



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts



Ref: 3/4/1 Vol I

March 13, 2023

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Miguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Sampson-Miguel,

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

Reference is made to your letter Parl.:14/3/55 Vol VI dated January 18, 2023 on the subject at caption.

By letter dated January 18, 2023, the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity wrote to advise of the obligation of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts to present a paper to the Senate and the House of Representatives that responds to recommendations and comments made in pages 22-26 of the Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on an inquiry into the role of the State in preserving the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago, Third Session (2022/2023), Twelfth Parliament.

Please find attached the response of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, submitted for the consideration of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity.

Sincerely,


Permanent Secretary (ag)

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE RANDALL MITCHELL,
MINISTER OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

RESPONSE RE:

**FOURTH REPORT OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ON AN INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN
PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
(FIRST PEOPLES) OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, THIRD SESSION (2022/2023),
TWELFTH PARLIAMENT**

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA) recognises the significant contribution of the indigenous or first peoples of Trinidad and Tobago and embraces the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity to explore their incorporation into its Community Based Tourism initiatives and Cultural Heritage Library. Specific responses to the report's recommendations that fall under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts are presented hereunder.

4.11. The Committee recommends that the MTCA expedite its efforts to develop CBT and explore the ways in which the new opportunities brought by the recent local government reform could be used to make prospective CBT initiatives even more beneficial to indigenous communities.

Draft Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Sub Policy and references to the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago

The indigenous groups' rich, well-developed cultures that have impacted our nation's history and legacy, continue to be the pride of the descendants of the First Peoples who are still active in various parts of Trinidad and Tobago. The opportunity to include elements of the First Peoples' cultural expressions into tourism experiences is a privilege which will enable benefits to both the visitor and the indigenous community members, once orchestrated in a respectable, authentic and sustainable manner.

It is the intent of the MTCA to create an enabling environment for the development of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).¹ The indigenous communities such as but not limited to the communities of Santa Rosa (Santa Rosa First Peoples), Siparia (the South Western Peninsula of Warao Descendants First Nation of Trinidad and Tobago) and Moruga (the Moruga's First Peoples) can engage in and benefit from the sustainable development of CBT.

At present, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA) is revising its draft Community Based Tourism Sub-policy. The Sub-policy provides a framework for the sustainable development and management of the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) niche. The framework is in alignment with the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's (GoRTT) Policy Framework, that

¹ CBT is a type of tourism that engages and empowers local residents in the development, management and ownership of tourism products and services in their communities. It emphasises the need to protect, preserve and promote the environment and the socio-cultural assets of the community.

being, the National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030 (Vision 2030), as well as the guiding principles and policy statements articulated in the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030).

The Sub-policy underscores the importance of the widest involvement and participation of members of the community in the decision making, planning and advancement of CBT initiatives and projects in the community. Given that the natural assets and resources of the community will be utilised to generate revenues from economic activity within the community, the Sub-policy advocates for the members of the community to be the beneficiaries of the resulting economic gains. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the Sub-policy encourages members of the community to upgrade their skillset and build capacity so that they can become local entrepreneurs in their community.

The Sub-policy aspires for the CBT niche to become economically, environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable. As such, the Sub-policy focuses on (5) key areas, namely: (i) governance, local community involvement and empowerment; (ii) natural and cultural heritage and sites; (iii) product development and marketing; (iv) infrastructure, health, safety and security; and (v) partnerships and investments.

The Sub-policy acknowledges that equitable representation and meaningful participation of all interest groups, including those of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) are essential for the development of a robust CBT niche. In this regard, one of the strategic actions elaborated in the draft CBT Sub Policy under the thematic area **“Governance, Local Community Involvement and Empowerment”** is the Government’s intent to support and facilitate the involvement of Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) in the decision making, planning and development of CBT projects and initiatives in their community. This group would be facilitated through various methods of outreach and consultation.

Additionally, the MTCA will be working synergistically with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to implement the initiatives of the CBT Sub-policy. The Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD) and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government will be instrumental in assisting the MTCA in the execution of the initiatives proposed in the CBT Sub-policy. Cognisant of the Local Government Reform, the drive towards local economic development and the areas of responsibility of Municipal Corporations (MCs), which includes the promotion of local tourism, sports and culture, the MTCA will be collaborating closely with the MCs in the advancement and growth of the CBT niche in each community.

Among the actions to be undertaken in this Fiscal 2023, is capacity building for community members and special interest groups in various communities. The Ministry has recognised that there has been a lack of formal tourism training and development in many rural and remote communities. Thus, the Ministry has embarked upon a CBT Enterprise workshop initiative that provides training in areas such as: an introduction to the tourism and hospitality industry; Community-Based Tourism; how to market products and services effectively; the process of starting and operating a CBT business; identifying target markets; product packaging; the travel distribution system; product development; and financial management. Communities that have an indigenous population, will be included as participants in this training initiative. It is anticipated

that the training will aid participants in starting, operating and promoting a successful CBT business and expose them, on an introductory level, to a broad range of cultural tourism knowledge and business development skills. Thus, the opportunity for increased economic gain through tourism and culture can be accessed by these indigenous community members.

4.12. The Committee recommends that the MSCD and / or the MTCA expand ongoing efforts to collect and record accounts of members of Indigenous / First Peoples communities for inclusion in the planned Cultural Heritage Library.

The Cultural Heritage Library is a collection of literature, audio and audio visual recordings that is curated, updated and maintained by the Culture Division, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts. It is a repository of publications and recordings related to local Culture and artistic achievement. It covers a diverse array of the country's various ethnic groups. Consequently, the Ministry routinely incorporates information from the local First Peoples Community in its diverse series of Heritage Assets.

Most recently, Culture Division, upon resuming audio visual interviews with Cultural Practitioners after the COVID 19 Pandemic, interviewed Mr. Ricardo Bharath Hernandez, Chief of the Santa Rosa First People's Community in May, 2022.

Going forward, the main mechanism for sourcing items for inclusion in the Cultural Heritage Library shall comprise the implementation of the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. In 2010, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ratified of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The convention defines Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as:

“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”²

Article 11 of this convention mandates the following:

“To ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory.”³

² Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 2.3, UNESCO, 2003

³ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 12, UNESCO, 2003

The convention also maintains several international lists that raise the global profile of and act as precursors to obtaining technical and financial support for the safeguarding of the items inscribed therein. These lists are:

- a) The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which ensures greater visibility of ICH in general and the nominated elements in particular;⁴ and
- b) The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, which helps States Parties to mobilize international cooperation and assistance to ensure that communities continue to practise and transmit their Intangible Cultural Heritage.⁵

The preparation of these lists and support for the items inscribed therein are criterion for international assistance provided by the organs of the Convention, inclusive of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.⁶

In order to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago meets its obligations and positions itself to access benefits once these requirements are met, the Ministry is in the process of drafting a Cabinet Note that shall establish a process for the management of the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. This involves the appointment of an interdisciplinary Committee (ICH Committee) for the review, assessment and compilation of the National ICH Inventory and the establishment of a secretariat within the Culture Division, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts to provide technical and administrative support for the ICH Committee. This Committee will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago meets its obligations as per the ICH Convention, and will also serve to raise awareness of our Intangible Cultural Heritage and provide recognition on a local and international level to communities' traditional knowledge, cultural expressions and know-how that reflect their cultural diversity. Consequently, the Committee's main objectives are to:

1. Evaluate submissions for the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage made by members of the public during the call for submissions in 2012.
2. Submit items for consideration that, in the Committee's opinion, should be included in the inventories but were not submitted by members of the public.
3. Prepare the National Inventory for promulgation.
4. Identify items for inclusion in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

⁴ Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO, 2009, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/06859-EN.pdf>

⁵ Six elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/six-elements-inscribed-list-intangible-cultural-heritage-need-urgent-safeguarding>

⁶ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 20, UNESCO, 2003

5. Assist in the creation of dossiers to accompany each element considered for nomination to UNESCO or inclusion in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in need of Urgent Safeguarding and the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
6. Recommend next steps in terms of safeguarding, promotional activities and public access to the listings.
7. Assist in the compilation of annual reports, which is a requisite of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention.

This committee will incorporate expertise from the first peoples in the effort to include Cultural Practices from them. This signifies that their legacy shall be a vital component of the National Inventory and will find themselves vested in the Cultural Heritage Library of the Ministry with Responsibility for Culture. Ultimately, the ICH Inventory will also help safeguard the different aspects of the Indigenous Peoples living heritage, as it will bring international recognition to the First Peoples, provide technical and financial opportunities to the community through the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund and will provide opportunities for marketing destination Trinidad and Tobago. This Inventory will drive various research projects that will be lodged in the Cultural Heritage Library.