethnic group with a long history of cultural development, knowledge, and adaptation to the changing world of Mexico and Central America. Many people believe that the Maya civilization collapsed and the Mayan people disappeared. While the monumental cities of the Maya were abandoned, the people themselves did not disappear but continue to live in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. Mayan people today have continuities to the past and are adapting to the present. Mayan language, agriculture, religion, and health provide a lens through which the future can be imagined and engaged not only for them but for all societies of the world.

Allan Burns, Ph.D., is an applied anthropologist who has lived, worked, and carried out research in Mayan communities of Mexico and Central America throughout his career. He learned to speak

Mayan while living in southern Mexico where he recorded oral histories and other narratives. These became the basis of one of his books, "An Epoch of Miracles: Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya." He has published four other books and over a hundred articles and book chapters on issues affecting Mayan communities, including migration, education, health, identity, language, and legal systems. He has produced two television documentaries on Mayan immigrants to the United States and other videos promoting pre-natal care among Mayan immigrants. Burns has been honored by Mayan refugee communities for his humanitarian work, by the University of the Yucatan for his advocacy for Mayan studies, and by the Society for Applied Anthropology for his career contributions to applied anthropology. He continues working today as an expert witness in federal courts on questions of immigration, human rights, and the social and political conditions facing Mayan people today.