

Our Land, Our Life – Maya Land Rights



Komonil (The village meeting) - *is the fundamental authority for decisions making*

The Maya People

- There are about 6 million Mayas in Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador
- Belize – Maya Q'eqchi and Mopan and Yucatec
- 38 Maya villages in southern Belize
- High degree of autonomy under the traditional form of governance – kamolb'e/jolomil Kaleb'aal

Maya Territories



The Struggle of a People – The Maya



**Traditional leaders at Supreme
Court hearing 2010.**

History of Alcaldes

- Attempt to co-opt the Alcaldes to sever British interest on Indian reservations
- Renamed as Alcaldes and duties reduced to law and order
- Attempt to eliminate this traditional practice in 1990's when the village council was introduced

Aj Ralch'ooch



MAYA LAND RIGHTS 2007

- **In 2007 the villages of Conejo and Santa Cruz claimed their right of ownership over their communal lands in the Supreme Court of Belize.**
- **The Supreme Court agreed and decisively acknowledged that the customary land rights of Conejo and Santa Cruz are protected by both international and Belizean law.**



The Chief Justice of Belize, Dr. Abdulai Conteh said:

- ***“...it is my considered view that both customary international law and general principles of international law would require that Belize respect the rights of its indigenous people to their lands and resources.”***
- ***“I conclude therefore, that the [government] are bound, in both domestic law in virtue of the Constitutional provisions that have been canvassed in this case, and international law, arising from Belize’s obligation thereunder, to respect the rights to and interests of the...members of the indigenous Maya community, to their lands and resources which are the subject of this case.”***

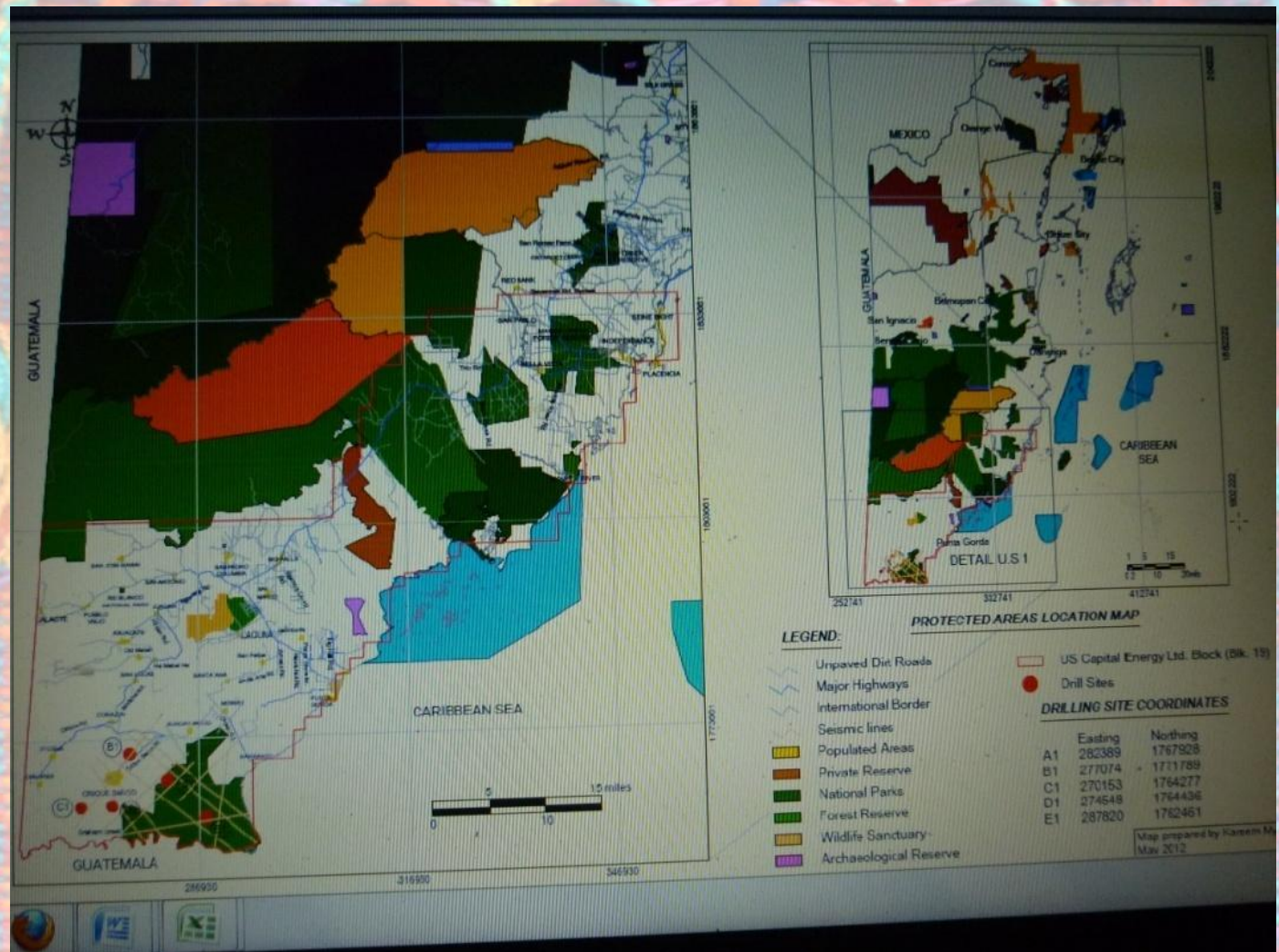


MAYA LAND RIGHTS 2010

- **On June 28, 2010 the Chief Justice of Belize again issued a decision in favour of the Maya.**
- **The Chief Justice extended his judgment to include the remaining 36 Maya communities in the Toledo District; meaning it included ALL Maya.**
- **This is the main difference between the decision in 2007 and the decision in 2010.**
- **After the 2010 decision ALL Maya villages had a right of ownership over their communal lands.**



State Failure to Uphold the Rule of Law



- US Capital Energy's concession block 19 includes all of the lands of 39 villages

Human Rights Violations by Oil Company



**Q'eqchi Speakers
hired by company**



Coercion of leaders



Mr. Alfonso Cal is refused entry to the US Capital Energy drilling site even though the company is on Maya lands without permission.





The government has allowed US Capital Energy to put up these signs so no Maya are allowed to go onto the lands including the people of Crique Sarco and Sunday Wood where this drill site is located.



Engagement with International Mechanisms

- Lobby for condemnation of governments failure to uphold the rule of law.
- Ask relevant agencies and international mechanisms, State parties to monitor the domestic and international human rights obligation of Belize
- Lobby for international support to implement court order and IACHR
- CERD, HRC, UPR, OHCHR

CURRENT SITUATION

- Maya Consultation Framework
- Framework for Oil Development
- Compliance Application

Conclusion

- Government remains out of compliance with CCJ Order
 - Cautiously Optimistic
 - Caribbean Community support
 - Encourage Belize to adopt LAC P10
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- The ability of our people and communities to ‘live well’

B'antiox, B'otic, Garcias, Thank
You

