



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Sport and Community Development

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February 08, 2023

Ms. Khisha Peterkin

Secretary to the Committee

Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Office of the Parliament

Parliamentary Complex, Cabildo Building

St. Vincent Street

PORT OF SPAIN

Dear **Ms. Peterkin**,

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

Reference is made to your letter on the captioned subject dated *January 18, 2023*.

In this regard, with respect to your request to submit to the Committee a written response to the recommendations/ comments directed to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, please find attached the requested response. In addition, an electronic copy will be forwarded to coth@tpparliament.org.

Should you require additional information please feel free to contact *Office of the Permanent Secretary*, at Telephone Number 625-6088 exts. 5110/5112 or via email at ps.secretariat@mscd.gov.tt.

Yours sincerely

A Edwards

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Sport and Community Development

Attch.



MINISTRY OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN
RIGHTS, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY
ON
*THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (FIRST PEOPLES) OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO*

FEBRUARY 08, 2023

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity was established by Standing Order 106 and 96 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively 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; and*
- 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.*

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.

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

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

The Committee made recommendations/ comments related to the information provided.

On this basis, this response will seek to address the recommendations/ comments currently under the responsibility of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development.

B. THE MINISTRY OF THE SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With effect from August 28, 2020, the portfolio of the Ministry formerly known as the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was adjusted with the transfer of several departments and agencies to the following Ministries: - Ministry of Sport and Community Development and the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. The Ministry of Sport and Community Development, now has responsibility for the administration and business of the Departments of Government as specified in the Schedule as outlined below¹:

SCHEDULE

Sport	Business and Departments of Government
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-National Governing Bodies/Sport Serving Associations-National Sport Policy-Physical Education, Recreation and Sport-Adult-Sports and Multi-Purpose Facilities-Total Participation and High Performance Sports
	Community Development:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Best Village-Community Action for Revival and Empowerment-Community Centres/Civic Centres-Community Development-Community Development Fund-Community Development Policy and Monitoring-Community Education (Skills Training) Programme-Community Mediation-Entrepreneurship at the Community Level-Management of Issues relating to First Peoples-Regional Complexes-Transformation and Development Centres
	<i>Statutory Boards and other Bodies:</i>
	National Association of Village and Community Councils
	Trinidad and Tobago Anti-Doping Organisation
	Trinidad and Tobago Boxing Board of Control
	Village Councils
	<i>Wholly Owned Enterprises:</i>
	Export Centres Company Limited
	National Commission for Self Help Limited
	The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT)

¹The Trinidad and Tobago Gazette No. 158, Vol. 59 dated Wednesday September 9, 2020, outlines the appointment of Ministers and the Portfolios of same to the various Ministries.

Through its various Departments and State agencies, the Ministry of Sport and Community Development seeks to build our nation's human capital through the development of athletic talent and community life in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry has recognised the recommendations/ comments provided by the Committee in the Fourth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity.

- 1. Government Financial Support to Indigenous/First Peoples Groups**
- 2. Development of Indigenous/First Peoples' Craft Production**
- 3. Recording Indigenous/ First Peoples' Heritage**
- 4. Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village**
- 5. Community Economic Development**
- 6. Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the SRFPC**
- 7. State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC.**

C. RECOMMENDATIONS/ COMMENTS OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

1. Government Financial Support to Indigenous/First Peoples Groups

Recommendations:

I. 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.

The Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD) has engaged the Moruga First Peoples (MFP) to discuss projects undertaken by this group which could be eligible for funding. These include: the Moruga Heritage Day and Food Festival; First Peoples Ceremonies to be held in Princes Town, San Fernando, Moruga and Siparia; White Land World Indigenous Day Celebration; National Cocoa and Chocolate Festival; St. Peter's Festival Moruga; and the Moruga Museum tenth-year Anniversary and book launch of their Works and Accomplishments of the Moruga Museum. Similarly, the MSCD also sought to engage the Partners For First Peoples Development (PFFPD) to discuss the projects being undertaken by the group. In addition, the MSCD has approached the National Archives on behalf of the Moruga First Peoples and the Ministry is also assisting with administration support such as advice on Registration as an NGO.

2. Development of Indigenous/ First Peoples Craft Production

Recommendations:

II. 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.

The MSCD is preparing to undertake a National Handicraft Sector Policy and Master Plan (NHSPTT). As part of the evidence gathering towards crafting the NHSPTT, the Ministry will begin with an Artisan Census with a view to understanding the breadth, diversity, nuances and aspirations of the Sector. For example, some areas of the sector wish to mass produce for export and others wish to specialise in unique pieces. The Handicraft Sector Policy will map out a pathway for the growth and development of the sector, including the unique position of the First Peoples. The ECCL will play a significant role in the building of the capacity of the First Peoples Groups in keeping with its mandate. The ECCL is also a partner in the work towards developing the NHSPTT.

Beyond this medium term activity, in keeping with its mandate, the ECCL is able to ensure in the short term, appropriate overtures are made to the First Peoples Groups as necessary.

3. Recording Indigenous/First Peoples' Heritage

Recommendations:

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

The MSCD stands ready to partner with the MTCA to collect and record accounts of members of the Indigenous / First Peoples communities for inclusion in the planned Cultural Heritage Library.

4. Development of the First Peoples Heritage Village

Recommendations:

IV. 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.

Background:

The Santa Rosa First Peoples Community was provided with 25-acres of state land located at 1 1/4 MM Blanchisseuse Road, Arima for the specific purpose of the establishment of a Model Amerindian Village comprising living quarters, farming, cassava processing, craft production, communal spaces/facilities, recreational spaces, visitor centre and exhibition space, spaces for spiritual and traditional ceremonies and performances, workshops, reserved forested areas (for conservation of traditional plant and animal life).

Feasibility Study & Master Plan:

In Fiscal 2021-2022, several stakeholder meetings were held with the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community (SRFPC), Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCDD) and Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) to determine the needs of the SRFPC and the areas where the Ministries would be able to provide assistance. The major outcome of these meetings was the mandatory requirement for the development of a Master Plan. The key activity for this Master Plan involved the drafting of a Terms of Reference for the Conduct of a Feasibility Study for the Establishment of a Traditional Village and Living Museum for the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community. MSCD was tasked with this responsibility and a Draft Terms of Reference for the Feasibility Study was completed in August 20, 2021.

However, due to several areas of uncertainties expressed by the SRFPC, the tender process for the Feasibility Study was significantly delayed. During a site visit held on July 08, 2022 between members of the SRFPC, MPD and MSCD, those uncertainties were resolved and the recommendation for the Feasibility Study and resultant Master Plan was again determined to be mandatory. As such, the procurement process for the Conduct of a Feasibility Study commenced in the last quarter of Fiscal 2022. From MSCD's pre-qualification list of contractors/suppliers, several suitably qualified proponents were invited to submit Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for this project. A site visit with the proponents was conducted on Thursday July 28, 2022. A deadline date of Friday August 05, 2022 was given

for submission of Queries / Requests for Additional Information. The closing date of the Tender was Friday August 12, 2022 at 1:30pm.

Unfortunately, several irregularities were identified in the submissions made by the proponents during the evaluation process. The irregularities ranged from non-submission of mandatory documents, submission of documents with expired dates and exorbitant proposed contract sums and it was decided that the Tender Process for the Feasibility Study should be redone. The retendering process is scheduled to be conducted within the second quarter of Fiscal 2023.

On Wednesday January 18, 2023, the SRFPC invited senior officials from the MSCD and MPD to a site visit where the officials from the “Habitat for Humanity” Trinidad and Tobago, were engaged in providing volunteer assistance to the SRFPC for a water harvesting project. At that meeting it was revealed that the Member of Parliament for that area had been instrumental in getting the Habitat for Humanity organization to render assistance to the SRFPC wherever possible. In addition to the water harvesting project, Habitat for Humanity has also pledged support for development of the afore-mentioned Master Plan, assistance with the construction of a reinforced concrete retaining wall and construction of a Green House at the site for the SRFPC. To properly organize these projects, it was agreed that a steering committee, with representatives from the SRFPC, MSCD, MPD and the Habitat for Humanity organization shall be formed as soon as possible. Invitations for the inaugural meeting have been sent out.

V. 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.

In Fiscal 2021-2022 several civil/infrastructure work activities were to be undertaken at the site by the MSCD. The works were: road repairs and improvement works, clearance of landslips and construction of slope stabilization systems. These works were approved by MSCD and the procurement process for a suitably qualified contractor was completed in September 2022. Those works were scheduled to commence in October 2022, but the incessant adverse weather conditions being experienced throughout Trinidad and Tobago for the entire last quarter of 2022, significantly impacted the scheduled commencement. The adverse/severe weather conditions also caused more landslips and damage to roadways.

Works finally commenced on Monday January 16, 2023 at the worst affected areas. These works are expected to be completed in May 2023. MSCD will be developing the Scope of Works (SOW) for the additional areas where infrastructure works are required for the site.

The SOW is expected to be completed by Tuesday February 14, 2023. The procurement process is expected to be completed by March 31, 2023, with works commencing in the first half of April 2023. These works are expected to be completed at the end of June 2023, just before the onset of the rainy season.

Construction of Retaining Walls and Reinforced Concrete Box Drains will commence and will be completed in the third quarter of Fiscal 2023 alongside assistance the Habitat for Humanity organization may provide.

Under the guidance and strict supervision of the Santa Rosa First Peoples, construction of the Amerindian Village's central monument, the "Totem-Pole" and "Benabs" will also be conducted in Fiscal 2023.

Additionally, the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community (SRFPC) applied to the National Commission for Self Help Limited (NCSHL), a state enterprise under the remit of the MSCD for assistance on October 01, 2019. On October 10, 2019, the application was considered for approval to assist in the sum of one hundred and twenty-one thousand, one hundred and thirty-eight dollars, and eighty-eight cents (\$121,138.88), with the construction of its headquarters, located on the twenty-five (25) acre plot of land owned by the entity. The NCSHL's role in this project was to provide the community with materials to construct a building with basic utilities to serve as a headquarters for overseeing the project whilst construction works are ongoing. The project was broken up into the following phases:

1. Foundation
2. Decking Fabrication
3. Deck Pan Installation.

In June 2020, a Purchase Order was administered to the SRFPC for the sum of thirty-two thousand, eight hundred and fifty dollars (\$32,850.00) for the foundation phase of the building. In August 2020, a monitoring visit was made by the NCSHL's Officer and was informed by the coordinators that the building was one hundred percent (100%) completed, as other agencies namely, Habitat For Humanity had rendered assistance.

It should be noted that the project has a balance of eighty-eight thousand, two hundred and eighty thousand dollars, and eighty-eight cents (\$88,280.88) available from its initial project allocation. In January 2023, officials of the NCSHL visited the SRFPC site and met with Chief Hernandez to confirm the project's status update and discuss their needs moving forward. It was established at the visit that welfare facilities are needed for occupants and visiting personnel.

Though the request falls outside the project's initial scope, assistance could be rendered by providing the necessary materials to construct the much needed welfare facility by way of utilizing the balance of funds available on file.

The NCSHL is awaiting the material listing from the SRFPC in an effort to render assistance promptly.

5. Community Economic Development

Recommendations:

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

The Community Development Division (CDD) of the Ministry is making plans for the inclusion of the First Peoples groups in CDD's Community Education Programme (CEP) craft programme.

Additionally, the ECCL is the state enterprise mandated to develop the craft industry. This requires a multi-faceted approach including: craft specific training; entrepreneurial development; production and creating avenues for revenue generation to increase the sector's contribution to national GDP.

Based on the above, ECCL proposes to make the following recommendations/contributions in accordance with its mandate:

1. ECCL continues to develop the craft industry of which training in various craft disciplines is an integral part. In this regard, ECCL can incorporate into its training courses, programmes related to teaching indigenous craft. This will result in Cultural Preservation as the craft skills will be passed on to future generations and a wider cross section of the local population.
2. To facilitate the above, indigenous people will be the natural choice as tutors. This will result in Income Generation for the target group.
3. ECCL can consider making available the use of its production spaces to assist the indigenous groups in the production of their craft. This will reduce any overheads that they currently incur and also provide them with access to equipment.

4. ECCL is developing a comprehensive and integrated system called CraftHub TT to facilitate the sale, marketing and export of T&T's craft. It is envisioned to be a group of National Craft Stores comprising of three elements:

- A Retail e-commerce platform through which individual artisans can sell their products. It facilitates local and international delivery.
- A National Wholesale Craft store containing an extensive digital catalogue of T&T craft items available for wholesale order.
- Physical National Craft Malls and Markets in strategic locations such as ports of entry.

ECCL can consider facilitating space for indigenous groups to promote their craft on all three arms of CraftHub TT.

6. Areas in Need of Further State Attention according to the SRFPC

Recommendations:

VII. 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.

The MSCD is reviewing the establishment of an Inter- Ministerial Committee to address these issues.

7. State Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Groups Other Than the SRFPC

Recommendations:

VIII. 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.

The MSCD has communicated with the MFP, PFFPD and the Warao Nation and remains committed to continuing efforts to work with the groups 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.

