**Belize Cultural Communities
Garifuna Culture and Communities:**

**Dangriga, Seine Bight, Silk Grass and Hopkins**

The Garifuna are mixed-race descendants of West African, Central African, Island Carib, European, and Arawak people. The British colonial administration used the term Black Carib and Garifuna to distinguish them from Yellow and Red Carib, the original Amerindian population before the Africans intermixed and those deemed to still look Native by the British.

**Language:**

The Garifuna language is an offshoot of the Island Carib language, and it is spoken in Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua by the Garifuna people. It is an Arawakan language with French, English, and Spanish influences, reflecting their long interaction with various colonial peoples. Garifuna has a vocabulary featuring some terms used by women and others used primarily by men. Men additionally used a distinct pidgin based on the unrelated mainland Carib language. Although many people speak it, it is not treated as a real language by some as it has no written component to it, it is only spoken. This makes the language hard to learn unless it is learned in early childhood, along with other languages simultaneously.

**Food:**

There is a wide variety of Garifuna dishes, including the more commonly known ereba (cassava bread) made from grated cassava root, yucca. Cassava is so closely tied to the Garifuna culture that the very name Garifuna draws its origin from the Caribs who were originally called "Karifuna" of the cassava clan. They later adopted the name "Garifuna", which literally means cassava-eating people. Making "ereba" is a long and arduous process that involves a large group of Garifuna hiking into the jungle to dig up a large quantity of the cassava root and taking it back to the village. Ereba is eaten with fish, machuca (pounded green and ripe plantains) or alone with gravy (lasusu) often made with a fish soup called "hudutu".

**Music:**

Garifuna music is quite different from that of the rest of Central America. The most famous form is punta. In its associated dance style, dancers move their hips in a circular motion.

**Spirituality:**

The Garifuna do not have an official religion, but a complex set of practices for individuals and groups to show respect for their ancestors and Bungiu [God] or Sunti Gabafu [All Powerful]. A shaman known as a buyei is the head of all Garifuna traditional practices. The spiritual practices of the Garifuna have qualities similar to the voodoo rituals performed by other tribes of African descent. Mystical practices and participation such as in the Dugu and chugu are also widespread among Garifuna.

**Mayan Culture and Communities: Las Flores, Maya Mopan, Salva-pan**

The Maya people (sometimes Mayans) are a group of Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. They inhabit southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras. The Maya population in Belize is concentrated in the Corozal, Cayo, Toledo and Orange Walk districts, but they are scattered throughout the country. The Maya are thought to have been in Belize and the Yucatán region since the second millennium BC. Much of Belize's original Maya population died as a result of new infectious diseases and conflicts between tribes and with Europeans. They are divided into the Yucatec, Kekchi, and Mopan. The Mopan (indigenous to Belize but were forced out by the British; they returned from Guatemala to evade slavery in the 19th century), and Kek'Chi). The later groups are chiefly found in the Toledo District.

**Spirituality:**

The Mayan landscape is a ritual topography, with landmarks such as mountains, wells and caves being assigned to specific ancestors and deities. Thus, the Tzotzil town of Zinacantan is surrounded by seven 'bathing places' of mountain-dwelling ancestors, with one of these sacred waterholes serving as the residence of the ancestors' 'nursemaids and laundresses'. Offering sacrifices serve to establish and renew relations ('contracts', 'pacts', or 'covenants') with the other world, and the choice, number, preparation, and arrangement of the offered items (such as special maize breads, maize and cacao drinks and honey liquor, flowers, incense nodules, rubber figures, and also, cigars) obey to stringent rules. Contemporary healing rituals focus on the retrieval and reincorporation of the lost souls or soul particles imprisoned somewhere by specific deities or ancestors. The procedures can include the sacrifice of fowl treated as the patient's 'substitute'

**Food:**

Most popular foods from the Maya culture are chocolate, avocados, corn tortillas and tamales.

**Creole Culture and Communities: Belize City and Belmopan, Gales Point**

In many parts of the Southern Caribbean, the term Creole people is used to refer to the mixed-race descendants of Europeans and African slaves born in the islands. Over time, there was intermarriage with residents from Asia as well. They eventually formed a common culture based on their experience of living together in islands colonized by the French, Spanish and English. Creole, "Kreyòl" or "Kweyol" also refers to the creole languages in the Caribbean.

**Food:**

Among the main staples of a Creole dinner are rice and beans with some type of meat, for example stewed chicken, baked chicken, stewed pork, stewed beef etc.; salad, whether potato, vegetable, or coleslaw; seafood including fish, conch, lobster; some game meats including iguana, deer, peccary and gibnut; and ground foods such as cassava, potatoes, cocoa and plantains. Fresh juice or water is typically served, occasionally replaced by soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. Breakfasts usually include Creole bread and Kriol bun, johnny-cakes and frycakes (also called fry jacks). In recent years Creoles have adopted foods from other groups, particularly "Spanish" dishes made with tortillas. Creoles in general eat a relatively balanced diet. The bile up (or boil up) is one cultural dish of the Belizean Creoles. It is a combination of boiled eggs, fish and/or pig tail, with a number of ground foods such as cassava, green plantains, yams, sweet potatoes, and tomato sauce. Other important Creole foods are cow foot soup, a thick stew with cocoyam and tripe

**Culture:**

The traditional fire sambai of Gales Point Manatee is an unusual Creole dance which survives from colonial times. Then slaves met in different parts of Belize City in "tribes" based on their African region of origin to celebrate Christmas holidays. Traditionally the group would form a big circle in the night around a full moon in the center of a square. One person at a time would go in the middle of the ring to dance.

**Language:**

English taught in the schools of Belize is based on British English. However, this is often influenced by the teachers' Kriol speech. The 1999 Ministry of Education said “Creole is spoken as the first language in most homes.” Kriol is “di stiki stiki paat” that holds Belize together. Belizean people speak English, Kriol, and often Spanish, while learning the English system of writing and reading in schools. It is a slightly different system of communication from the standard forms

**Mennonite Culture and Communities: Spanish Lookout, Armenia and Sprinfield**

Mennonites are easily identified by their clothing, except from the ones who have modernized to a large degree or have never been traditional, because they have converted in recent times. The women wear bonnets and long dresses while the men wear denim overalls and hats. The men may wear traditional suspenders and dark trousers. The women wear brightly colored dresses. In many of the Mennonite communities there is a softening of the old tradition.

**Language:**

The vast majority, more than 95%, of ethnic Mennonites in Belize speak Plautdietsch (a form of Russian) in everyday life. A small minority of very conservative Mennonites that came from North America mostly in the second half of the 1960s speak Pennsylvania German instead. Both groups use Standard German for reading the Bible, in school and in Church.

**Economics:**

Mennonites in Belize contribute to the carpentry, engineering and agricultural industries of Belize. They produce milk, cheese, beans, corn, melons, honey, chicken, and eggs. They have turned sections of tropical jungle into highly productive farmland. They are also skilled in manufacturing household furniture as well as constructing houses. The Mennonites have made it a point to have their own school, church, and financial institution in their community.