



THIRD SESSION (2022/2023) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT

FOURTH REPORT OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

on

***THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF
THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (FIRST PEOPLES) OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO***



Committee Mandate

The Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity was established under House of Representatives Standing Order 106 and Senate Standing Order 96 and shall have the duty of considering, from time to time, and reporting whenever necessary, on all matters related to:

- (a) compatibility of Acts of Parliament with human rights, and any matters relating to human rights in Trinidad and Tobago (but excluding consideration of individual cases);
- (b) Government compliance with national and international human rights instruments to which Trinidad and Tobago is a party;
- (c) the promotion of measures designed to enhance the equalization of opportunities and improvement in the quality of life and status of all peoples including marginalized groups on the basis of gender, age (elderly, youth, children) disability and the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society through greater social justice and sustainable human development within Trinidad and Tobago.”

Committee Membership¹

Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim	Chairman
Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member
Ms. Anita Haynes, MP	Member
Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member
Mr. Keith Scotland	Member
Ms. Jearlean John	Member
Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye	Member

Secretariat Support

Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Justin Jarrette	Graduate Research Assistant

Publication

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website using the following link:
<https://www.ttparliament.org/committees/show/the-committee-on-human-rights-equality-and-diversity-2/>

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 624-7275 Ext 2627; 2284 Fax: (868) 625-4672
Email: jschumanrights@ttparliament.org

Date Presented in HOR: 09.12.2022

Date Presented in Senate: 13.12.2022

¹ Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim, Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP, and Mr. Keith Scotland, MP were appointed to the Committee in lieu of Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP, Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian, MP and Ms. Donna Cox on June 14, 2022.

Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
2. INTRODUCTION.....	8
BACKGROUND	8
<i>Who are the Indigenous Peoples?</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Recognition of Culture – A Human Right</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Cultural Facets of Indigenous Peoples.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>The Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.....</i>	<i>9</i>
National Policy and Legislation for the Cultural Recognition of Indigenous Peoples.....	10
Overview of Initiatives of the State to Recognise the Indigenous / First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago	11
<i>Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Ministry of Sport and Community Development</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Office of the Prime Minister - Communications</i>	<i>12</i>
Conduct of the Inquiry	12
3. EVIDENCE.....	14
Objective 1: To Identify the Measures Adopted by the State to Recognise the Cultural Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples).	14
Government Financial Support to Indigenous / First Peoples Groups.....	14
Development of Indigenous / First Peoples' Craft Production.....	15
Community-Based Tourism	15
Recording Indigenous / First Peoples' Heritage.....	16
Objective 2: To Determine the Areas in which Recognition of the Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) could be Improved.....	17
Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village.....	17
Community Economic Development.....	17
Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the SRFPC	17
State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC	18
<i>Warao Nation.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Moruga First Peoples.....</i>	<i>19</i>
4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	21

Objective 1: To Identify the Measures Adopted by the State to Recognise the Cultural Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples)	21
Government Financial Support to Indigenous / First Peoples Groups.....	21
Development of Indigenous / First Peoples Craft Production	21
Community-Based Tourism	22
Recording Indigenous / First Peoples' Heritage.....	23
Recommendations.....	23
Objective 2: To determine the areas in which recognition of the contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) could be improved.....	24
Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village.....	24
Community Economic Development.....	24
Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community	24
State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC	25
Recommendations.....	26
APPENDIX I.....	29
APPENDIX II	31
APPENDIX III.....	40
APPENDIX IV.....	73

ABBREVIATIONS

CARIFESTA	Caribbean Festival of the Arts
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CED	Community Economic Development
ECCL	Export Centres Company Limited
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
MFP	Moruga First Peoples
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSCD	Ministry of Sport and Community Development
MTCA	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PFFPD	Partners for First People's Development
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
SRFPC	Santa Rosa First Peoples Community
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

TABLES

Table 1:	National Legislation for the Cultural Preservation of Indigenous Peoples
Table 2:	State Initiatives to Recognise Local Indigenous Communities
Table 3:	Breakdown of the Annual Government Subvention to the SPFRC

IMAGES

Image 1:	A Tree Planting Ceremony in Moruga
Image 2:	The former Chief and current Prince of the Moruga First Peoples meeting diplomatic representatives from Latin America and Spain

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. At its Eighth Meeting held on Friday February 11, 2022, the Committee resolved to inquire into *‘the role of the State in preserving the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago.’* It was agreed that the following objectives would guide the inquiry:

- To identify the measures adopted by the State to recognise the cultural contribution of the indigenous peoples (First Peoples); and
- To determine the areas in which recognition of the contributions of the indigenous peoples (First Peoples) could be strengthened.

1.2. The Committee agreed to hold one virtual public hearing with officials from the following:

- Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD);
- Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) – Communications;
- The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community (SRPC); and
- The Warao Nation.

1.3. The Committee submitted its findings and recommendations with respect to the role of the State in preserving the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago in **Chapter 4**.

1.4. **A summary of the Committee’s key findings and recommendations are:**

- I. The Committee found that of the four (4) major Indigenous / First Peoples groups, only the SRFPC receives systematic annual government funding. By comparison, sums provided to the MFP and the PFFPD were one-off contributions. The Warao Nation does not appear to have received any public funding at all, as the group’s Grand Chief noted at the Committee’s public hearing that *“without finances [...] we are left with nothing in our hands to work with”*

- a. **Given the funding disparity between the SRFPC and the other Indigenous / First Peoples groups, the Committee recommends that the MSCD consider the possibility of extending some form of ongoing support to the MFP, the Warao Nation and the PFFPD.**
 - b. **The Committee recommends that the MSCD expand planned CED initiatives to include indigenous groups other than the SRFPC.**
- II. The Committee found that there was clear acknowledgement of the opportunity for the cultures of Trinidad and Tobago's Indigenous / First Peoples to bring economic benefit to those often marginalised communities. This recognition needs to be quickly translated into action
 - a. **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**
- III. The Committee found that efforts have been made to establish records to preserve certain aspects of indigenous knowledge. There is, however, room to expand these initiatives.
 - a. **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.**
- IV. The Committee found that, although nine (9) years have passed since the Cabinet-appointed Committee recommended the establishment of the First Peoples Heritage Village in 2013, the project was still at the planning stages at the time of the inquiry in 2022. The Committee notes that tangible progress has been slow.
 - a. **The Committee recommends that the MSCD provide a detailed explanation for the lengthy delay in the implementation of the project for the Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village**

2. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Who are the Indigenous Peoples?

2.1. Though an official definition of the term ‘*Indigenous Peoples*’ has not been adopted by the United Nations (UN), the term has been recognised as encompassing specific characteristicsⁱ. These are: *self-identification as Indigenous Peoples at the individual and community levels with acceptance as a member of the community, historical continuity with pre-colonial societies, strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources, distinct social, economic or political systems, distinct language, culture and beliefs, formation of non-dominant societal groups and a resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.*

2.2. A number of human rights documents also pinpoint self-identification as a key criteria in determining an indigenous personⁱⁱ.

2.3. The term ‘Indigenous Peoples’ is used to make reference to the entirety of this group. However, certain groups have a preference for other termsⁱⁱⁱ, one of which is ‘First Peoples’, the preferred title for the Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

Recognition of Culture – A Human Right

2.4. Culture is an element of diversity within the State which not only contributes to the pluralism of national societies^{iv} but which is now regarded as being synonymous with human rights^v. Moreover, the ability to identify and celebrate one’s culture is a fundamental freedom according to Articles 18 and 22 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights^{vi}.

2.5. Globally, the loss of unique cultures, identities and knowledge systems of the Indigenous Peoples are being eroded as a result of both historical colonisation and present day modernisation^{vii}. The realisation is dawning among States that greater efforts must be undertaken to both recognise the ecological value and preservation of the cultural heritage of indigenous populations^{viii}.

These ideals have been codified as legal norms enshrined in international commitments such as the *UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore of 1989*, the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001* and the *Istanbul Declaration of 2002*. Collectively, they acknowledge that commitment to the protection of (Intangible Cultural Heritage) ICH as a key element of cultural diversity and sustainable development must be actioned at both the global and national levels^{ix}. It is within this framework that the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills of Indigenous Peoples be safeguarded^x.

Cultural Facets of Indigenous Peoples

2.6. The facets of indigenous culture identified as being particularly at risk encompass the following^{xi}:

- **Knowledge-** Rich knowledge about the natural world, health, laws, folklore, rites and rituals linked to the identity and experiences of indigenous people with their natural environment;
- **Cultures-** The loss of cultural practices has been accompanied by the gradual loss of territorial land;
- **Traditional food and sustainable agricultural practices;** and
- **Languages-** Indigenous peoples speak minority languages, which are being lost to the dominance of official languages in many countries. Due to the fact that children tend to learn and use the dominant languages to integrate into modern societies, knowledge and transmission of the local dialects is being lost.

The Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago

2.7. Historical records indicate that indigenous peoples settled in Trinidad and Tobago at least 6,000 years before Columbus and reached a population of around 40,000 by the end of the 16th century.^{xii}

The Santa Rosa First Peoples^{xiii}

2.8. In 1976, Ricardo Bharath Hernandez founded the Santa Rosa Carib Community, later re-named the *Santa Rosa First Peoples Community (SRFPC)*. The Government officially recognised this organisation as the sole legitimate representative of Trinidad and Tobago's indigenous population with October 14 designated as the National Day for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples in the year 2000. The SRFPC has since opened its membership to all people of indigenous descent and operates a cultural resource centre in Arima. Since 1990, the SRFP has been in receipt of an annual Government subvention in addition to one from the Arima Borough Corporation, the latter of which, caters specifically to the maintenance of the Santa Rosa Festival.

The Warao Nation

2.9. Led by Elder Rabina Shar, this ethnic community from the Siparia region have made significant attempts to represent people of pure and mixed Warao ancestry.

The Moruga First Peoples

2.10. Led by its Grand Chief, the MFP has worked to revitalise First Peoples heritage in and around Moruga through the hosting of events, public education and museum displays of artefacts.

National Policy and Legislation for the Cultural Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

2.11. The national policy and legislation established that provide for the cultural recognition of indigenous peoples are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1
National Legislation for the Cultural Preservation of the Indigenous Peoples

Title of Legislation	Provisions for the Cultural Preservation of Indigenous Peoples
National Policy on Culture and the Arts for Trinidad and	<i>The Policy addresses two developmental themes:</i> <i>1. National identity and cultural confidence; and</i>

Tobago for the period 2019-2024^{xiv}	2. <i>Harmonised and strengthened cultural environment as an enabler of cultural growth.</i> By extension three of the five cultural development goals that are most relevant to this inquiry include: 1. <i>Enhance cultural confidence by enriching the participation of all in cultural development that transform the social and economic experiences of the nation.</i> 2. <i>Strengthen national identity, identities and the sense of belonging among all social groups.</i> 3. <i>Secure and strengthen infrastructure for cultural diversity, preservation, participation, exchange and expression.</i> Two of the four relevant policy sub-sectors are: 1. <i>The culturally confident society and heritage; and</i> 2. <i>Heritage, Memory and legacy.</i>
--	--

Overview of Initiatives of the State to Recognise the Indigenous / First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago

2.12. An overview of certain major state initiatives concerning Indigenous / First Peoples is seen in Table 2 below^{xv}:

Table 2 – State Initiatives to Recognise Local Indigenous Communities

Year	Provisions
1992	<i>The First Gathering-</i> Trinidad hosted CARIFESTA and Arima was allocated TTD 250,000 to be the centre for the delegations of indigenous peoples from across the Caribbean.
1993	<i>The Second Gathering-</i> The State in cooperation with the SRFPC hosted a second gathering in observance of support for indigenous causes worldwide.
1993	<i>Award of the Chaconia Medal (silver)-</i> The SRFPC was awarded the National Award for culture and community service.
1995	<i>CARIFESTA -</i> The State assisted in the hosting of delegations of Caribbean Indigenous Peoples for another CARIFESTA.

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts

2.13. One of the main objectives of the MTCA in fiscal year 2022 was the National Inventorying Exercise: ‘the Ministry has responsibility for the UNESCO Convention for the

Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) which was ratified on July 22nd, 2010. An important aspect of the UNESCO ICH Convention is the inscription of heritage elements that have been nominated by a country to the UNESCO Representative List. For fiscal 2022 proclamation and promulgation of the National ICH Inventory of Trinidad and Tobago will be pursued'^{xvi}.

Ministry of Sport and Community Development

2.14. In August 2020, the Ministry was realigned from the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development. One of the relevant mandates of the Ministry is *developing and building resilient communities and creating an environment where diverse cultures can flourish in an atmosphere of understanding, tolerance and harmony*. A key deliverable of the MSCD that is relevant to this present inquiry is the project to undertake a feasibility study on the Development of First Peoples.

Office of the Prime Minister - Communications

2.15. *National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago*: the National Archives is responsible for acquiring, preserving and providing public access to our nation's documentary heritage in all formats; and the management of all government records throughout the public service. The mandate of the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago involves the acquisition and preservation of records of enduring administrative, legal, cultural and intrinsic value to Trinidad and Tobago. This is particularly relevant to the initiatives required for the preservation of the heritage of Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples).

Conduct of the Inquiry

2.16. The Committee conducted one public hearing held on July 1, 2022, with key stakeholders related to the cultural heritage of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago, and to the role of the state in preserving this cultural heritage.

During this time, the Committee questioned the officials on matters based on the objectives of the inquiry.

2.17. Prior and subsequent to the public hearing, the Committee sought responses from various stakeholders and the following written submissions were received:

- Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD);
- Ministry of Education (MoE);
- Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) – Communications;
- The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community; and
- The Warao Nation.

2.18. The **List of Officials** that appeared before the Committee is attached as **APPENDIX I**.

2.19. The **Minutes and Verbatim Notes** are attached as **APPENDIX II** and **APPENDIX III** respectively.

3. EVIDENCE

Objective 1: To Identify the Measures Adopted by the State to Recognise the Cultural Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples).

Government Financial Support to Indigenous / First Peoples Groups

3.1. In its submission, the MSCD indicated that the Indigenous / First Peoples groups in Trinidad and Tobago include:

- the Santa Rosa First People's Community (SRFPC);
- the Partners for First People's Development (PFFPD);
- the Warao Nation; and
- the Moruga First Peoples (MFP).

3.2. In its written submission to the Committee, the SRFPC highlighted that it gained official Government recognition as a representative of First Peoples in 1990.

3.3. The response by the MSCD acknowledged the importance of '*continued support for the empowerment of First Peoples via the provision of subventions to them*'. The MSCD explained that, whereas the SRFPC initially received an annual government subvention of \$30,000 from 1990 to 2014, the value of this annual funding increased to \$1.4 million as of 2015.

3.4. Data from the MSCD highlighted that the subvention was provided for the purposes indicated in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Breakdown of the Annual Government Subvention to the SRFPC

ACTIVITY	AMOUNT (\$)
Celebration of days and festivals (Amerindian Heritage and Santa Rosa Days and related activities)	850,000
Curatorial services at the Carib Centre	150,000
Workshops and Educational Activities	200,000
Cultural Exchange Visits	100,000
Administrative Office of the Community (recurrent expenditure)	100,000

TOTAL	1,400,000
-------	-----------

3.5. The MSCD's submission also indicated that financial assistance was provided to both the Moruga First Peoples (MFP) and the Partners for First People's Development (PFFPD) in August 2018 for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, which is held on August 9 each year.

Development of Indigenous / First Peoples' Craft Production

3.6. Written responses received from the MSCD highlighted the handicraft segment of the Best Village Competition, which includes an "Indigenous Craft" sub-category showcasing the craft making skills and traditions of the First Peoples. The Ministry in recognising the need to develop the various cultural aspects of the indigenous peoples included in the National Policy on Culture and the Arts its aim to '*promote the production of high quality indigenous and local craft by [...] supporting research and development for best practices and process mechanisation to make indigenous craft more internationally competitive*'.

Community-Based Tourism

3.7. The Committee learned from the MSCD that there were plans for the MTCA to develop policies and strategies to promote Community-Based Tourism (CBT). CBT is defined as a type of tourism that engages and empowers local residents in the development, management and ownership of tourism products and services in their communities.

3.8. According to the MSCD's written submission, the MTCA intended to engage with Indigenous / First Peoples Groups to determine '*appropriate models for tourism, development, governance structures and decision-making that are representative of the community*'.

Recording Indigenous / First Peoples' Heritage

3.9. The MSCD highlighted that a Cabinet Note providing for the establishment of a process for the management of the National Inventory of the (ICH) of Trinidad and Tobago was being prepared by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA).

3.10. The OPM-Communications submission explained that *"the National Archives is committed to building an inclusive archive that not only represents the official public record but also the peoples' archives, represented by the archival records and oral history of the many communities that comprise Trinidad and Tobago, including that of the First Peoples."*

3.11. As part of MSCD initiatives aimed at recognising the cultural contributions of the indigenous peoples, under the heading "Knowledge", *'an interview was conducted with Mr. Ricardo Bharath Hernandez, Chief of the Santa Rosa First People's Community on May 11, 2022'.* It was further indicated that *'this interview will become part of the Cultural Heritage Library of the Ministry with responsibility for Culture.'*

Objective 2: To Determine the Areas in which Recognition of the Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) could be Improved.

Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village

3.12. The SRFPC highlighted that a Cabinet-appointed Committee was established in 2013 *‘with the objective of bringing greater recognition and visibility to the First Peoples in the context of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’*. One of this Committee’s recommendations was the establishment of the First Peoples Heritage Village.

3.13. The MSCD indicated that in fiscal year 2021, an allocation of \$1,000,000 was provided under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) for a Feasibility Study in relation to the Master Plan for the Model Amerindian Heritage Village’. The MSCD expressed its commitment to the development of this Master Plan.

Community Economic Development

3.14. The submission from MSCD indicated that the Ministry was in the process of developing a mechanism for CED focusing on cultural heritage spaces. This is intended to be aligned with the National Development Strategy, Vision 2030. Specific reference was made to First Peoples in Arima.

Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the SRFPC

3.15. In a written submission to the Committee entitled *a Proposal on the Status and Development of the Santa Rosa First Peoples of Trinidad & Tobago*, sent after the public hearing, the SRFPC highlighted the issues in need of urgent attention to ensure that progress made thus far in the recognition of First Peoples is maintained. Details of the SRFPC’s specific views on each of the following issues are attached as **APPENDIX IV**:

- Governance and Representation;
- Land;
- Public Space of Recognition;

- Government Assistance for the establishment of Phase 1 of the First Peoples Heritage Village;
- National Holiday;
- Legislation;
- Protocol;
- Research and Compilation of the History and status of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago;
- National Award Category;
- Spirituality;
- Restoration of Language; and
- Reparations.

3.16. In the MFP's written submission to the Committee, the group affirmed that *"almost all aspects of indigenous culture are being eroded"*. Because of this, the MFP was of the view that broad based assistance is needed to provide First Peoples with the level of cultural visibility and appreciation enjoyed by other communities in Trinidad and Tobago society. The submission included education,

State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC

Warao Nation

3.17. The Warao Nation shared the following view: *"the State after 11 years of meeting with the Warao Nation has done nothing to recognise us. There has been no continuance from one Government to the other as it pertains to the interest of the Warao Nation; at least, none that we are aware of."*

3.18. The Warao Nation also highlighted that, *"two Warao Nation Elders, Grand Chief Shar and First Elder Jones are both writing books on our traditions with the hope of having same published however at this time we do not have the resources to complete this task. In the meantime, we continue to transmit our knowledge orally to our young and to those who show interest"*.

3.19. The Warao nation emphasised the need for *"the recognition in law of the Warao and Indigenous Nations where we can identify each other in the same way Africans, East Indians and others can express themselves and their traditions. [...]"*.

Moruga First Peoples

3.20. The Moruga First Peoples affirmed that, while they had “*a fair working relationship with the different government agencies such as the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts and the National Archives*”, more government assistance is needed regarding the group’s heritage preservation initiatives, examples of which can be seen below.

Image 1: A Tree Planting Ceremony in Moruga



Image 2: The former Chief and current Prince of the Moruga First Peoples meeting diplomatic representatives from Latin America and Spain.



4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1: To Identify the Measures Adopted by the State to Recognise the Cultural Contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples)

Government Financial Support to Indigenous / First Peoples Groups

4.1. Based on the data provided by the MSCD in **Table 3**, the Committee found that, of the four (4) major Indigenous / First Peoples groups, only the SRFPC receives systematic annual government funding. By comparison, sums provided to the MFP and the PFFPD were one-off contributions. The Warao Nation does not appear to have received any public funding at all, as the group's Grand Chief noted at the Committee's public hearing that *"without finances [...] we are left with nothing in our hands to work with"*.

4.2. The Committee noted that extending some form of systematic government financial support to indigenous groups outside of the SRFPC would represent progress towards the state meeting its obligation to fulfil human rights, specifically those of indigenous communities. The obligation to fulfil means that "States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights"^{xvii} by giving people the ability to access important services.

Development of Indigenous / First Peoples Craft Production

4.3. The aspects of the National Policy on Culture and the Arts pertaining to craft production are an area to be prioritised for more action. Developing craft production by Indigenous / First Peoples to its full potential could contribute to the economic well-being of these communities.

4.4. Regarding the promotion of local craft including craft produced by Indigenous / First Peoples, the Committee notes that the Export Centres Company Ltd (ECCL) is a wholly state owned enterprise under the purview of the MSCD^{xviii}. The ECCL's mission is *"to provide guidance, research support to producers of craft and fashion throughout Trinidad and Tobago so as to facilitate and promote their development and success"*^{xix}. In a written

submission to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, the ECCL described itself as contributing to the development of human and social capital at the community level^{xx}. There is, therefore, potential for beneficial input from the ECCL in developing this aspect of local craft making.

Community-Based Tourism

4.5. The Committee found that there was clear acknowledgement of the opportunity for the cultures of Trinidad and Tobago's Indigenous / First Peoples to bring economic benefit to those often marginalised communities. This recognition needs to be quickly translated into action.

4.6. The Committee noted that the Miscellaneous Provisions (Local Government Reform) Act 2022 (the Act) was assented to by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the same day as the public hearing for the present inquiry, on July 1, 2022^{xxi}.

4.7. One of the major features of the Act is enabling sustainable local development. Local government bodies are now responsible for economic research and planning. This means that they will be able to closely observe trends to identify gaps in each community's economy and fill them. When these gaps are being addressed based on targeted community-based analysis, the solutions developed will be the best fit for each community. These solutions would take into account costs, benefits, resource availability, as well as specific social and environmental characteristics of each community. Also, community entrepreneurs and service providers will have more opportunities to ply their trade and contribute to their community's economy. This recent legislative development now creates an environment that is even more suited to successful CBT initiatives driven and informed by Indigenous / First Peoples Groups themselves. Notably, this would be in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which emphasises Indigenous Peoples "right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests".

Recording Indigenous / First Peoples' Heritage

4.8. The heritage of Indigenous / First Peoples includes knowledge of nature, indigenous laws and practices, traditional agricultural methods, and indigenous languages. The Committee found that efforts have been made to establish records to preserve certain aspects of indigenous knowledge. There is, however, room to expand these initiatives.

Recommendations

4.9. Given the funding disparity between the SRFPC and the other Indigenous / First Peoples groups, the Committee recommends that the MSCD consider the possibility of extending some form of ongoing support to the MFP, the Warao Nation and the PFFPD. This support, whether in cash or in kind, would be subject to these groups meeting eligibility criteria comparable to those applied to the SRFPC when it was granted state recognition as a representative organisation of First Peoples in 1990. Where the support takes the form of funding, relevant accountability mechanisms should apply and possible assistance should be rendered through one of the State's community development and self-help programs to ensure these standards are met and adhered to.

4.10. The Committee recommends that the MSCD facilitate the involvement of the ECCL, which is under its purview, in efforts to develop the commercial potential of Indigenous / First Peoples' craft production, if such collaboration is not already in place.

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.

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.

Objective 2: To determine the areas in which recognition of the contribution of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) could be improved

Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village

4.13. The Committee found that, although nine (9) years have passed since the Cabinet-appointed Committee recommended the establishment of the First Peoples Heritage Village in 2013, the project was still at the planning stages at the time of the inquiry in 2022. The development of the Village was included in the PSIP^{xxii} for the financial years 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021 and 2022. The Committee notes that tangible progress has been slow.

Community Economic Development

4.14. Similar to what was noted with respect to CBT, the Committee found that CED - especially with its focus on cultural heritage spaces - has the potential to allow Indigenous / First Peoples to monetise their long overlooked cultural capital. This will be to the benefit of those specific communities, while contributing to the country's overall economic diversification. It is, however, notable that, thus far, these initiatives have been centred on the SRFPC. No specific mention has been made of the other Indigenous Peoples groups in official policy documents seen by the Committee.

Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community

4.15. The Committee noted that, although certain initiatives have been either fully implemented or are in progress, the target populations for these policies - i.e. the Indigenous / First Peoples communities themselves - continue to point out the many deficiencies that need to be addressed. These are detailed most notably in the

aforementioned *Proposal on the Status and Development of the Santa Rosa First Peoples of Trinidad & Tobago*.

4.16. Addressing these issues would involve input from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) across the public sector. The Committee acknowledges that some MDAs had already begun to implement measures relevant to the SFRPC's priority areas of concern. For example, the MOE explained in written submissions that educational content about *"the cultural heritage and impact of the indigenous peoples on local culture"* has been included throughout the primary school Social Studies and Visual & Performing Arts curricula. Further, the Committee was informed that the MOE was *"engaging in a consultation on curriculum reform for the education system of Trinidad and Tobago"* and that this reform could include additional content about indigenous culture.

4.17. The Committee affirms that a basic goal of public policy is to facilitate initiatives that further the public interest. This may be the interest of the general public or those of a specific sub-section of the public who are direct stakeholders in a particular issue. These stakeholders are the ones who would be directly affected by or benefit from the policy measure. The issues raised by the SFRPC in written submissions to the Committee are based on that community's unique perspective and lived experience as stakeholders in issues pertaining to Indigenous / First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago.

State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC

4.18. The Committee found that, whereas the SRFPC has benefited from state recognition as a representative organisation of First Peoples, is a recipient of public funding and there are initiatives at varying stages of completion concerning the group, the same cannot be said for the other indigenous community represented at the Committee's public hearing – the Warao Nation. The frank assessment given by the group's Grand Chief and other representatives that *"from a Warao perspective, the State after 11 years of meeting with the Warao Nation has done nothing to recognise us"* is in stark contrast to the SRFPC's basic acknowledgement in its post-hearing written submission that *"over*

the years, our First Peoples have made significant progress, through decisive action by successive, governments". The same applies for the Moruga First Peoples, who clearly stated in their written submission their need for greater government assistance to maintain and strengthen their ongoing heritage preservation initiatives.

4.19. Following on from paragraph 4.16 above, it is noted^{xxiii} that stakeholders who are most able to meaningfully influence policy priorities and choices on a given issue are those who have both a high level of interest in the issue and a high level of power in society. The Committee acknowledges that the Warao Nation, though it clearly has a high level of interest in the development and preservation of its community, lacks the power and agency to influence policy on its own.

Recommendations

4.20. **The Committee recommends that the MSCD provide a detailed explanation for the lengthy delay in the implementation of the project for the Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village.**

4.21. **The Committee recommends that the MSCD make every effort to expedite the preparatory work for the First Peoples Heritage Village, which has been in the planning stages for several years, and provide an estimated implementation timeline for the project.**

4.22. **The Committee recommends that the MSCD expand planned CED initiatives to include indigenous groups other than the SRFPC.**

4.23. **With a view to incorporating the perspectives of Indigenous / First Peoples communities into state initiatives involving them, the Committee recommends that the MSCD, the OPM, the MTCA and the MOE thoroughly consider the points raised in the Proposal on the Status and Development of the Santa Rosa First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, found at Appendix IV to this Report.**

4.24. Reiterating the disparities discussed at paragraphs 4.9 and 4.18, the Committee recommends that renewed efforts be made by the MSCD to work with the Warao Nation, the MFP and the PFFPD towards the implementation of the form of state recognition or other special and differential treatment deemed appropriate in the interest of the development of those respective communities.

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of Parliament.

Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim
Chairman

Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP
Vice - Chairman

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
Member

Ms. Anita Haynes, MP
Member

Mr. Keith Scotland, MP
Member

Mr. Kazim Hosein
Member

Ms. Jearlean John
Member

Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye
Member

December 05, 2022

APPENDIX I
Officials Attendance List

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY/ORGANISATION
Public Hearing November 05, 2021		
Dr. Donna-Mae Knights Mr. Wilfred Fullerton Ms. Ann Belmontes	Policy Coordinator Technical Director Research Officer II	MSCD
Ms. Avril Belfon Mrs. Roma Wong Sang	Government Archivist Senior Archives & Records Officer	OPM – Communications
Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez Mr. Cristo Adonis Prof. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine Dr. Thomas Isaac	Chief/President Member Pro Vice Chancellor (Graduate Studies & Research, U.W.I) Lecturer (University of the Southern Caribbean)	Santa Rosa First Peoples Community
Mr. Rabina Shar Mr. Felix Voisin Jones Mr. Selwyn Jacob	Grand Chief First Elder Assistant Grand Chief	Warao Nation

APPENDIX II

Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY,
HELD ON
FRIDAY JULY 01, 2022 AT 9:35 A.M.**

Present

Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim	Chairman
Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP	Vice – Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member
Ms. Anita Haynes, MP	Member
Mr. Keith Scotland, MP	Member
Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye	Member
Ms. Jearlean John	Member
Secretariat	
Ms. Keiba Mottley Jacob	Procedural Clerk
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Justin Jarrette	Graduate Research Assistant

Excused/Absent

Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member
------------------	--------

[The meeting was held virtually via Zoom](#)

Call to Order and Welcome

1.1 The Clerk called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and welcomed those present.

Election of a Chairman

2.1 The Clerk indicated that:

- by Motions agreed to in the House of Representatives on Monday June 13, 2022 and in the Senate on Tuesday June 14, 2022, the Membership of the Committee was changed:
 - Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP replaced Mrs. Lisa Morris Julian;
 - Mr. Keith Scotland, MP replaced Dr. Nyan Gadbsy Dolly, MP; and

- Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim replaced Ms. Donna Cox.
- the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman were vacant and invited nominations for the post of Chairman.

2.2 Mr. Keith Scotland, MP nominated Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim for the post of Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP.

2.3 There being no other nominations, the Clerk declared Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim the duly elected Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity.

2.4 The Chairman took the Chair and thanked present and past Members.

Election of a Vice-Chairman

3.1 The Chairman invited nominations for the post of Vice-Chairman.

3.2 Mr. Keith Scotland, MP nominated Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP for the post of Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye.

3.3 There being no other nominations, the Chairman declared Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP the duly elected Vice-Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity.

Announcements by the Chairman

4.1 The Chairman informed Members that Mr. Kazim Hosein asked to be excused.

Confirmation of Minutes of the 9th meeting held on March 11, 2022

5.1 The Chairman asked Members to examine, page by page, the Minutes of the 9th meeting held on March 11, 2022.

5.2 There being no further omissions or corrections, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye and seconded by Ms. Jearlean John.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

6.1 The Chairman enquired whether there were any matters arising from the Minutes.

- **Item 6.1, page 3** – The Committee’s *2nd Report on the human rights of socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on their treatment and relocation from Port of Spain public spaces* was presented in the HOR on May 05, 2022 and in the Senate on May 10, 2022.

Pre-Hearing Discussions on an inquiry into the role of the State in preserving the cultural heritage of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad & Tobago

7.1 Members were advised that officials of the following entities were expected to participate in the day’s hearing:

- i. Ministry of Sport and Community Development;
- ii. Office of the Prime Minister – Communications;
- iii. The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community; and
- iv. The Warao Nation.

7.2 The Chairman confirmed that all Members were in receipt of:

- i. The submissions made by these entities; and
- ii. Issue Papers prepared by the Secretariat based on the submissions.

7.3 The Committee discussed the approach to be taken during the hearing.

Recusal of the Vice-Chairman

7.4 The Vice-Chairman declared her interest owing to her portfolio as the Minister of Sport and Community Development and the nature of the inquiry; the Member then recused herself from the day’s public hearing.

Other Business

Work Programme

8.1 The Committee agreed:

- i. to add the Vice-Chairman’s proposed topics to the Committee’s Work Programme re:
 - a. inquiry into the right to quality education with specific focus on the review and updating of the primary and secondary school curriculum to include non-mainstream subjects; and
 - b. an examination of the implementation of Article 24 and 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Rights within the education

- curriculum for children at the primary level with specific focus on the incorporation of daily physical/playtime activities.
- ii. that the Secretariat will circulate the updated Work Programme and that Members will determine the priority of topics via email round-robin.

Suspension

9.1 The Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Public Hearing: The Public Hearing on an inquiry into the role of the State in preserving the cultural heritage of the Indigenous Peoples (First Peoples) of Trinidad & Tobago

10.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:11 a.m.

10.2 The following persons joined the meeting:

Ministry of Sport and Community Development

Dr. Donna-Mae Knights	Policy Coordinator
Mr. Wilfred Fullerton	Technical Director
Ms. Ann Belmontes	Research Officer II

Office of the Prime Minister - Communications

Ms. Avril Belfon	Government Archivist
Mrs. Roma Wong Sang	Senior Archives & Records Officer

Santa Rosa First Peoples Community

Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez	Chief/President
Mr. Cristo Adonis	Member
Prof. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine	Pro Vice Chancellor (Graduate Studies & Research, U.W.I)
Dr. Thomas Isaac	Lecturer (University of the Southern Caribbean)

Warao Nation

Mr. Rabina Shar	Grand Chief
Mr. Felix Voisin Jones	First Elder
Mr. Selwyn Jacob	Assistant Grand Chief

Opening Statements

10.3 The following chief officials gave brief opening remarks:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Dr. Donna-Mae Knights | Policy Coordinator, Ministry of Sport and Community Development |
| 2. Ms. Avril Belfon | Government Archivist |
| 3. Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez | Chief/President, Santa Rosa First Peoples Community |
| 4. Mr. Rabina Shar | Grand Chief, Warao Nation |

Key Issues Discussed

10.4 The following are the key subject areas/issues discussed during the hearing:

Ministry of Sport and Community Development

Conservation Efforts

- i. The conversion of the 25 acre land to a model Amerindian Village with the assistance of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community as a potential site for tourism.
- ii. The Government has provided financial assistance to the Santa Rosa First People Community to host the activities for the International Day of the World's First People as well as other events, workshops and educational activities.
- iii. The Ministry has engaged the Warao Nation, the Santa Rosa First Peoples and the Moruga Group to understand their interests and the support needed from the Ministry.
- iv. There has been some work done by the MOE to introduce, document and revise the history of the indigenous peoples in the books.
- v. The need to reconvene or convene a multi-disciplinary/ multi-sectoral committee to focus on spearheading the recognition and addressing the issues of the First Peoples Community.

Office of the Prime Minister - Communications

Overview

- i. The national archives collect and ensure that the archive contains all documents related to the history, story and work of all the groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

- ii. The information received by the OPM is received primarily from the Government or former colonial regimes.
- iii. The need for the promotion of more archaeological work in Trinidad and Tobago to learn more about the work, culture, history, and story of the indigenous people.

Contributions of the OPM to the Indigenous Community

- iv. The OPM has collaborated with both communities to promote the events of the communities and provide information about the communities via exhibitions and social media platforms.
- v. The efforts of the OPM to interface with the Spanish Government to retrieve original records of the interactions between the Spanish and the indigenous peoples including relationships and land.

Santa Rosa First Peoples Community

Overview

- i. There are approximately 6000 known descendants of First Peoples in Arima and environs.
- ii. The need for the national census to include a category for persons of indigenous or Amerindian descent.
- iii. The need for DNA testing available for persons to become aware of their indigenous descent.

Recognition

- iv. The need for an annual day of recognition for the First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago.
- v. The need for proof of indigenous ancestry.
- vi. Successive Governments have made contributions to improving the visibility and plight of the First Peoples.
- vii. The Government should treat indigenous groups on an individual basis rather than a joint group as each group has different interests, culture, traditions, and spiritual practices and may not agree with each other. Additionally, insisting on treating indigenous persons as a joint group is akin to forced assimilation which is against UN practice.
- viii. The need to emulate the best practice of countries with a mature policies for the treatment of indigenous peoples and for a national policy in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Land Rights

- ix. The Santa Rosa First Peoples was leased 25 acres of land for the period of 30 years.
- x. The view of the Santa Rosa First Peoples that the land be granted instead of leased or for an extension of the lease to a minimum of 99 years.
- xi. The need for more land to be granted to the indigenous groups.
- xii. The need to fast track the development of the model Amerindian village community, which will provide an avenue for the promotion and conservation of indigenous culture, tradition , spiritual practices, technologies.

Warao Nation

Identification of Persons of Indigenous Descent

- i. The need to determine the DNA ancestry for persons from different tribes of indigenous persons such as, Warao, Arawaks or First Peoples.
- ii. According to the estimates of the Chief of the Warao Nation, there are approximately 100,000 persons who are of Warao ancestry in Trinidad and Tobago.
- iii. The challenge of the Warao Nation in distinguishing persons of their community as the DNA department is unable to distinguish persons of Warao descent from persons who are of Karina or Arawak descent.

Land Rights

- iv. The claim of the Warao Nation to Naparima Hill also known as San Fernando Hill, which they refer to their cosmological world. The claim to Naparima Hill was in accordance with Article 17 it speaks to the right of indigenous people to property.
- v. The request of the Warao Nation to allocate of 100 acres of land and the financial assistance to create a community to facilitate the exchange of indigenous technologies.

Intellectual Property

- vi. The need to facilitate the protection of the intellectual property rights of the indigenous peoples to encourage the exchange of their indigenous technologies with the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Recognition

- vii. The request of the Warao Nation for the Government to recognise the status of the Warao Nation as a Nation.

Adjournment

11.1 The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

I certify that the Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

September 20, 2022

APPENDIX III

Verbatim Notes

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TENTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON FRIDAY, JULY 01, 2022,
AT 10.11 A.M.**

PRESENT

Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim	Chairman
Mr. Keith Scotland	Member
Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye	Member
Ms. Jearlean John	Member
Ms. Anita Haynes	Member
Mr. Esmond Forde	Member
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Justin Jarrette	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member
Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe	Member

MINISTRY OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Donna-Mae Knights	Policy Coordinator
Mr. Wilfred Fullerton	Technical Director
Ms. Ann Belmontes	Research Officer II

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER - COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Avril Belfon	Government Archivist
Mrs. Roma Wong Sang	Snr. Archives & Records Officer

WARAO NATION

Mr. Rabina Shar	Grand Chef
-----------------	------------

Mr. Felix Voisin Jones

First Elder

Mr. Selwyn Jacob

Assistant Grand Chief

SANTA ROSA FIRST PEOPLES COMMUNITY

Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez

Chief/President

Mr. Christo Adonis

Member

Prof. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

Pro Vice Chancellor (Graduate Studies & Research,
UWI)

Dr. Thomas Isaac

Lecturer (University of the Southern Caribbean)

Mr. Chairman: Good morning all. I would like to welcome everyone to the Tenth Virtual Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity. It's the Committee's first public hearing. It is the role of State in preserving the cultural heritage of the First Peoples, our indigenous peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. As Chairman I would just like to remind participants that this is a virtual meeting and specific guidelines would apply inclusive of, making sure that you mute your microphones when you are not speaking, to keep background noises to a minimum; to adjust your camera so that your face is clearly visible when you speak; ensuring that notifications from any electronic devices around you inclusive of your cell phones that are in your vicinity or others as well, are all muted during the course of the meeting.

Members of the listening and viewing audience are invited to post or send their comments via the Parliament's various social media platforms, inclusive of Facebook, *ParlView*, and the Parliament's YouTube channel and Twitter which we will take into consideration during the course of the meeting.

I would like to introduce the representatives in the following order: Ministry of Sport and Community Development, followed by the Office of the Prime Minister, then we will flow into the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community, and then lastly, the Warao Nation. Ministry of Sport and Community Development.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Office of the Prime Minister, Communications Division.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Can I have introductions from the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: And the introductions from the Warao Nation.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Good morning to all and welcome to our public enquiry. My name is Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim. I am the Chairman of this Committee. I would invite all members to introduce themselves to you all

starting with Independent Senator, Hazel Thompson-Ahye.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks and welcome again everyone. Just a quick reminder of the objectives of the enquiry, it is to identify the measures adopted by the State to recognize the cultural contributions of the Indigenous First Peoples and for us to collectively determine the areas in which cultural recognition of the contribution of the First Peoples could be strengthened.

I would like to have the following persons make brief remarks with a maximum of two minutes and I ask Dr. Donna-Mae Knights from the Ministry of Sport and Community Development to start.

Dr. Knights: Good morning again. Donna-Mae Knights of the Ministry of Sport. Mr. Chair, and members of the Joint Select Committee the Ministry of Sport and Community Development is guided by the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago founded on the principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, faith in the fundamental human rights and freedoms, dignity of the human person and the inalienable right with which all members of the human family are endowed. And in this regard the treatment of our indigenous peoples, they are assured of these rights and freedoms.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago through its various configurations with Ministries with responsibility for culture, community development and national diversity, both has and continues to invest in the preservation of the nation's national heritage and indigenous people even before the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. So in 2007 the Government was reaffirming its commitment to the protection of the rights and maintenance of the distinct cultures of indigenous people by adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

The Ministry of Sport and Community Development which now has as part of its portfolio the management of issues related to First Peoples, continues to do its part to ensure compliance with the convention and the advancement of strategies consistent with the national development goals, the national policy on sustainable community development as they relate to the development of the First Peoples Community.

While COVID-19 and the realignment of the Ministry may have impacted the time frame to achieve some of the plans developed by and for the indigenous people – But nevertheless we are pleased to share what was done and what we are doing in terms of those plans. The Ministry's role has revolved around work with the registered First Peoples groups to discuss their current activities, future priorities and the possibilities for partnership with Government, as well as facilitating the realization of the model Amerindian Village pursuant to the Cabinet decision of 2009.

We note that while the Ministry of Sport and Community Development has a specific mandate for

issues relating to First Peoples, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts is also responsible for culture and cultural organizations. Accordingly that Ministry continues to facilitate cultural education, recognition and inclusion of the ways of life for First Peoples and the safeguarding of their cultural heritage. So we look forward to responding comprehensively to the interest of the Committee as well as to continuing the dialogue with various registered First Peoples groups to support their current activities and future priorities. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks, Dr. Donna-Mae Knights. I would like to call on Ms. Avril Belfon for a brief opening remark.

Ms. Belfon: Good morning again to all and thank you, Chair. The National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago is a division, as we said before, of the Office of the Prime Minister which is charged with – we are charged with two major responsibilities. To acquire, preserve and provide public access to our nation’s documentary heritage, that is, records that have deemed to have long-term national historical and cultural significance. We are also responsible for guiding public records policy and management of practices so as to strengthen good governance, transparency, accountability and efficiency.

For the purposes of today’s discussion we are focusing on the first mandate. [*Earbud falls out*] “Oops”, I am so sorry. Apologies. Additionally it should be noted that the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago is not the only national or government institution with the responsibility for heritage preservation. Other agencies deal with different aspects of our heritage. For example, the National Trust would deal with built and natural heritage. National Museum would be more focused on artifacts and objects and the National Library with published works, et cetera.

The National Archives therefore can answer questions on issues related to its own role and does not presume to speak for the entire government interaction with the First Peoples. But having said that, of course, we at the National Archives are committed to building an inclusive collection which would document the diverse cultures of the peoples of our nation. We collect mainly primary sources of history and unpublished works, such as, files, manuscripts, original recordings, et cetera. And we work diligently to ensure that they are authoritative and reliable sources which have been vigorously verified. These documents are then – they then serve as the basis for research and scholarship by students, historians, private citizens, et cetera. We facilitate this research by providing access to these documents in our publicly accessible search room and online via our website, social media and an email reference service.

We stand ready to answer and provide any information that is necessary to support the availability of documentation or records that would help and guide this process. And thank you for having us.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks, Ms. Avril Belfon. I now call on Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez who is the Chief and President of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Thank you very much, Chair, for the opportunity to say these opening remarks in this very special, and what we consider to be very important meeting. We are happy that it is finally on because it was since, probably about three years or more that we first had notification to appear before a joint select committee and for one reason or the other it did not materialize until today. So we thank God and we thank you all for facilitating and making sure that this process is on.

Let me begin by saying that the Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad existed here from precolonial times as I know that all of us would know through our history and so on. But it was only in 1990, May of 1990 that the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community was recognized by the Government of the day through a Cabinet as the representative voice of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. And that was so because at that time there was no other organization, indigenous organization, in the country.

Subsequent to that, we have had coming on board – and I imagine it is through the work of the Santa Rosa First Peoples that the people in the country had become more aware and the people of indigenous descent in other parts had begun to identify within their indigeneity and started organizing themselves. And so we had other groups being formed and being registered as legal entities.

Having said that, I would like to say that since that time successive governments have taken steps to improve the plight of the First Peoples and when we got the first government recognition, a Cabinet appointed committee was appointed, but at that time that committee never met because the people who were named to that committee were very high profile members of the Government and so, and we could have never had the opportunity to get a quorum. So that just died a natural death. After some years we continue to lobby and we had a committee in place and we started the work. So that successive governments have made contributions to the upliftment and the visibility of our First Peoples.

Having said that, we feel at times that we are placed at the same level and looked at as another cultural group in the society, and we feel that indigenous people should be looked at through different lenses. The United Nation's declaration clearly states of certain rights of indigenous peoples which we are not saying that makes them different, not different, but more important than the other sectors, we are all important equally, but when you come to the indigenous communities we are supposed to be looked at and treated in a slightly different manner because of the indigeneity and the inherent rights of our indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks, Mr. Hernandez. It is really, really, really, a good introduction and I am hoping for more of an input from you when the questions start. I would just like to get the Grand Chief of the Warao Nation to give a two-minute introduction as well.

Mr. Jones: I am the head of the Warao people. I must give the permission. [*Technical difficulties*]

Mr. Shar: I am Rabina Shar as you said, spokesperson for the Warao Nation. What the Elder is trying to say is

that our tradition, which we would like you to pay respect to as we pay respect onto yours, gives permission to the spokesman from the elders' council to speak on behalf of the Warao Nation. Now, Sir, I wanted to – the parliamentary Joint Select Committee statement of intent is Human Rights and Equality. That is supposed to be in my view – the term of reference, is to establish whether the State of Trinidad and Tobago is delivering justice on the indigenous peoples, I the Warao Nation and the First Peoples of Arima. The human rights of indigenous peoples of our nation is the question before this parliamentary Joint Select Committee, whether the State is meeting and treating with indigenous people and nations in full compliance with the Human Rights Law is one part of this Committee's enquiry in our opinion.

However, it appears that the Committee has deferred from this position. Its other part is whether there is equality in respect to the treatment of indigenous peoples or the first nations in human rights law. So the question arises as to the right of sovereignty or the status with respect to the aboriginal sovereign territories now defined or recognized as Trinidad and Tobago, a member state of the United Nations.

So we would like to make a statement concerning our status. We are the original nation, the original first nation of this land. And if you look at the evidence from the book, Johannes Wilbert, *Mystic Endowment*, there is evidence there to support our claim. We have submitted claims to the past governments, 11 years now. Claim number one with respect to Naparima Hill or San Fernando Hill which is our cosmological world, of course, the northern end. This comes under Article 18 of the human rights law; under Article 17 it speaks to the right of indigenous people to property; under Article 15 it speaks to the right of indigenous peoples nationality. It appear to us that this enquiry is not in keeping with the law that the statement of intent implies. So we would just like to put this before the Joint Select Committee because it appears to me that this is ultra vires the law.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks for your contribution, introduction and we definitely hope that your opinion will change from the discussions because we do adhere primarily to the guidelines of the UN for the purpose of this Joint Select and I believe after the meeting we can alleviate your concerns and we can move forward in recognition and in addition to recognition of your nations as the first occupier as best as possible. I now welcome questions by the Committee. And in lieu of the topics that you have just mentioned, Sir, I would like to have member Scotland lead the discussions with his first question. Member Scotland.

Mr. Scotland: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning to the First Peoples, Mr. Rabina Shar, good morning.

Mr. Shar: Pleasant morning, morning. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Scotland: I am not surprised as to the very sterling and very passionate plea from Mr. Shar. I can assure you that he is well schooled in areas of the law. He had a very good ally some years gone by and I will not disclose anything further. May I start by asking the First Peoples of both the Santa Rosa and the Warao Nation, what – and we are here about solutions. What are your suggestions that the Government can bring to the table

in order to augment or improve the preserving of the cultural heritage of the indigenous people, the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. Can I start with Santa Rosa and Mr. Shar, then can I come across to you after?

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks. I was now going to suggest that, that question. Please go across to Mr. Shar and then after the Warao Nation subsequently. Thanks for the question, Mr. Scotland. Mr. Shar first and then followed by —

Mr. Scotland: Mr. Shar is the Warao Nation, Mr. Hernandez he is the First Peoples.

Mr. Chairman: Correct.

Mr. Scotland: So we go with the First Peoples of Arima, Santa Rosa?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chair, for the question and I will try to answer as best as we see it. And if I understand it correctly, it is what can the Government do to ensure the preservation and the success of the First Peoples? I speak for Santa Rosa First Peoples Community and Santa Rosa First Peoples Community have been lobbying for many, many, years for lands to reestablish a space, an indigenous space. After they lost 1,320 acres of land which was given as their inalienable property in Arima and that was lost under the British. Recently in just the last few years, the Government have made 25 acres of land available to the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community under a lease agreement. We are saying that to do a lease for indigenous peoples is an insult to indigenous peoples. That land should never be a lease but it should be a grant. And if it had to be a lease, a lease of not more than 90 or 99 years I think. This lease is for 30 years. That is not acceptable. That is number one.

Mr. Scotland: Right. So not cutting you. So the first point you are saying is the land is an issue and although land has been allocated you do not like the title of the land, in that it is a 30-year lease, and it should at least be a 99-year lease.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Yes.

Mr. Scotland: This Committee will try to be practical so we want practical — what is your second suggestion, Sir, apart from the first one?

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Yes, my second suggestion is that all the efforts that are being made to highlight and to preserve the indigenous peoples' way of life, their culture and their heritage needs to have substantial foundation. For instance, we had asked for a one-off holiday many years ago which we got, but we are seeing now as that as that holiday is gone, that the day comes and it is a day of recognition and people are not aware and that that support as the other major ethnic groups have in the country to sustain their culture, to give a day

of recognition where the whole country recognizes and supports, is not there. So we are like swimming against the tide. We need a day, a public holiday as the rest of the ethnicities where we can focus on the indigenous issues and get that support. If not a full holiday, but a day of significance, not just a day of recognition.

And the third thing I would like to say is to see that a team be put in place to fast-track the development of our heritage village which will support all that we are doing and give people a sense of pride and belonging, and that is lagging on too long. Too many obstacles. We need a special technical team to fast-track that and to see how we can get that going.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks for your contribution, Sir. All points taken and noted and you do have, well, my support when it comes to recognizing that day. It was a wonderful day. I was in Arima myself on that day. I believe it was in 2017 and the festivities and the foods and the cultural display was amazing and I personally support if it is that the holiday, unlike that day, in the recognition can move forward. Thank you very much.

Mr. Scotland: Chairman, can we get the response from the Warao Nation, please?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the same response from Warao Nation. Member Scotland, after those two particular responses I would just like to jump across to Communications from the PM's Office to see if it is that in the last contribution with respect to the support and what can they do to push this forward and to support the wants. Okay, so member from the Warao Nation.

Mr. Shar: Mr. Scotland, members of this honourable Committee. With respect to cultural contributions and recognition of cultural contributions, this is but a part of our tradition.

10.40 a.m.

And how could we contribute culturally without, for example, our intellectual property per se being protected. So that, for the Government to put the emphasis on cultural contributions which speaks more to the arts and that sort of thing, agriculture and so on, it is defeating the very purpose of recognizing our right. Because if our rights are not recognized, how could we contribute, you know. I mean, suppose we give part of our agricultural experience and so on, or knowledge, what guarantee do we have to deal with the finance to make this into a viable business that could support our peoples? Or is it that this cultural contribution is going to be used by the people with capital and exploit our intellectual property for their value and leave us in the rain as usual?

You see, after 11 years of meeting and treating with the governments, both governments, PNM and People's Partnership, nothing has been offered to us. Everything has been offered to Santa Rosa. So we are a black sheep as it appears. This is inequality. This is why we thought that the direction of this Committee would stick to the law. But it is unfortunate, as I have said, that we go ultra vires the law and into the Government's

agenda, which is suspect in our view.

Mr. Scotland: Mr. —

Mr. Chairman: Before Mr. Scotland, you have to recognize what I did and said, Sir, in your previous contribution that, you know, we are progressing for — and the whole purpose of this enquiry is to get your point of view so that we can move forward in taking your recommendations forward. I have firstly heard the cultural contribution, in the recognition of the cultural contribution, is there anything else you would like to raise?

Mr. Shar: Personally, we would like to be allowed to make our cultural contributions from a perspective where we can do it. It is a practical thing to us, and without finances and this sort of thing, and our territories and so on, we are left with nothing in our hands to work with.

Mr. Chairman: Understood. But what do you see as a starting point? You have mentioned that you felt as if there was not recognition for yourselves and the other organization got recognition. What would be a good starting point on behalf of your community, Sir?

Mr. Shar: Yes. You would think that we could be on equal par with the others, who got lands and so on, but we reject the idea of leasing our lands to us. So we think that if we should get a parcel of land, probably 100 acres as the case may be, to enter into agricultural contributions practically, you know, then we could now share this within the community at large. We would also need the financial assistance to put this into operation.

Mr. Chairman: So similar to the last contributor, you would like to have some comfort of some sort of location and also a task force assigned to push the business of your community forward so that you can be recognized, and, also in addition to being recognized, that your people could be the centre point of the location where you may benefit from it on a social, cultural and economic manner?

Mr. Shar: Yes, you have put it in perspective, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Mr. Shar: The question of [*Technical difficulties*] from this exercise, people are controlling the exercise if they want to be established in our domain.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I listened and understood, Sir. Thank you for your contribution. Mr. Scotland, would you like to make a follow-up or shall we go on to the Communications Division of the Prime Minister's Office?

Mr. Scotland: Chairman, I think the follow-up will apply both to the two indigenous groups that are representing — two indigenous peoples groups that are represented here and also the Office of the hon. Prime Minister. I want to ask, Chairman, through you, what do you think can be done? So we are piggy-backing on what Government can do, but what can both First Peoples' nations do and the Government — so I am asking

this also, the Government represented – to sensitize the country and by extension the world to our First Peoples’ heritage? And I want suggestions, please.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to pass that question primarily over to the Communications Division of the Office of the Prime Minister and see if the both indigenous groups would be in agreement with and support of what they may be able to be in support of. OPM, Communications Division?

Ms. Belfon: Okay. Good day again. Chair, thank you. I just want to be sure that I am answering the question that is posed. It is really what can we do to help to sensitize both the country and world about the contribution of the First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Scotland: And their cultural heritage that they bring with them.

Ms. Belfon: Okay. All right. So I am going – as again I said before, we are speaking specifically to our role at the National Archives, and what we do to collect and ensure that we have documents related to the history, and the story, and the work, everything about persons of all the groups in Trinidad and Tobago, it is our mandate and we have continued to do it, to try to collect and ensure that the material is available at the National Archives. But far beyond having it available, we have worked together with both communities right here, both Chief Bharath as well as the members of the Warao – I am sorry for not saying it correctly – to a lesser extent, yes, truthfully, and to have collaborated and worked with them in terms of promoting activities that they have had, supplying information, what is available at the National Archives already. We have had both exhibitions in-house as well as online on our various social media platforms. Those exhibitions and those products that we have produced, we do not only have it at our archives or online. We consciously go out to communities, schools and so on, so that the information is promoted on a wide forum.

But one of the main issues that we would like to point out is that a lot of the content, the material – because again, with the National Archives the material that we collected is mainly material coming out of the work of the Government – the material, the content would be documents that have come from since the advent of the colonial powers. And as Chief Bharath-Hernandez mentioned, of course, the First Peoples have existed here so much longer than that, and what is documented will be for the most part that interaction between those two groups so that we could get some material coming out of the Spanish, or the British and so on, what is documented about that interaction. What is missing and I want to say it on this forum, that would be I think a great contribution for us as heritage professionals and, of course, in the Government, that there needs to be some support for the work of archaeology which I think will add a lot more – and I think Chief and the Warao could bear me out, and, of course, our professor, that there is a lot of material, a lot of information to be had from looking for supporting and building on archaeological groups. There is a lot more information to be learnt about the work, the culture, the history and the story of our indigenous people from that.

But having said that, on our part at the National Archives, the records that we can access, we have been making efforts with the Spanish archive which is the archives in Seville, to retrieve the original records which are not here at our National Archives. They remained with the Spanish Government when they left. And so, there have been efforts made by the archives through both the Spanish Embassy and indirect contact with the civil archives to reacquire those records, and in the documents we submitted to the Committee we have listed some of the more important ones. It is not all, but some of the ones that we identified from their catalogue which will certainly speak to information about lands and relationships that the First Peoples would have had during their interaction with the – well, that first encounter with the Spanish when they came to our region.

So on our end I think it would be very important that that is supported in trying to acquire that information and make sure it is available so to facilitate scholarship by people in Trinidad and Tobago and, of course, to provide additional information to support the various claims that are being made by the First Peoples here. We have tried to put forward, and we have put forward I should say, a project under our Development Programme because we do not have unnecessarily just to acquire and these agencies are not giving us for free. We have to purchase these records. So we have put forward a PSIP project to deal with the acquisition of these original records.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Belfon, thank you very much for your very well-weighted and informative contribution. I would like to suggest at this point in time – I mean, you did mention that you have community outreach, but based upon – Mr. Forde, I will come to you immediately after – what you have in possession, and when it comes to archives and what has been brought to the Archives Division, I would like to just suggest at this point in time that the First Peoples and the Warao community be given the opportunity – this is just in passing, a way forward – when there is the awareness campaigns coming up, when it is the outreach programmes that you may do, to bring them in, not just to vet, but to vet and to contribute. We speak a lot of archives and pasts, but there is nothing past relics and they are tangible, but one of the most important intangible tangibles is experience from people. And everyone in front of us today, from all the First Communities and the Warao Nation, they have shown a wealth of information and they would love to have their perspective brought forward especially as it comes to outreach in the future. Member Forde, you had a contribution?

Mr. Forde: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations on your elevation to the chairmanship this morning. And as we go forward, good morning, Trinidad and Tobago, Esmond Forde here. I would just like to get a certain prospective from both the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community and the Warao Nation community in terms of – you all are hearing me?

Mr. Chairman: Loud and clear, Sir.

Mr. Forde: You all are hearing me, Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Loud and clear.

Mr. Forde: Right. Okay. Yes. You know, I would just like a perspective from these both two indigenous groups in terms of the numbers you know, that we are dealing with. When I say in terms of, the population amount of these two both groups so that our country, Trinidad and Tobago, can get a clear perspective based on the terms that they are seeking; land, they are seeking public holidays, they are seeking a technical team in order to fast-track the indigenous village. We are hearing rights not being recognized. We are hearing no funding, no recognition. Because why I am asking this, is that remember we need to take into consideration other groups coming forward at a later date saying the same thing, “we entitled to this, we are not entitled to this”. Now, do not get me wrong, I am not saying you all are not entitled. But I would just like to get a perspective in terms of the numbers we are talking about, the population base of these two groups, Mr. Chairman, so that we can be clear in going forward which will also give us a greater perspective in making our recommendations as we go forward. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Noted, member Forde. Can I get the responses from Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez, followed by the Grand Chief of the Warao Nation?

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Excellent question. In terms of numbers, we at our local level have numbers. In the Arima and environs its numbers about 6,000 descendants of our First Peoples. That is not taking into consideration people of indigenous descent throughout Trinidad, throughout the country. One of the things we had lobbied for in one of the Cabinet appointed committees was for inclusion in the national census, for a category in the national census for people to identify as indigenous, or Amerindians. We were successful in getting that lobby adhered to in that the last census we had a category that was included for people to claim their indigeneity, but what happened is that the education was not there. So that when the census went out you find that people were not aware to claim their indigenousness under that census. So that they still continued to register under “other” and so on, and the percentage that is in the last census is very small. So that if there is another census, we need to educate the people here, there is a category.

Another thing I want to say on that is that we had the DNA testing out of a team from the University of Pennsylvania who first did that project among members of our community, and what they found was amazing to see the percentage of the indigenous blood flowing in those people who have indigenous descent. And then they went out further into the community, into the wider community, and there were a number of people in the community who do not even know that they are of indigenous descent, that found the percentage of their DNA very high in terms of the indigenous. So what I think is needed to get an accurate figure, is in the next census a clear marker and education to follow so that people can claim and we can have a better picture, a better idea rather, than how many people of indigenous descent in the country.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you so much, Mr. Bharath-Hernandez. Can I have —

Mr. Forde: Mr. Chair –

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Forde I was now coming back to you to ask a particular question. From my understanding on your question you were not just speaking about the total volume of numbers in a community, but you were speaking about the possibility of new communities emerging, were you?

Mr. Forde: Well, no. You see, I am looking from the point of view of both the Santa Rosa First Peoples and Warao, what are their total numbers.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mr. Forde: Mr. Bharath-Hernandez mentioned 6,000, but as we know there will be multiplication, there will be persons being born as we go forward. I just want to get a total picture of what sort of numbers we are dealing with.

Mr. Chairman: And I like the fact that Mr. Bharath-Hernandez spoke about the Philadelphia project when it came to DNA testing. I would like to have the Committee's indulgence in thinking along those lines so that we can make recommendations going forward as it applies to recognizing persons of indigenous genealogy. We have a hand – before we go to the Grand Chief, the Professor has her hand up and I am sure it is going to be a little pertinent on the matter before you make your next point, Mr. Forde. I would just like to get Ms. Rose-Marie Antoine in on the action right now.

Prof. Antoine: Thanks. And thank you so much for this meeting. So important. I just want to emphasize that cultural rights are important, but both Warao and Santa Rosa are saying more land and livelihoods and that is in fact supported in international principles. And just to assure Mr. Forde that it does not apply to other groups because these rights are unique and specific to indigenous peoples, and they have actually entitlements including property rights and it is being upheld all over the world including in the Caribbean, Belize most recently, Guyana, Dominica as the case may be. In the case of our First Peoples is not just because of the colonial history that we know about, the brutal history where all the lands – nobody is saying give back all the lands to the First Peoples. No. But it is also what I think Chief was alluding to, that in the recent past there is evidence of plain fraud and the illegal misappropriation of land, and the breach of agreements that the State set up, and the Church set up, like in Arima, perhaps San Fernando, and Minister Scotland will understand this. So we have two sets of injustices and I think we should start to think about the term reparations in relation to First Peoples especially in relation to land.

And the last point I want to make and I think Chief has talked about the 25 acres not being enough, we do not want leases. Warao has said leases. I agree it should not be leases, it should be outright grants of land. But there is one last thing I wanted to say and that right now we are talking about climate smart strategies to protect against climate change and so on, and I actually believe that the First Peoples have an important role to

play to help the entire nation because of the own religious and cultural traditions which have always preserved the environment. They emphasized that. So we have lot to learn from them as custodians of the land. So if we can give them the tools and resources including the IP projections, including some finance to fulfil that role, I think it benefits the entire nation. So we probably should look at it from that point of view, not just some favour but of an entitlement, one. So I just wanted to throw that in. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Professor. Back to you, Mr. Forde.

Mr. Forde: Again, I still want to hear from the Warao Grand Chief also with regard to his numbers. And a follow-up question one time, Mr. Chair. These two groups, these two indigenous groups, now, they are seeking holidays, they are seeking land, they are seeking recognition, is there any possibility that they can be considered as one grouping?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Forde, let me just straighten up one thing. It is not a matter of seeking a public holiday. There was just a day of recognition because they appreciated the holiday given back in the 2017. It is a day of recognition where—

Mr. Forde: Recognition.

Mr. Chairman: Recognition, yeah.

Mr. Forde: So therefore can they be considered, both indigenous groups that we are referring to today, and they take—whatever is being offered, whatever recommendation that comes out of our Committee to the various Ministries, can it be considered? Are they saying that we want separate recognition; or can we consider it as one indigenous recognition for all two groups?

Mr. Chairman: Before we move on to answering the first question—the second question, sorry, I would like to have the Grand Chief of the Warao Nation answer the first question first; we will then come back to the professor who I am sure would alleviate the culminations, speak about the culmination of the groups possibility; and then we will open the floor to Mr. Bharath-Hernandez to answer the second question in follow-up from Professor. The Grand Chief of the Warao Nation?

Mr. Shar: Yes, Sir. With respect to the views of Mr. Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez, the Chief from Arima, I think that he is sort of on spot, you know, and that the idea of proof of indigenusness is very important. Because the thing that the gentleman is saying there, perhaps if we do not deal with that effectively according to the Chief himself, “Tom, Dick and Harry go come and say dey is Warao when ting sharing”, you see. So that with regard to the numbers of our people per say throughout Trinidad and Tobago, we believe that this number is in the hundreds of thousands, you know, because you have to understand our history. Three thousand years ago we actually had a treaty, an oral treaty, for the people that history called the Arawaks, the Lokono people.

As a result of that treaty, they have lived in our territory and will become a sort of a—I do not know if to call it cosmopolitan, is it the right word or what, it will become integrated as families there.

Two thousand years ago the Karina or the so-called Caribs, came and the same thing happened, we had a treaty with them. So we have to understand that we are the protectors of the treaty-bound nations under our protection, you see. So that this whole thing about trying to divide, or the gentleman spoke about trying to unite, which is great, but we have got to know the true history. And even the question of DNA for instance, to identify a person, the very specialist in the DNA department is saying quite clearly we cannot determine who is a Warao from who is a Karina or who is Arawak. So then what is the purpose of that? I think that the question that a lady alluded to earlier, when we get the archives from Spain this will give us an idea of our family history, and then we can go through the archives in the legal Ministry and follow-up this to more or less identify the true owners or the true indigenous people.

As I said, more than 1000,000 Warao people are in Trinidad. Some do not even know that they are Warao as the professor indicated, you see. You know, to kind of equate you know—I mean, yes we are talking about equality, but remember that the original owner of the land is distinct to the people who came into his land, you see, and to sort of equate them you have to look at the law of status. Status speaks to not to all persons. It speaks to particular persons according to the—let me try and read this thing, this for you from this document.

Status is a person's legal condition...personal or proprietary. The sum total of that person's legal right refers or applies to specific individuals as opposed to everyone, free persons—that is something very particular. Father and the rights of original son of the soil to experience his inheritance.

So that law of trust is the issue here.

Due to the modern tendency towards equality, status has become less frequent or has diminished. So honour thy father and mother, or ancestors, relating to sovereignty of their national status as successors, but their right to self-determination.

And all this is not being considered by this team. So we are looking at this thing from a keyhole that you do not want to open the door to see the real picture.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for that point, and I believe in your explanation you have managed to answer the second part of the question about how you may feel about the grouping aspect. Yes. So many thanks for your contribution. Prof. Antoine, any words on the topic at hand?

Prof. Antoine: Yes, I think Mr. Forde's question is very pertinent and it is likely that we could end up with two main groupings. Yeah? But just to point out that this is not an abstract exercise in terms of law. You have to use anthropological evidence. This is what we did in Belize with the Mayan Alliance to prove a whole host of things

including occupation and history and extra, et cetera. And I think Santa Rosa, that is why they started that DNA evidence and so forth. So it is possible that you could get two main groupings but I do not think you are going to get like 100 groupings. Most would fall into the two main groupings so you may have to consider, let us say, two sets of resources for two separate peoples. I think the State should be aware of that. It is possible that that could happen.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks. Any other line of questioning – oh, I do apologize. I did promise to go to Mr. Bharath-Hernandez now to his answering of the second question in follow-up to the last three contributions.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Yes, thank you so much, Chair, once again. On the question I think Mr. Forde raised about if they are looking for separate recognition, I think in terms of – there are areas that the groups can agree on and there are areas where we see things differently as any other section of the society. For instance, the groups we may have our different agendas, and how we want to pursue that and what we feel is justified by the State to us, we may see that approach differently, by the other groups may see it differently. But in terms of a national recognition, I think we can come together and agree on that, in that all groups it is for indigenous peoples, and all groups can fall under that day of the recognition, or holiday, or whatever it is, and we can develop our programmes under that. Because those in the south will do things that in the south, those in the north will do things in the north, and it will benefit the whole country. So there are areas yes, where we can agree and there are areas that we see things differently. And you know there is precedent set by Canada for this, and Canada in their documentation deals with their diverse indigenous groups, case by case basis.

Mr. Chairman: Well, thank you so much especially for raising up the Canadian point. I am really appreciative of that. Mr. Forde, one final commentary on this topic because I really would like to go on to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development.

Mr. Forde: Just one final thing.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Forde: You see, it is based on the last comment that Chief Bharath-Hernandez has now made, where he is making reference to the other countries like, for instance, Canada. And this is why I wanted the whole perspective in terms of numbers, percentages, so that we can clearly determine how we are going to go forward with regard to this. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Point noted, Sir. Can I move on to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, please? And as it pertains to the questioning so far for the morning, what are your thoughts on the matter, what are the programmes and what do you do in the purview of these topics for the community and the nation to hear as a

whole?

Dr. Knights: All right. Thanks, again. Dr. Donna-Mae Knights speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development. I just wanted to bring to the attention of the Committee and the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the Cabinet, in providing the land through the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community, intended that that site would have been for all of the First Peoples as a grouping. So that is one thing to take note of and I guess one has to be clear whether there is the feeling that that should be changed or how do we treat with that. But we do have a Cabinet decision that puts forward the 25 acres, the land in Arima, as something as a model Amerindian village that benefits all of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, and I think that point needs to be made.

Earlier there was a question of what is being done to promote the value and the recognition of the First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago and around the world. And it must be pointed out that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, over the years, has given funding via the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community to host activities to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, to mark the day of recognition in October; to conduct workshops and educational activities so that the citizens at large could be informed about the history, the practices, the culture and so on of indigenous persons. So, there is support, you know, through the Santa Rosa First Peoples and as was said in the beginning, there was not a focus on the other groups because Santa Rosa at the time would have been the first and the duly registered entity.

The Ministry has been in talks between 2017 and 2019 with the other groups, the two Warao Nation groups, the Moruga group and the Partners for First Peoples Development in terms of trying to understand what would their interests be and how the Ministry could support their interests. What we have not received, it would be clear proposals from these groups in terms of written proposals, in terms of what they would want and how the Ministry could support. But there is a lot of discussion going on and the Ministry does stand ready to support, in addition to which there are several other grant facilities where the First Peoples Community could take advantage of the opportunities to showcase their work and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks for that contribution. Can I just interject here and ask a question to you, Ms. Donna-Mae, followed—also for an answer to Ms. Belfon. I would like to know of any thrust—on behalf of these indigenous groups, I would like to know if there exists any thrusts in incorporating these indigenous teachings and practices through the primary and secondary school curriculum as it applies to them being our First Peoples and indigenous peoples and if there has been any level of engagement to enhance our educational curriculum in recognition of these people.

Dr. Knights: Well, please let me say that as part of the—I would not really want to answer on behalf of the Ministry of Education but I do know that there was work done in terms of introducing and documenting and even revising the history of the indigenous people definitely on the books. In terms of the status, I could not

say right now but I know – and I do not know if Ms. Belmontes would wish to comment. But certainly efforts were made in the past to, one, look at the history of the indigenous peoples and ensure that that was available in terms of the education – the Ministry of Education, as well as the documentation that would have been made available or was supposed to be made available to the education system.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: Mr. Chairman, can you advise what I can do to get your attention?

Mr. Chairman: You can raise your hand but since you have it –

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: It was raised –

Mr. Chairman: But since you have it already, you can take the floor.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: Thank you. Yes because it is raised three times and it was lowered by some electronic interception.

Mr. Chairman: I do apologize, I have no control over that. Sen. Thompson-Ahye, I look forward to your contribution.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: Thank you very much, Sir. I would just start with the preamble to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples where it says that:

“Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests...”

And this feeds into Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People which says:

“1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they otherwise acquired.”

Now, when I looked at the First Peoples’ submission, it seems to be that they are happy with the 25 acres that they have received but what they are not happy about is the method of ownership in that they have a lease rather than outright ownership. But when I looked at the other group where they say:

We are privy to information where 147 acres of land is being purchased by members of the corporate sector in Trinidad and Tobago at \$42 million, yet we as a nation are not in possession of any

land owned by our ancestors. Foreign systems have bound us into individuals with the concept of human rights, equality and diversity, and the United Nations has not recognized any indigenous nation as a member.

So, I get a sense that they are not all satisfied with what has happened with them in terms of the land but I am not sure what exactly they want in terms of the land, if they want to own the land, if they want their community to come together and occupy those lands which they will have a captive group where they can pass on their cultures and so on.

I recall going to Albuquerque in New Mexico and seeing all the indigenous peoples gathered there together. We were able to go and shop and, you know, buy things from them, recognizing that that was their place that you could meet with these indigenous peoples. I remember also going up the Essequibo River in Guyana and meeting with the indigenous people there and chatting with them around the time of CARIFESTA. So, they have a place where they can call their own. Is it that what the indigenous peoples in Trinidad and Tobago are thriving for? Is it that they want a place that they say, “Well, this is mine, this is ours”? And is it that we are saying there is unity in strength and if we are dealing with the First Peoples and it is instructive that they are called the First Peoples, and they are not only the First Peoples as opposed to the other group, you know, is it that we are saying, “Come together” and perhaps what we get from the Ministry is that it was for everybody, that is what is going to happen? What do they want really? Are they going to come together or are they saying, “Well, look we are a group and we are independent of any other group and we want what is due to us as people who are not named First Peoples but are First Peoples”?

Mr. Chairman: Point noted, Senator. I would like to—I mean, I think part of your question was already answered when the representative of the Warao Nation spoke. And I would like to ask the question now, what is the plan moving forward—because when he did speak, he spoke about the DNA can tell you who is Warao but it cannot tell you which Warao they are, so it puts everything in a model. I am asking him: What would their plans be moving forward in support of your question, Senator. Is that okay?

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: That is fine, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Subsequent to that, I would like to have the inputs of both Ministries into Sen. Thompson-Ahye’s line of questioning as it applies to the governance which I saw even coming with applause and nods from both indigenous groups from all here on the screen. I would like to hear their perspective on the UN perspective and maybe after that, we can get some comments from Ms. Haynes who I believe would like to make a comment or two in the matter. The representative from the Warao Nation.

Mr. Shar: Yes, Sir. You see, again, we are falling back into the status of a nation and you keep calling us a

community. We are not a community. We are the original owners of these lands historically. We are the Warao Nation. Perhaps I should read to you in law what is a nation, you see. In law, a nation is defined as:

“A large group of people having a common origin...”

Common origin suggests from creation kind of thing, common language and common tradition. Let us speak of culture here, usually:

“...constituting a political entity...” —and territory.

So, we are defining who we are, this territory belongs to us and that the very Treaty of Amien which had a secret clause, you know, that Spain gave Trinidad and Tobago onto the English or the United Kingdom is not constitutional, it is not part of international law.

International law began some years ago, 1538 to be precise, and I do not want to go into it right now because, you know, I have to look for it and that sort of thing. But what I am saying is that the concept of consent, the concept of agreement speaks to a treaty, and this is what we are talking about “buh yuh running from this and talking about cultural contribution as if Trinidad and Tobago own us”. Our status here, Sir, gives us the status of free persons. We are not under the jurisdiction of this State. That is not—

Mr. Chairman: Point taken, Sir. Can we move on to the next contribution as planned which are the Ministries, Office of the PM and also, the Ministry of—we will start with the Ministry of Sport and Community Development.

Dr. Knights: Thank you. So, the Ministry looks forward—and while we understand the comments by both groups, both nations, we look forward to greater cohesion among all of the representatives of groups of the First Peoples in Trinidad and Tobago. So that notwithstanding the variations and diversity that may exist among the groups, there could be national consensus on the aspirations of the First Peoples Community so that Government’s continued and future investment in the community could reflect a shared vision among the First Peoples representatives. We look forward to the involvement of all First Peoples communities in the design and configuration of, and I would have to say either the model Amerindian village or model Amerindian villages, if that is what is preferred by the community, in keeping with the spirit and the intention of the Government.

It must be noted that the collective involvement in the Arima model village does not negate the possibility of development, promotion and safeguarding of other special sites around the country. All right? And while recognizing the priority and prioritizing collaboration among the representing organizations of the First Peoples, the Ministry is very open to welcoming proposals from the four representing organizations.

The Ministry also recognizes that considerable investment has been made by the State and the Santa

Rosa First Peoples Community towards the development of a model Amerindian village. This 25-acre model Amerindian village is intended to be a cultural and heritage centre for all First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago but also has the potential to be a considerable and prominent site for local and international tourism. Given the potential value of this investment, in the first instance, our precious First Peoples to the economy of Arima as well as to all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry is of the view that considerable care needs to be taken in the building of the village. The Ministry therefore recommends that the construction of the model Amerindian village be placed in the hands of a state enterprise under the guidance of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community and all of the representative organizations of First Peoples. This will ensure that all of the relevant approvals and feasibility studies could be obtained and a clear phased development approach be outlined.

I think those are some of the main concerns. The Ministry is of the view that—and we would want to recommend that the relevant legal Ministry, Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs look into the question of the nature of the title for the land in terms of the lease versus grant situation. I think those would be our main issues. We also would want to recommend the reconvening or the convening of a multidisciplinary, multisectoral committee that has spearheaded a lot of the work that has been done for the First Peoples Community since 1990. We would also want to recommend that we consider having such a committee re-established so that it can both continue the great work that has been done in the past and further work for the recognition and addressing some of the issues of the rights that have been raised by the First Peoples Community. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you so much. I am seeing a few nods while the contribution is going forward but I am also seeing some frowns. Let me get Ms. Belfon in to have a word and I would like a response, a brief response from the indigenous and First Peoples groups before we move on to Ms. Haynes. Just by a nod, Sen. Thompson-Ahye, have your questions been answered?

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: Yes, I do have further questions follow up because it is important to—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, I understand —

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: It is about getting people together.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I understand that part but I just wanted to—based upon your first line of questioning, I would like to have Ms. Belfon have a word. I am seeing—are you raising your hand, Mr. Adonis? No. So, Ms. Belfon, please go ahead.

Ms. Belfon: Thank you, Chair. So, in terms of the contributions that the National Archives can assist or support in this process, I would just like to reiterate that our role then is that support, facilitation and education, and we stand ready to provide that support to all groups. It is and has always been our mandate at the National

Archives to highlight the history of all communities, members of the nation or nations, however they identify themselves. And again, just to reiterate, coming from your previous comment, it is not only the written record but definitely we also do support oral history, documenting of activities, performances, any way that your – anyone's culture is recorded. All of that is part of the work that we do and it is included.

Specifically, I would say that what we can immediately contribute, and I would say as a government, we could support, it is a suggestion, the facilitation of the acquisition or if we would like to say the repatriation of some of our records related to—well, related to everyone, of course, but specifically to our First Peoples that are housed outside of Trinidad and Tobago. As I said, previously, we have made inroads having discussion with the Spanish about it and there may be some overlap even in terms of the British. However, it is a costly exercise and it is difficult, and it has been taking many years for us—it is negotiating and so on. But certainly, I think this is a way that we could contribute as a nation, as a Government, if we facilitate and find ways to ensure that those records are here in Trinidad and Tobago to support, access, research so that the First Peoples then will have the tools and the evidence to make their various claims. So, I am just suggesting that that is one way that we could contribute.

And secondly, in terms of education, I know you raised an issue of whether efforts have been made to highlight the culture and the First Peoples in primary and secondary schools. And again, as I have said in terms of the work that we do, that this is ongoing and it is not work that we have not done on our own. I think Chief Bharath-Hernandez could bear us out; we have done it in collaboration with the First Peoples and we do have a direct and ongoing relationship with the Ministry of Education and with schools directly to ensure that when we promote the records of the archives, promote the history of Trinidad and Tobago, we do, of course, include and promote in our outreach programme the culture, the history and the story of the First Peoples. Yes, I think that is all I have.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks. Can I—I am seeing more nods on the indigenous side—on the First Peoples side. So, I would just pause to go across. Before I entertain any further questions, Sen. Thompson-Ahye, I would just like to, you know, just ask MP Haynes for her contribution on today. MP Haynes.

Ms. Haynes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning again, all. I think our discussions this morning have been particularly fruitful, especially in highlighting the greater need for our sensitization and education. I believe that the remit of this Committee, in terms of promoting equality and diversity, this discussion today showcases how important it is to give the First Peoples group, the nations represented here today, a space to articulate their experiences, their unique place in our history and also in crafting the space in our future as Trinidad and Tobago.

I noted in the submission from the Warao Nation that there was a request for the creation of a communication centre which would improve the sensitization space. So, in terms of my question, which will

be directed to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, I would be looking at, in terms of as we focus on Government allocation and Government intervention, how closely are our interventions linked with the request of the First Peoples of the various nations and are we looking at making targeted interventions. I also note the contribution of Ms. Belfon and I think that the work that is being done there is exceptional but if it is kept in a private space or the access is only to those with a particular interest, it will not benefit the nation as a whole. So, I think the collaboration between the Ministry of Education as well as the nations represented here would lead us to much better space as we go forward.

So, I guess my question would be: How closely are we collaborating? Are the submissions from the Warao Nation in terms of communication centres and spaces for sensitization of their spaces in our country's history and future, how have they been taken on board and are there any challenges that are being faced by the Ministry at this time in terms of this implementation? Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I believe the floor is open to you, the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, on this.

Dr. Knights: Thank you, Chairman. The Ministry of Sport and Community Development works very closely with all of the First Peoples groups, all the groups that represent the First Peoples. And over the years, the requests that have been fulfilled and are still being fulfilled through annual subventions, especially through the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community, are exactly what they would have asked for. In terms of the Warao Nation, there are no written submissions to the Ministry from the nation in terms of what it wants. There were lots of discussions and conversations, but we are still awaiting written submissions that we could action, take to Cabinet and get approval as would have been the case with the Santa Rosa First Peoples. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Ms. Haynes: Just one quick follow up, Mr. Chairman, please.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Haynes: With respect to the absence of any written submission, I think we can all acknowledge that bureaucracy sometimes gets in the way of our progress and is there any space then within the Ministry to assist persons in getting these written submissions, translating the conversation into what is needed by the Ministry? Because, I mean, if anybody has a public sector background, you would be aware that this is a significant barrier sometimes in getting—just crossing the t's and dotting the i's. So, I mean, I would like just to use this space to advocate to maybe some assistance in getting the written submissions done and I think we will see progress in that regard, especially if that is just the line that needs to be crossed.

Mr. Chairman: Even the written submissions as it applies, getting the assistance there for the Warao Nation on their behalf, it is important. Can I get—he has his hand up, not virtually, but he has had his hand up. Let me

ask Mr. Bharath-Hernandez for his comments on the topic.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, once again. I want to answer a few questions. I think it was the Senator—I cannot remember the name now, that asked about if we were satisfied with the land that we got. We were not satisfied with the land but we took it because we felt it was a start. We were too long in the wilderness wanting to do something so we took it because it was a start.

Let me quickly say, Mr. Basdeo Panday, when he was Prime Minister, visited our centre where we were dealing with the subject of land, I think it was on a special day. And he leaned to us and he asked us, “How much land you all are looking for”? And I said, “Four hundred acres”. And he jumped from his chair and he said, “Why do you all not take the whole northern range”? You see, because he did not understand the land and indigenous peoples. We were not going to develop 400 acres of land but we wanted forest because the forest plays an integral role in the culture of the First Peoples. That is a long discussion, we do not have time to go more on it.

Anyway, on the issue of education, we lobbied in one of the committees that the school curriculum should include more on the First Peoples and that was done. As a result, we have students at all levels visiting our centre for lectures, for seeing the artefacts, for interacting with them, so that they can be educated on the First Peoples for their school curriculum work. So that was done.

The coming together of the First Peoples groups, as I said before and I would like to reiterate, there are certain issues we see eye to eye on, there are certain issues we do not and the coming together will be, if you insist on that, like forced assimilation which the United Nations clearly talks about. It was forced assimilation that the colonials did to First Peoples that have them in the state that they are today and no one should ask us to come together because we see things differently and we cannot get along on certain things. If you look at my brother there, Mr. Shar, who I have a lot of respect for, he is on a different agenda to Santa Rosa’s agenda.

11.40 a.m.

Santa Rosa’s agenda is to preserve our culture in this space and in the scene that we are of today. He is on a different—I am not saying he is wrong. I am not saying he is wrong with what he is projecting, but his focus is on something different. As a result, our coming together will not take us forward. Let us deal with each other on a case-by-case basis. I thank you at this time.

Mr. Chairman: Points noted. But I believe in the wider concept of consultation, everyone’s point of view, separately and together, must be taken into consideration as for the record.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: If I may?

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: I just want to stress just to say that originally the land was, yes, for First Peoples.

That was a Cabinet decision. That was subsequently corrected by another Cabinet decision which said that the lands of the 25 acres were specifically for use by the Santa Rosa First Peoples community.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: If I may?

Mr. Chairman: Sen. Ahye, followed by Mr. Forde.

Mrs. Thompson-Ahye: If I may, it seems to me, having regard to all what the Ministry officials say that they want to do, the collaboration and all of that, I think there is need also, what they did not mention, is mediation. Somebody needs to have some mediating role between or among the groups. I do not know how many groups there are.

But I was very excited when you talked about the potential for culture. Because there is a lot. I travel a lot and I am able to go to countries. You go to Cayman Islands and they tell you and you go and you see what is happening, you know, and you have an exposition and you spend money and you are able to see and enjoy the culture. That is not easily available here. So, I would like to see collaboration among all the groupings and also, you know, among other people in this part of the world.

I do not know if the First Peoples are aware – when I say, I mean, all of the people – that Belize, last year, swore in as the country's first female and third Governor General Froyla Tzalam, an indigenous woman. And the Acting Chief Justice for about a year now, and she is now, I think I heard this week they have moved her to the Court of Appeal, is also an indigenous woman. So why can you not meet with the people in Belize as well and other people in the Caribbean and see what, putting all your heads together, we can come up with? Because, I really believe unity is strength you know, and there is a lot that you can gain from hearing about the progress of other people. So that would certainly be my recommendation.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Senator. I would like to recognize two people who I would allow to contribute. Firstly, we go to member Forde and then we go to Mr. Adonis directly after.

Mr. Forde: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two things, first to the Ministry, I would like to know basically what created the decision and the recommendation by the Ministry to recommend a 30-year lease, one, and also, why 25 acres of land? Right? So I would like to get a feedback from the Ministry. And I would also like to get from Chief Bharath-Hernandez who just mentioned that when hon. Prime Minister Basdeo Panday sometime between 1995 and 2001, asked him how many acres he needed, he said 400. In 2022, does that figure still stand? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Adonis, please.

Mr. Adonis: [*Indigenous language spoken*] Greetings in the Kariña way. Mr. Chairman, and to all who are taking part in this special venture today, what I believe is escaping the mind of a lot of people is that they do not realize that our people, the Indigenous people, it is not just like an ordinary Best Village group, or a cultural group. We have great respect for our Warao brothers and sisters.

But I want the Committee to understand that we have differences in our spiritual practices, differences in our way we do medicine, differences in a lot of our ways. So, of course, we can get together on a national level in a day of recognition or something like that where we portray or display all of our arts and crafts, and so on. But, in our grouping, in our day-to-day life and dealing, we have differences. And I am sure that the Warao people would bear me out on that. So, I want the other group to understand that we are dealing with spirituality. We are dealing with the way of curing our people, with the way we practise our way of preparing food. There are quite a lot of differences within our people. There is unity with us as indigenous people, whereby we are trying for people to recognize that we are asking to be more recognized within the bigger whole, Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Adonis. But at the same time I would like you to understand the country which we live in, Trinidad and Tobago, where we have every creed and race has an equal place. So in this whole landscape of cultures in Trinidad and Tobago, tolerance and respect is due to all faiths and all denominations. I would like to just remind you that in our multicultural society, we have members of different faiths who have to have their meats a certain way. There are members of our faiths who pray at different manners, which is in total, how should I put it, non-agreeable terms as other communities, and we do share a space.

So, points taken. Everything that you said has been noted and the spiritual aspects and the religious aspects, based upon the sharing of spaces, obviously, will have to be taken into consideration.

Can I have—I am keeping the floor open to anyone who would like to virtually raise their hand at this point? I am seeing Thomas Isaac, I believe.

Mr. Forde: Mr. Chairman, my question has not been considered as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Isaac: Thomas Isaac; am I addressing you now, Thomas Isaac?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you are.

Mr. Isaac: Right. I know we are coming to the end of the discussion and I would just like to bring two, perhaps, not really new perspectives, but certainly underlying very many other things, certainly as Ricardo has been saying. The first is that, I want to commend the Government and the Ministry and agencies for convening this

meeting. I think it is a tremendous initiative and at a very appropriate time in history.

Up to the end of the 20th Century, civilization was essentially Eurocentric. We demonized other cultures, and so on. The 21st Century, what we normally refer to as the postmodern times, is a radically different time, in the context of a globalization process. And now we recognize the value of every civilization; those that are past, those that are present, those that are disappearing. And what people like Christo Adonis and Chief Ricardo are involved in, is the preservation of the little that has been left of our Aboriginal culture, a culture that precedes Western European cultures and other people's cultures by centuries, if not millennia. Right? We are trying to retrieve that and we are trying to incorporate it in our own cultural totality here in Trinidad and Tobago. And that has significant intellectual and cultural advantages and benefits. And I think that is the first point I would want to emphasize.

And the next one is that it strikes me that, you know, when you look at the Amerindian people, at the First Peoples, say, in the Arima area where I belong, they are not asking for anything individually. They are like every citizen conducting their affairs, going to their works, looking after their families, establishing their homes, and so on. So it is not at the individual level that people are looking for benefits and handouts, and so on. I think the trust is a communal trust. It is the community that speaks — [*Technical difficulties*] — and to my mind this will only be fully actualized when we really have our Amerindian village.

The Amerindian village will bring tremendous benefits. It would provide, first of all a certain tangibility about a village. A lot of the things we are talking about sound sort of airy-fairy and idealistic. But it is the Amerindian village that will give tangibility to this project. This will be a place, a work site for people. There will be a sense of belonging. There will be the opportunity to restore something that has disappeared from our society for so very long. It will be an income earner. People have emphasized the educational benefits of it. It is going to be a pedagogical centre, a spot for local tourism and a spot for international tourism. And people like Adonis are talking about the wildlife restoration and their agricultural pursuits. And we are talking now of feeding ourselves, of food security.

A lot of the original foods are virtually lost in this country. I do not remember when last I saw a cassava bread anywhere, you know. And I grew up in the 1950s and '60s with things like that. So, when you look at the project that the Arima community is involved in, it is a really very significant project to the entire national community. And I would want to see, before the passing of people like Christo and Ricardo, I would want to see the realization of that project; that village in Arima, where school children will be coming in busloads day after day to be educated; where tourists will be leaving the cruise ships and coming up to witness what is happening here.

One of the things about South America is that you have to go into the remote areas to see is the Amerindian villages. We are 15 minutes from Piarco and just one hour from Port of Spain, and that will be

available. The actual members of the team will be involved in that project in a very direct way. And I think that is what I would want to emphasize, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Issac. Your words have been taken note of and you have actually started our windup process by building up all those points on such a wide and very summative point of view.

There is one last hand up, and before we go into closing, I would like to hear from the Professor.

Prof. Antione: Thank you. Well, I am glad I came after the last two speakers, Adonis and the delegate, because I just wanted to reiterate. So, I will tie in with Mr. Forde's, again, useful question about why not 400 acres, and why 25 acres. And although Chief said he did not have time go into the religion and, so on, it is actually key, when I spoke earlier about the religious and spiritual beliefs that ground, let us say, their approach to the environment. That is why he would want 400 acres, to want to preserve the forest and so, the environment, and I mentioned climate change in today's context, for the nation. So it is not just to have – not to cut down the trees and build a house. No, that is not what it is. So, I think it is important for us to understand that the entitlements and the rights that exist under law, international law, and some people have spoken of Belize and so on, is also connected to those religious and spiritual and cultural beliefs, which are tied to the land.

So when we ask, the practical thing, how much land, which I am glad we have gotten to this point, you can understand it is not just 25 acres, and so on. I would like us to keep that in mind. And again, thank you so much for this meeting, which has been very helpful.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks, Professor. Seeing that we have no more hands up, I would just like to make a round of summation and invite brief closing comments. Firstly, from Ms. Donna-Mae of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, then followed by Ms. Belfon of the Office of the Prime Minister, Archives and Communication. And lastly we will have Mr. Bharath, followed by the representative of the Grand Chief of the Warao Nation. Ms. Donna-Mae.

Dr. Knights: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to your team for having this very important discussion. Just to respond to a question raised by MP Forde. It would have been in 2011, where the Government of Trinidad and Tobago agreed to the 25-acre parcel of land that was at that time accepted by the Santa Rosa First Peoples.

In terms of the lease, Cabinet would have mandated the Attorney General's Office to look into the terms of reference that they called it at the time, and that resulted in the provision of a 30-year renewable lease. All right? So just to respond to that.

In terms of our closing comments, the Ministry would have identified what we felt would be the critical areas, in terms of the relationship. We understand the issues. As Chief Bharath would have said, there are

areas of commonality and agreement. And I am sure we would want to capitalize on those areas and recognize the uniqueness and the differences among them as well. But there is value in, wherever possible, taking advantage of those areas of commonality. And I am sure it happens now, in terms of the different celebrations that we have in August and October, et cetera.

We definitely want to see the model Amerindian village completed and, to reiterate our recommendation that it be placed in the hands of a state enterprise under the guidance of Chief Bharath, and also, of course, the background documents that we already have from Mr. Balkaransingh and Dowlath.

And, certainly in terms of looking at going forward, we take onboard MP Haynes' comments in terms of whatever support can be provided to the Warao Nation, in terms of that documentation of the things that they would want to go to Cabinet for consideration, and finally to review that interagency multi-sectoral approach to furthering the goals of the First Peoples. And I think in saying furthering those goals, I would have to say really furthering the goals of Trinidad and Tobago, as we recognize, honour, celebrate our First Peoples. And through that committee, we can do that in a most comprehensive manner. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Belfon, open to you.

Ms. Belfon: Thank you, Chair. As others have said, this has certainly been a very fruitful discussion and I do appreciate our involvement here and being invited to the table. I wish to, again, stress that we are open and available to provide whatever support and facilitate whatever is needed, in terms of research, information and assistance in sensitizing and supporting the educational outreach for the First Peoples; all groups, or the current two that we have on board, or any others which may come forward.

And just to add, in terms of my suggestions before, certainly as a national archive we would really appreciate to have the original records from some of our former colonial powers available locally and we will continue our efforts as much as possible to ensure that it is here to facilitate and make easy access to all researchers and persons willing to use this record to support the various claims and, of course, to educate and sensitize people.

Our role, as I continue to say, is always, always to ensure the diverse cultures of Trinidad and Tobago are well represented in our collection. So, thank you for having us.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks. Mr. Bharath, Chief President of the Santa Rosa First Peoples community, words of summation.

Mr. Bharath-Hernandez: Thank you. Before I really say my last words, I want to say to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development that your recommendation for a state agency, before you recommend, we would like to have further discussion to know exactly what will be the role of that agency and guidance from us.

Because we do not want anything that will usurp our going forward with the Santa Rosa people heavily involved, as outlined by the UN Declaration.

Having said that, my closing words. In all that we have identified, meaningful recognition and understanding of the unique and inherent rights of our indigenous peoples is of paramount importance for the survival of the heritage and culture of our First Peoples.

If steps are not taken to cement the proposed actions, all our collective efforts will be in vain. We therefore call for national policy to be implemented in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and following best practice from a country such as Canada who has made progress with their First Peoples. I thank you and hope for the good outcome of this session.

Mr. Chairman: Many thanks. Can I get closing remarks from the representatives of the Grand Chief of the Warao Nation?

Mr. Shar: Yes, Sir. I just want to read the solemn proclamation.

Trinidad and Tobago solemnly proclaims the following United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As a standard of achievement to be pursued, it is further of partnership and mutual respect.

Now, Article 1:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights.”

Now, this implies in law that the United Nations Declaration, which is not ratified by the Government, or by the State, sorry, is a sort of a travesty. I mean, it is 15 years this document has been before the Government, or before the State. Is it that the State does not want to recognize us because they want to claim our lands unlawfully and continue to do so? That is just one aspect of it, Sir.

Now, what I want to say here is that, to me, this Parliamentary Joint Select Committee, as well as I appreciate the views, and so on, of the parties involved, right, especially you, Sir, in the manner in which you conducted this. Right? If we do not recognize the law or the laws that govern the rights of indigenous people, then we have been known before the entire world, before the United Nations, as a lawless society. And all this song and dance “all yuh come here tuh gih we,” with the cultural recognition and all this kind of thing; culture is something that we have a right to preserve ourselves. The law gives us that right. If we wish to share, then so be it. But you cannot come and force us to do this. And this is what the attempt of this committee is doing.

Mr. Chairman: “Umm”, Mr. —

Mr. Shar: They said it has come to deal with human rights and it has not done that. They said okay you will give us something at the end to look at it, now it is something else. So then, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Representative from the Warao Nation, your points are noted. However, I think you have — there was a certain meat of the discussion that we had moved away from that thinking and we had — recommendations were made and definitely will continue to be made for conversation. And in addition to conversation, moving forward, from all the representatives who mentioned that — and we recognize the role of the indigenous. We understand whom the indigenous are, and all that have come forward is dialogue to ensure that we can all move forward for the satisfaction and for the achieving of the goals of this committee.

I would have liked your summation to be a little more positive in recognizing the conversation this morning. So, I am giving you a few more moments to go at it and I keep the floor open to you.

Mr. Shar: Thank you, Sir. Sir, recognition is a legal term. It is defined according to *Black’s Law Dictionary*, as:

1. The authority to confirm an action.

And we are using recognition outside on the law here.

2. Formal admission that a person or entity has a particular status.

This status is not being recognized at all here.

3. A nation’s act formerly acknowledging the existence of another nation or national government.

4. International law, official action by a country, acknowledging expressly or by implication is de facto or de jure the existence of a government or country or the situation such as a change of territorial sovereignty.

That is one.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Shar: Just a minute, Sir.

Mr. Shar: Ratification —

Mr. Chairman: You are going into meat of matters that we have — this is the end of the meeting and we have passed that position. All your points have been taken into consideration and we do understand what you are saying and I would like to thank you for your presence and contribution today, Sir.

I would like to thank all officials and contributors to today’s proceedings; to the Committee members who have participated remotely for this virtual hearing. I would like to thank the staff of the Office of the

Parliament for your procedural and logistical support and the viewing and listening audience.

I would just like to make one last note here. The Committee recently presented to Parliament the “Second Report on the Human Rights of the Socially Displaced Persons in Trinidad and Tobago with specific focus on their treatment and relocation from Port of Spain to public spaces”. The Committee did some good work and should the public wish to see the Committee’s findings and recommendations, the report is available on the Parliament’s website at [www. ttparliament.org](http://www.ttparliament.org).

I now declare this meeting ended and it is now adjourned. Many thanks to all.

12.06 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

APPENDIX IV

A Proposal on the Status and Development of the Santa Rosa First Peoples of Trinidad & Tobago

Hon. Prime Minister,

The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community which is the representative of the Indigenous Amerindians (referred to today as the First Peoples) of Trinidad and Tobago, as recognized by the Government through a Cabinet decision in 1990, finds it necessary to address you on some urgent and important issues in relation to our First Peoples.

Over the years, our First Peoples have made significant progress, through decisive action by successive governments. The most recent demonstration of the government working with the First Peoples was the reinterment of the indigenous human remains at the Red House site. The comments from both national and international sources indicate that Trinidad and Tobago have set a precedent in treating with the indigenous peoples and their issues as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Having built a critical mass of awareness among our First Peoples and in the national community of the presence and contribution of our First Peoples, it is necessary that we continue to keep the momentum, and ensure that this aspect of our culture enjoys a certain level of security and acceptance in the national community. If we allow ourselves to rest on these laurels and fail to build on what we have achieved, we will become stagnant and all our gains will come to nought.

In order to prevent such a catastrophe, we feel that the government must continue to take some decisions that will continue to empower the Community and lead to the full restoration of our culture.

I think it is important to bring to your attention the decisions of other countries in treating with their indigenous peoples.

There was a time when the Aboriginal People of Australia were despised and looked down upon as “worthless sub-human individuals”. We see now that a public apology was made by the Prime Minister of Australia to the Aboriginal peoples, and the Government has been working to bring them to a place of equality in the society. A similar situation existed in Canada, and the Government has also issued an apology to the indigenous peoples. In addition, in certain Cities in Canada, leaders of meetings and other events, are acknowledging that the land on which the City stands, is the original property of the First Nations.



An apology was also made by the VATICAN, and we intend to pursue this “Apology” with the Catholic Church, as to how it can help the First Peoples in advancing our Cause.

Venezuela has the protection of the Indigenous Peoples in its Constitution. Recently, we met with the Ambassador of Chile, and the government of that country is in the process of revising that country's Constitution to include the rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

Against this Background, these are some of the Issues for which we seek urgent attention at this time:

1. Governance and Representation
2. Public Space of Recognition
3. Land
4. Government Assistance for the establishment of Phase 1 of the First Peoples Heritage Village
5. National Holiday
6. Legislation
7. Protocol
8. Research and Compilation of the History and status of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago
9. National Award Category
10. Spirituality
11. Restoration of Language
12. Reparation

As stated previously, successive governments have supported Community in building ongoing public awareness on the culture and traditions of the First Peoples and our contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. Acknowledging this support, the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community outlines several aspects of the further recognition due to the First Peoples in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Preamble of the UNDRIP affirms that "indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such". It further recognizes "the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their culture, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources".

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is a Signatory to this Resolution 61/295 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – adopted 7th Plenary Meeting on 13th September, 2007.

The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community therefore calls on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to address the following issues which are in line with the provisions of the UNDRIP.

1. GOVERNANCE AND REPRESENTATION

With regard to governance, the UNDRIP in Article 4 states that "indigenous Peoples in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions". Articles 18 and 23 are even clearer, stating "the right to participation in decision-making on matters that would affect their rights; and the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, administer such programmes through their own institutions".

*Within the current context of governance, the SRFP therefore requests an Independent Seat at the level of local government in the Borough of Arima, the Regional Corporations of Sangre Grande and Tunapuna/Piarco; and the Cities of San Fernando and Port of Spain. Although Indigenous/First Peoples are resident throughout

Trinidad, our presence is more concentrated in these areas. Such action will not only serve to address the needs of the Indigenous/First Peoples, but will inspire a sense of pride and belonging.

2. PUBLIC SPACE OF RECOGNITION

It was F.E.M. Hosein, a former Mayor of Arima in the 1930's who declared Arima as "The High Capital of the "Indios/(Caribs)". We call for this distinction and national title of the Santa Rosa Park in Arima as the Home of the First Peoples; in similar manner as "China Town" has that honour in Port of Spain, to the pride of the Chinese. Similar pride will be felt by all Indigenous/First Peoples in Trinidad.

3. LAND ACQUISITION

Access to land is an imperative for Indigenous/First Peoples to exercise their rights as outlined in Article 25 which states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal resources". Access to land is also closely connected with Indigenous Peoples right to maintain the use of traditional medicines.

The Community is very much appreciative of the twenty-five acres of land made available for the Establishment of the First Peoples Heritage Village. However, this is done under a lease agreement. The issue of the lease has to be further discussed towards full ownership by the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community.

I also bring to your attention that the twenty-five acres of land referred to is mostly mountainous and cannot accommodate the agricultural aspects of the Village.

The adjoining land now known as "CLICO" lands was originally known as part of Mausica Lands. The First Peoples have been occupying this land for over forty years and has started the RPO process.

4. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PHASE 1 OF THE FIRST PEOPLES HERITAGE VILLAGE

Government has returned 25 acres of land to the Indigenous/First Peoples, on which it is proposed to establish a First Peoples Heritage Village. This Village is to be a physical space that is continuously used for the regeneration of Knowledge, and re-establishment of First People's values. The goal of the Village is to conserve, preserve and sustain the cultural legacies of the peoples of the First Peoples of Trinidad. Initial funding is required from Government to complete the first Phase of the project.

*There is need to take another look at the amount of land made available to the Indigenous/First Peoples. We are now realizing that the twenty-five (25) acres leased for development is limited. We must have access to areas where forest material could be gathered for our craft, building and medicinal needs, but these forest areas are destroyed through increased quarrying.

The issue of returning land to the First Peoples should not be in the form of a Lease, rather it should be a Grant as First Peoples have an inherent right to their land as the original inhabitants. In addition, the Lease arrangement is proving to be an impediment to our fund raising strategies, as it does not meet the sustainability requirements of prospective investors.

5. NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN HONOUR OF THE FIRST PEOPLES

In 2017 we requested a "One-Off" Public Holiday for the First Peoples, to bring awareness to the Nation, which it did. We thought we would continue to celebrate the Day of Recognition annually, with the hope that the recognition would be strengthened, but we are experiencing the opposite. We gather to observe the Day, with half of our people being unable to attend, because it is a work day, and with Officials and the wider public not

being part of the event. We wonder if this is the Recognition that we need to advance our cause. As a result, we are tempted to reconsider our position and ask for a public holiday, or some other tangible official action that would attract the attention of the Nation. Such action would serve to build unity among all Indigenous/First Peoples in our march towards visibility and meaningful recognition.

6. LEGISLATION

The Provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples need to be brought under National Law.

7. PROTOCOL

*Recognition of the Indigenous/First Peoples as the oldest sector of the population not only in word but in facilitating the practice of our inherent rights. The Chief is the Head of the Community, and that Office is to be recognized as such in the Protocols of the State. On many occasions, the Chief and Queen of the Community are invited to official functions and are not recognized.

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.

9. NATIONAL AWARD CATEGORY

*Since Independence there have been changes in the system of National Awards. It is noteworthy that the country's highest Award features the headdress of an Indigenous Chief. The next step is for a National Award in the name of the Indigenous/First Peoples.

10. SPIRITUALITY

The First Peoples right to practice our spirituality, and maintain traditional diets, is compromised by laws of the land such as "smoking in public spaces", the "close season" for certain forest animals, and access to water ways. "Smoke" and "Water" are part of the rituals of the indigenous peoples as we practice our spirituality. The traditional meat for the diet of the indigenous/first peoples, and access to water ways must be available on an ongoing basis. There must be special provisions in the laws of the land to permit such practices even if confined to our own lands.

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.

12. REPARATION

In July 2013, at its 34th Meeting in Trinidad, CARICOM made a call for Reparations for Native Genocide and African Enslavement, and such rights as outlined are in themselves forms of Reparations at the national level.

The acknowledgement of the ownership of the land by the Indigenous/First Peoples would be another significant act of Reparations.

-
- ⁱ Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Factsheet- Who are indigenous peoples. Accessed: March 16, 2022. Available: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf
- ⁱⁱ Ibid
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid
- ^{iv} Francioni, F. (2004). Beyond State Sovereignty: The Protection of Cultural Heritage as a Shared Interest of Humanity. Michigan Journal of International Law, 25 (4). Accessed: March 16, 2022. Available: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1291&context=mjil>
- ^v Ibid
- ^{vi} United Nations. United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Accessed: March 17, 2022. Available: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- ^{vii} Swiderska, K. Protecting indigenous cultures is crucial for saving the world's biodiversity. International Institute for Environment and Development. February 18, 2020. Accessed: March 23, 2022. Available: <https://www.iied.org/protecting-indigenous-cultures-crucial-for-saving-worlds-biodiversity#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20have%20conserved%20biodiversity,livestock%20breeds%20and%20unique%20landscapes.>
- ^{viii} Ibid
- ^{ix} United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Accessed: March 17, 2022. Available: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>
- ^x United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Living Heritage and Indigenous Peoples. Accessed March 17, 2022. Available: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/indigenous-peoples>
- ^{xi} United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs. Indigenous Peoples- Culture. Accessed March 17, 2022. Available: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/culture.html>
- ^{xii} National Library and Information System Authority. First People's Presence in Trinidad and Tobago. Accessed May 06, 2022. Available: <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Resources/Subject-Guide/First-Peoples>
- ^{xiii} Boomert, A. (2016). The Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. From The First Settlers Until Today. Sidestone Press, Leiden. Accessed: March 23, 2022.
- ^{xiv} Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Hansard of the House of Representatives 17th Sitting, Fifth Session, 11th Parliament. Accessed: March 23, 2022. Available: <http://190.213.84.147:8081/PapersLaidViewer/TempFiles/National%20Policy%20on%20Culture%20and%20the%20Arts.pdf>
- ^{xv} Forte, M, C. 1999. Reviving Caribs: Recognition, Patronage and Ceremonial Indigeneity in Trinidad and Tobago. Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine. Accessed September 19, 2022: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/reviving-caribs-recognition-patronage-and-ceremonial>
- ^{xvi} Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Social Sector Investment Programme 2022. Accessed September 19, 2022: <https://www.finance.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Social-Sector-Investment-Programme-2022.pdf>
- ^{xvii} Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. What are human rights? Accessed September 21, 2022: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>
- ^{xviii} Trinidad and Tobago Gazette No. 158 of 2020 dated September 9, 2020. Accessed September 20, 2022: <http://news.gov.tt/sites/default/files/E-Gazette/Gazette%202020/Gazettes/Gazette%20No.%20158%20of%202020.pdf>
- ^{xix} Export Centres Company Ltd, About Us. Accessed September 20, 2022: <https://exportcentrestt.com/about-us/>
- ^{xx} Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Seventeenth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Accessed September 20, 2022: <https://www.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/p11-s4-J-20190604-PAEC-R17.pdf>
- ^{xxi} Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Miscellaneous Provisions (Local Government) Act, 2022. Accessed September 20, 2022: <https://www.ttparliament.org/publication/the-miscellaneous-provisions-local-government-act-2022/>
- ^{xxii} Ministry of Finance. Tag: Public Sector Investment Programme. Accessed September 21, 2022: <https://www.finance.gov.tt/tag/public-sector-investment-programme/>
- ^{xxiii} Eden, C. and Ackermann, F. (1998) Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management. London: Sage Publications.