



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Office of the Permanent Secretary

E: 19/3/88

February 8, 2023

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Joint Select Committee on Human Rights & Diversity
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Sampson-Meiguel,

Re: The Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality & Diversity on an inquiry into the role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous People (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago

I refer to your correspondence dated Parl.: 14/3/55 Vol.VI dated January 18,2023, on the subject at caption.

Please see the attached Ministerial response to the Committee's request for the recommendations/comments outlined on page twenty-six (26) of the Report on an inquiry into the role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous People (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago.

Should you require further information, you may contact Dr. Peter Smith, Chief Education Officer at 622-2181 ext. 2344/2347 or email ceo@moe.gov.tt.

Respectfully,


Permanent Secretary



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad

Joint Select Committee on Human Rights and Diversity

**The Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on
Human Rights and Diversity on an Inquiry into the
Role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage
of the Indigenous People (First Peoples)
of
Trinidad and Tobago**

February 09, 2023

The Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights & Diversity on an inquiry into the role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage, Equality of the Indigenous People (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago

The following is the Ministry of Education's response to the Committee's request for the recommendations/comments outlined on page 26 of the Report on an inquiry into the role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous People (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago:

Appendix IV to the Report on First Peoples contains the following two (2) recommendations which may be considered to be of interest to the Ministry of Education:

8. RESEARCH AND HISTORY

**Recognition of the First Peoples was made public just 29 years ago, and the need to build capacity and awareness remains urgent. The relevant research needs to be undertaken and requires funding. The history will be rewritten from the perspective of the Indigenous/First Peoples, will boost morale, and lead to removal of discriminatory practices. In this regard, urgent attention must be paid to youth development in general on matters affecting the Indigenous/First Peoples, and to indigenous youth in particular, in order to maintain the continuity of our culture and traditions.*

The Ministry of Education concurs with this recommendation. In 2019, a reference book, *Foundation Readings on the History of Trinidad and Tobago*, commissioned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, was published to provide young persons with the expert historical perspectives of the history of the country. All secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago were provided with two (2) copies each of this book. Part One of the book detailed the archaeological and historical presence of the First Peoples in the following two (2) Chapters:

Chapter 1 – *The First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago: From the Earliest Settlement (ca. 8000 BC) until the European Encounter (1498)* - Arie Boomert

Chapter 2 - *The Precolonial Red House Site in Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago)* - Basil A.Reid, Patrisha L. Meyers and John J Schultz

The Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights & Diversity on an inquiry into the role of the State in Preserving the Cultural Heritage, Equality of the Indigenous People (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago

11. RESTORATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The year 2019 was designated by the United Nations as the “International Year of Indigenous Languages”, to build awareness of the many indigenous languages that were lost, or on the verge of extinction. The recovery of our indigenous Lokono and Carina languages is essential to our growth and development. Research must be conducted to identify what remains, and resources provided for recruiting linguists and teaching the language in similar manner to the teaching of French, Spanish and other foreign languages.

The view of teaching indigenous languages is a new and uncharted area in the education landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, one that requires research and consultation to plot the way forward for this area.

Historically and at present, the English curriculum focuses on skills development for the Standard English. The curriculum also recognises the Trinidad dialect and advocates for its contextual use in the English Language Arts classroom. However, the focus remains on the use of Standard English as the formal language of instruction and assessment. It is to be noted that this is also the language that is recognised officially across all regional examination bodies in the Caribbean.