



The Rotunda Gallery

A display of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural and political heritage

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Artists & Collectors

The Rotunda Gallery is inviting submissions for our exhibition titled “**Ancient Roots: The Living Culture of the First Peoples**” in recognition of First Peoples Day observed on October 14 in Trinidad and Tobago. The exhibition will be held from **Monday 28th September to Friday 23rd October 2026**.

Inspirational Tags

Trinidad and Tobago; First Peoples Day; Indigenous People; Santa Rosa First Peoples Community; Warao Nation; Santa Rosa Festival; Amerindians; Amerindian Heritage; Wild Meat; Cocoa; Cassava; Corn; Maize; Warap; Chardon Beni; and Roucou; Indigenous Rituals; Smoke Ceremony; Water Ritual; Chief Hyarima Statue; Caurita Petroglyph; Indigenous Crafts; Pottery; Weaving; Carving; Banwari Trace; Heritage Week; Cultural Heritage; Cultural Legacy; Cultural Practices; History of Indigenous People; Preservation of Indigenous Heritage; Preservation of Indigenous Culture.

The Vision

The history of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago extends thousands of years before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Archaeological findings indicate that Trinidad had an Indigenous presence for roughly 8,000 years. The most significant sites is Banwari trace located in southwestern Trinidad, the West Indies’ oldest pre-

Ceramic archaeological site, dating to approximately 5000 BC. The landmark discovery of human remains traditionally referred to as “Banwari Man” confirms a legacy of hunter-gatherer habitation originating from mainland South America's Orinoco Delta. Tobago's ancient timeline reflects a separate archaeological narrative, beginning with early settlements established between 3500 BC and 1000 BC.

Following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1498, the Indigenous population was estimated at 200,000 people, later it was estimated to 40,000 by 1595. The Indigenous population at the time included eight Indigenous peoples belonging to three large groups. Among the Indigenous languages that were once spoken in Trinidad and Tobago, eleven are specifically identified in the historical record. The Cariban family contributed five of these: Kalina (also called Carib, which remains a living language with speakers across several mainland countries), Carinepagoto, Chaima, Nepoio (related to Venezuela's Mapoyo), and Yao. The Ta-Arawakan or Ta-Maipuran branch accounted for three more: Lokono or Arawak, still spoken today by a number of people in Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana; Shebaio; and Igneri. Beyond these two major groupings, three additional languages belonged to other families or stood as isolates, namely Warao – a language isolate that persists as a living tongue – alongside Kalipunian and Chaguane. Though none of these eleven languages is natively spoken in Trinidad and Tobago today, their presence in the islands' past is well documented.

Together, their knowledge of the land, rivers, forests, and seas shaped sustainable ways of living, while their customs, spirituality, artisanship, language and traditions laid some of the earliest foundations of life in Trinidad and Tobago. Despite the profound disruptions of European colonialism, which declined population numbers significantly over the past centuries, these families and communities persevered. They preserved elements of their identity, through generations, which ensured that their cultural heritage remained a living part of Trinidad and Tobago's history.

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 representative of Trinidad and Tobago's indigenous population. On October 14, 2000, it was declared as the official day of recognition of Indigenous Peoples. The annual celebrations, including ceremonial gatherings, traditional music, dance, storytelling, craft, food and spiritual observances, demonstrates that the Indigenous culture is not confined to the past but continues to thrive and evolve while maintaining connections to ancestral traditions. The exhibition theme also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly, SDG4: *Quality Education* – by promoting greater understanding of Indigenous history, knowledge, and cultural traditions; and SDG 11: *Sustainable Cities and Communities* – through safeguarding Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage and strengthening appreciation for Indigenous identity within our national heritage.

The preservation of First Peoples traditions is not solely the responsibility of the communities that inherit them, but is a shared commitment. The Rotunda Gallery is inviting artists to submit works based on the theme “*Ancient Roots: The Living Culture of the First Peoples*” whereby artworks will encourage reflection on the importance of remembering our earliest history and ensuring the stories of the First Peoples, their customs, beliefs and knowledge continue to inspire future generations.

Important Notes

- ❖ All visual art genres are acceptable (painting, photography, drawing, sculpture, prints, fabric art, collage, installation art, digital art).
- ❖ Submissions for this call are open to citizens/residents of Trinidad and Tobago.
- ❖ There is no submission fee, but artists and collectors will be responsible for framing, transport, and insurance of their artwork.
- ❖ No nudity, sexual content, violence, hatred, or propaganda allowed.
- ❖ The final decision on whether your artwork will be exhibited is at the sole discretion of the Office of the Parliament Rotunda Gallery Committee.

- ❖ Artists and Collectors may be invited to exhibit by the Office of the Parliament Rotunda Gallery Committee or solicited through a Call to Artists.
- ❖ The Office of the Parliament will, at the Artist's request, make contact information available to persons interested in purchasing the artwork. All sales and related negotiations are the sole responsibility of the Artist.

Important Dates

Activity	Date
Call for Submissions	Monday 17 th August, 2026
Email Submission deadline of artwork and other supporting documents to rotundagallery@tpparliament.org	Sunday 20 th September, 2026
Selection Notification via email	Tuesday 22 nd September, 2026

Submission Guidelines and Requirements

- ❖ Proof of Trinidad and Tobago citizenship/residence (National ID/DP/Passport/Birth Certificate).
- ❖ Contact information (name, phone number, email address).
- ❖ A brief Artist Statement (not exceeding 300 words).
- ❖ An explanation of each piece submitted (not exceeding 150 words per piece).
- ❖ Images should be at least 300 dpi.
- ❖ Artists can submit a **MAXIMUM** of three (3) pieces of work.
- ❖ Documents must be submitted electronically to rotundagallery@tpparliament.org in **MS Word** format and images of work must be in **JPEG** format. See title examples below on how to name files:
 - John Doe_National ID
 - John Doe_First_Peoples_Day_2026_24x44inches
 - John Doe_Artist Statement_2026
- ❖ Collectors must submit proof of ownership of the artwork being submitted.
- ❖ All artwork submitted must be authentic, original and done by the artist submitting the work.

❖ **You are required to submit the title, medium, year, size, and price of artwork.**

The Selection Process

The Office of the Parliament Rotunda Gallery Committee will judge the selection process for “**Ancient Roots: The Living Culture of the First Peoples**” Exhibition.

Frequently Asked Questions for Exhibitions at the Rotunda Gallery

1. **WHO CAN SUBMIT WORKS?** Any citizen/resident of Trinidad and Tobago.
2. **WHAT CAN I SUBMIT?** Artists and collectors can submit up to three (3) pieces of work in any medium of visual arts, which includes painting, photography, drawing, prints, fabric art, collage, installation art, digital art or other. **No nudity, sexual content, violence, hatred, or propaganda.** Unsuitable works will not be accepted.
3. **I CANNOT COMPLETE ARTWORK BY THE DEADLINE, ARE THERE ANY OTHER OPPORTUNITIES?** Yes, the Rotunda Gallery exists as an exhibition space to display Trinidad and Tobago’s cultural and political heritage. Follow the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and Rotunda Gallery on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for future Call for Submissions.
4. **HOW MANY WORKS CAN I SUBMIT?** Artists may submit up to **THREE (3) pieces** of artwork unless specific permission has been granted to submit a collection.
5. **WHAT IS THE SIZE LIMITATION?** The maximum size is 60 inches in height and 72 inches in width.

6. **WILL THE ARTWORK BE INSURED?** It is the responsibility of the artist or the collector to arrange all insurance. While every effort will be made to ensure that artworks submitted are handled carefully and well protected, all artworks should be insured door to door by the participating artist or collector.
7. **HOW WILL I KNOW WHETHER MY WORK HAS BEEN SELECTED?** You will receive an email informing you of the status of your submission.
8. **DO I HAVE TO FRAME MY ARTWORK?** For the initial electronic submission, the artwork can be unframed. Once you receive the email advising of the selection of your piece(s), you may proceed to the framing phase to prepare your work for submission day. **All selected works must be professionally/tastefully mounted and ready for hanging or installation in the Rotunda Gallery.**
9. **WHAT CAN I EXPECT ON FINAL SUBMISSION DAY?** Artists are required to bring in their work(s), ready to hang or display. The labels and submission form will be provided in the notification email. All documents should be completed in advance and submitted with artwork.
10. **WHAT ARE THE GALLERY HOURS?** The gallery is open from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Mondays to Fridays to facilitate walk-ins or scheduled appointments. The exhibition will be shown online @rotundagallerytt on Facebook and @rotundagallery on Instagram and Tik Tok. To book an appointment, call 624-7275 ext. 2314/2365 or 701-6133.
11. **I CANNOT COLLECT MY ARTWORK IN THE WINDOW PROVIDED CAN I AUTHORISE SOMEONE TO COLLECT ON MY BEHALF?** Yes. We **DO NOT** have a facility to store unclaimed works. Please arrange to collect your works within the window provided. If you are designating someone to collect your artwork you must send us an email with the person's name, and they must provide photo ID on arrival.

Celebrating the first peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. (n.d.). <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/blog/celebrating-the-first-peoples-of-trinidad-and-tobago/>

National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago. (2020, October 20). Celebrating our first peoples. <https://nationaltrust.tt/celebrating-our-first-peoples/>

The Banwari Man | The Department of Life Sciences. (n.d.). <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/lifesciences/banwari-man>

Santa Rosa First Peoples Community Heritage Week. (n.d.). <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/blog/santa-rosa-first-peoples-community-heritage-week/>

Amerindian Languages in Trinidad and Tobago. (2013 - 2026) St. Augustine News STAN articles. (n.d.). <https://sta.uwi.edu/stan/article13.asp>