

National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago

Response to the Recommendations and Comments of the Fourth Report on 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

1. The National Archives is in support of the recommendation made by the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community under *Item 8. Research and Compilation of the History and Status of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago* in its Proposal on the Status and Development of the Santa Rosa First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago:

"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."

The National Archives is of the firm view that the acquisition of digital copies of archival records of the period under Spanish colonial rule will provide primary historical sources not only for the Santa Rosa First Peoples but also for the Warao and other groups to help rewrite their own story. Although the records may be written through the distorted lens of the colonial rulers, they may still carry evidence of the First Peoples – interactions with colonial officials, movements, involvement in the encomienda system, agricultural practices, lifestyle and other aspects of their culture and heritage. These records are housed at the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain and funds are required for research, digital repatriation and translation into English for use by the First Peoples and researchers for discovering ancestral history. The National Archives has prepared a PSIP project for the acquisition and digital repatriation of archival records held in overseas archives as well as oral history recordings, which would serve to preserve the undocumented aspects of national history. Please see project summary attached as Appendix I.

..... Currently, the tangible heritage of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago are mainly evident through DNA testing, existence of over 200 middens, archaeological pottery, skeletal remains e.g. Banwari person, place names and national heritage sites such as the Caurita Petroglyphs and Banwari Heritage Site managed by the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.

The National Archives continues to collect published works on the First Peoples as part of its Library Reference Collection and promote the community through its various platforms. It also intends to collaborate with the Ministry of Sports and Community Development, the Ministry of Tourism Culture and the Arts and the National Library and Information Systems Authority (NALIS) for the development of the planned Cultural Heritage Library.

2. The National Archives notes that the report makes no reference to research into and the preservation of our nation's archaeological patrimony - sites and artefacts, which are significant forms of documenting the First Peoples' history and heritage. The National Archives takes this opportunity to propose the re-establishment of the Archaeological Committee to undertake this mandate.

Submitted by: Avril Belfon, Government Archivist

February 28, 2023

PROJECT SUMMARY: NATIONAL ARCHIVES: ACQUISITION AND DIGITAL REPATRIATION OF ARCHIVES

MINISTRY: OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER-COMMUNICATIONS
HEAD/SUB HEAD: NEW PROJECT (PSIP)
AGENCY: OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
PROJECT: NATIONAL ARCHIVES: Acquisition and Digital Repatriation of Trinidad and Tobago Archives

PROJECT GOAL: To acquire private archival records of individuals and organizations, and repatriate digital archival records of Trinidad and Tobago held in national archives of former colonial rulers, within three years.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To acquire archival records, including oral history, of individuals and organizations who have contributed significantly to shaping the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, and which represent our ethnic and cultural diversity, including indigenous cultural forms.
- To repatriate digital surrogates of Trinidad and Tobago's archival records held in other national archives and repositories.

PROJECT SCOPE:

This project has an estimated duration of three years. The scope of this project includes the following:

1. Purchase of private archival records of individuals and organizations of Trinidad and Tobago or collections of archival records, when they become available and are appraised.
2. Purchase of private archival records of Trinidad and Tobago (maps, photos, documents, books etc.) available through EBAY and other collectors' websites and repositories such as the David Ramsay Map Collection.
3. Purchase of high resolution scans of archival records of Trinidad and Tobago held in other national archives and repositories e.g. National Archives of United Kingdom, Spain, India, France, Netherlands, Venezuela.
4. Conduct and record oral history interviews of individuals and representatives of organizations of significance to our history and heritage.

PROJECT COST (ESTIMATE): \$1,000,000

FISCAL YEAR: 2024