



BELIZE

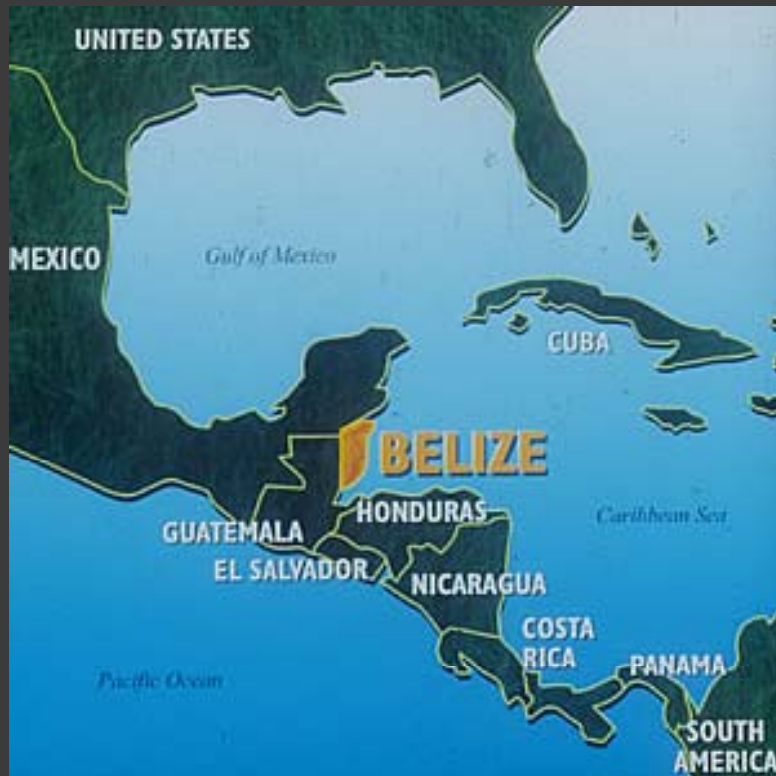
“Sub Umbro Floreo”

“I Flourish Under the Shadow”

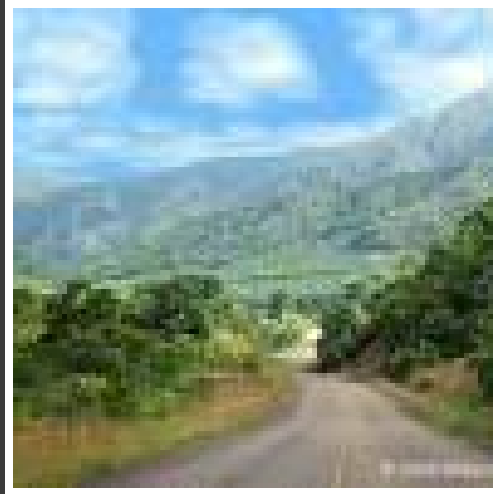


Belize: The name may have originated from the Maya word “belix” meaning “muddy water.” Probably refers to the Belize River.

OVERVIEW OF BELIZE



- Located in Central America
- Bordered by the Caribbean Sea on the East, Guatemala on the West, and Mexico to the North.
- Latitude & Longitude
 $17^{\circ} 31' N$, $88^{\circ} 11' W$
- Total land area – 8,867 square miles
- Capital – Belmopan
- Population – 320,000 (est.)



- Climate – Tropical, very hot and humid. Rainy season from May through November.
- Terrain – Flat, swampy coastal plain. Low mountains in the South.
- Highest Point – Doyle's Delight, 1124 meters
- Largest City – Belize City

HURRICANES



- **1931** – An unnamed storm destroyed 2/3 of the buildings in Belize City.
- **1955** – Hurricane Janet destroyed the town of Corozal.
- **1961** – Hurricane Hattie hit the central coastal area. Belize City was destroyed for a second time.
- **1978** – Hurricane Greta caused \$25 million USD in damage.
- **2001** – Hurricane Iris destroyed the banana crop.



RELIGION

80% are Christians.
50% are Roman Catholic
29 Percent are Protestant

Non Christian religions:

- Muslim
- Hinduism



ECONOMY

- Currency is the BZD Belizean Dollar
- Currency exchange rate is: \$2 BZD per \$1 USD
- Economy is based on tourism, and exportation of marine products, citrus, sugar cane, bananas, and garments.
- 33.5% of population is below the poverty line.



HISTORY OF BELIZE



- The history of Belize dates back thousands of years.
- The original inhabitants were the Mayans, Caribs and Arawaks from the 16th century B.C. until the 4th century A.D.
- Christopher Columbus was the first European to Arrive in 1502. He did not disembark from his ship. He sailed along the coastline.
- In 1511 a group of twenty shipwrecked Spanish sailors landed in Belize. They were captured by the Mayans.
- Europeans did not begin to live in Belize year-round until the 1670's.



HISTORY OF BELIZE



- The Spanish Empire allowed the United Kingdom to set up logging camps.
- In 1798 the United Kingdom and Spain went to war in Belize. The war was called, the Battle of St. Georges Caye. The war ended when the Spanish withdrew from Belize.
- In 1838 slavery was abolished.
- In 1840 Belize was named the Colony of British Honduras.
- In 1862 Belize became a Crown Colony.
- In 1973 the name was changed to Belize.



HISTORY OF BELIZE



- Belize gained its independence on September 21, 1981.
- Guatemala believed that Belize rightfully belonged to them and refused to recognize Belize until 1992.
- The United Kingdom agreed to defend Belize against possible invasion from Guatemala, even after the country gained its independence.
- The British army continues to man bases in Belize.

EDUCATION IN BELIZE



- School system is based on the British education system.
- There are three levels:
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Tertiary

EDUCATION IN BELIZE

Primary school

- Begins at age 4.
- Free to attend, but families must pay for uniforms and books
- 2 years of infant classes (voluntary)
- 6 years of standards (compulsory*)

*Education Act subjects parents to a fine of up to \$200 BZD or \$100 USD if children do not attend school on a regular bases.

School is compulsory from ages 6 through 14.



EDUCATION IN BELIZE

Secondary school

- Divided into four “forms”
 - Sixth Form: Prepares students for Cambridge Advanced or “A” level examinations.
 - Belize Teachers’ College
 - Belize School of Nursing
 - Belize College of Agriculture



LEGAL EDUCATION

- Graduates of law school will receive a Legal Education Certificate.
- The Certificate is issued by the Council of Legal Education in one of the member countries.
 - <http://www.clecaribbean.com/schools.php>

LEGAL EDUCATION

Article 5 of the Agreement Establishing the Council of Legal Education :

“The Government of each of the participating territories undertakes that it will recognise that any person holding a Legal Education Certificate fulfils the requirements for practice in its territory so far as institutional training and education are concerned and that (subject to the transitional provisions hereinafter contained and to any reciprocal arrangements that any of the said territories may hereafter make with any other country) no person shall be admitted to practice in that territory who does not hold such certificate. But nothing herein contained shall prevent any territory from imposing additional qualifications as a condition of admission to practise therein.”

<http://www.clecaribbean.com/>

Note: Spelling is intentional.

LEGAL EDUCATION

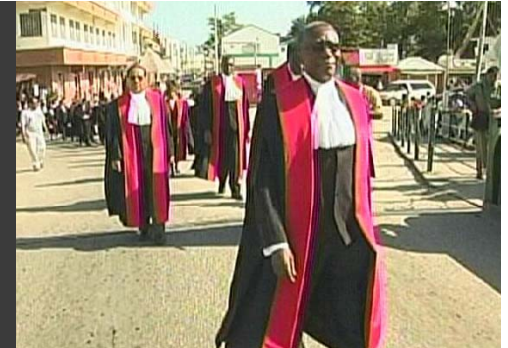
Path to Becoming a Lawyer:

- Obtain an LL.B. from the University of West Indies, OR,
- Obtain an LL.B. from a fully accredited institution.
- Apply for admission at one of the law schools established by the Council.
- Upon completion the candidate will be awarded a Legal Education Certificate. No one is allowed to practice law in the Caribbean without this certificate.
- Perform a six month internship with a Caribbean law firm.



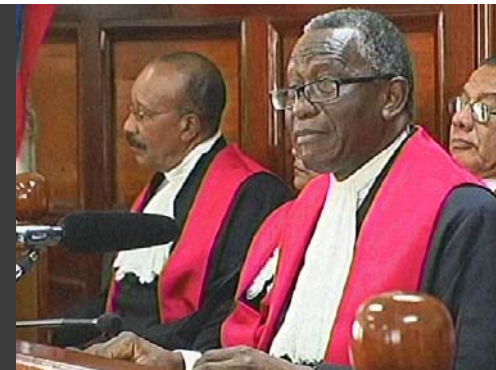
UWI

PRACTICE OF LAW



- The practice of law in Belize is governed by the Legal Profession Act – Chapter 320 of the Laws of Belize Revised Edition and the Agreement Establishing the Council of Legal Education, as amended by a Supplemental Agreement, dated Oct. 12, 1984.
- The Legal Profession Act was ratified on Aug. 1993.
- Admission to practice law & enrollment on the Roll of Attorneys-at-law are regulated and provided by the Legal Profession Act.

PRACTICE OF LAW



Practice of Law

- **Section 6** of the Legal Profession Act states:

“A6.-(1) A person who after the commencement of this Act applies to the Supreme Court to be admitted to practise law, and who satisfies the Supreme Court that he -

*(1) is a Belizean and **holds a Legal Education Certificate**; or (emphasis added)*

(2) has obtained adequate training in the law and is suitably qualified and competent to practise law in Belize; or

(3) possesses suitable practical experience and competence and is qualified to practise law in any country which the Chief Justice, after consultation with the Council, designates by Order published in the Gazette as having a sufficiently analogous system of law

and is of good character, shall upon compliance with requirements of this Act, and unless that person is exempt therefrom, on payment to the Registrar of the appropriate fee for registration and upon payment to the Bar Association of the annual subscription in respect of membership of that Association, be admitted to practise law and be entered on the Roll by order of the court.”

Note: Spelling is intentional.



EXECUTIVE

Chief of State:

Queen Elizabeth II

Represented by:

Gov. Gen. Sir Colville Young, Sr.

Head of Govt:

Prime Minister Dean Oliver

Barrow

Cabinet:

Appointed by Governor General

Elections:

Monarch is hereditary.

Governor General is appointed by Monarch.



LEGISLATIVE

Type of Government:

Parliamentary Democracy &
Constitutional Monarchy

Senate:

12 seats, appointed by the
Governor General

House of Representatives:

31 seats, elected by direct popular
vote (5 year terms)



JUDICIAL

Summary Jurisdiction Courts:

Criminal cases

District Courts:

Civil cases

Supreme Court:

Chief Justice Abdulai Conteh
(Appointed by Gov. Gen. on advice
of PM)

Court of Appeal

Privy Council

POLITICAL PARTIES

National Alliance for Belizean Rights (NABR)

National Reform Party (NRP)

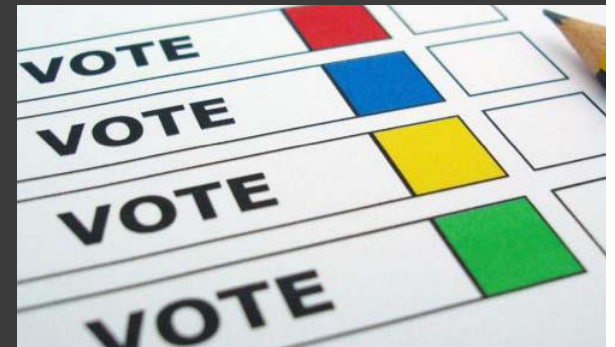
People's National Party (PNP)

People's United Party (PUP)

United Democratic Party (UDP)

Vision Inspired by the People (VIP)

We the People Reform Movement (WTP)



THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



- The Belize Constitution, Section 94 (Chapter 7) establishes Belize's Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

Privy Council



Court of Appeal



Supreme Court



THE PRIVY COUNCIL

- The Privy Council sits in the United Kingdom and is the final court for Belize.
- The Privy Council hears appeals from the Court of Appeal either by right or by the discretion of the Privy Council.
- The Privy Council is made up almost entirely from members of the United Kingdom's House of Lords. Some appointments are made from the Commonwealth jurisdiction.
- Belize Prime Minister, Dean Barrow, has announced that he wants Belize to abolish appeals to the Privy Council and use the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) as its final court of appeal.



COURT OF APPEAL

- The Court of Appeal has appellate jurisdiction over both the High Court and Magistracy.
- The court has jurisdiction to hear appeals in both civil and criminal matters.
- The Court of Appeal sits in Belize four times a year. A panel of 3 Justices sits at any one time.
- The Court of Appeal is comprised of 1 resident Belizean and 3 visiting Justices, including the President, from the Commonwealth Caribbean jurisdictions.
- The potential judge must have worked for 15 years as an attorney-at-law or have held office as a judge previously in another court to qualify for appointment as a Justice of the Court of Appeal.

THE SUPREME COURT



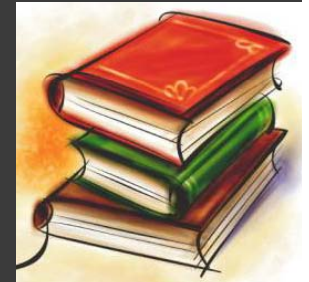
- The Supreme Court has unlimited original jurisdiction in civil and criminal proceedings.
- There are three Supreme Court Judges (The Chief Justice and two Puisne Judges)
- The Judges are appointed by the Governor-General. To qualify for appointment a potential judge must have worked at least five years as an attorney-at-law.
- In criminal cases the judge sits with a jury of either 9 or 12 jurors. The court holds four sessions each year in each of the 3 judicial districts (Northern, Southern Central).



THE
SUPREME COURT
LIBRARY

THE SUPREME COURT LIBRARY

- The Supreme Court Library was one of the first libraries to be established in Belize.
- In 1918 it burned to the ground in a fire that also destroyed the Supreme Court building.
- The library was placed into a small room where it remained until 1992.
- In 1992 USAID provided financing to create a library in the Sir Albert Staine Building (the Legal Aid building).
- The library is used by Supreme and Appeal Courts, magistrates, attorneys, law students, para-legal students, and University students studying business law.
- The library has about 10,000 volumes.



LEGAL AID IN BELIZE



- The Legal Aid Center is located in in the Sir Albert Stain Building in Belize City which is located at One Treasure Lane.
- The Center opened on November 27, 1981 to meet the needs of the poor.
- The Legal Aid center was started by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Caribbean Justice Improvement Project (CJIP), the Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- The Center is currently funded by the Bar Association.

LEGAL AID IN BELIZE



- A local Board of Directors governs the Legal Aid Center.
- The Center is staffed by one attorney, a secretary, and an officer manager.
- The Center charges a \$20 consultation fee. The fee is discretionary and may be waived in certain cases.
- The Center either advises the client on steps they can take to remedy their problem they are experiencing themselves or refers them to another agency that can help them.

LEGAL AID IN BELIZE



- There are eligibility guidelines that must be met before a person can receive the services of the Legal Aid Center.
- The Center primarily provides assistance in legal matters to low-income clients.
- The Center can assist with family law, land, civil and estate issues.
- The Center does not provide advice for corporate/commercial matters, murder cases, or for civil matters that exceed \$20,000.

LEGAL AID - SUPREME COURT



- If there is a capital case, the Supreme Court of Belize will provide legal aid to indigent defendants.
- The legal aid is provided by the Registrar of the Supreme Court.
- The Registrar will appoint an attorney to the defendant.
- The attorney's fees are capped at \$1,000 (BZD) which is equivalent to \$500 (USD).
- The fees covers both a retainer fee and per diem allowance.

ADR IN BELIZE



- Arbitration is governed by laws of Belize under Chapter 125, The Arbitration Act.
- Arbitration is irrevocable and has the same effect as an order of the court.
- The Crown is also bound.

INTERESTING FINAL FACT



Belize is the only country in Central America where English is the official language. But only 5.6% speak English at home.