

“Celebrating Ten years of Building the Indigenous Heritage of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean”

Summarised Annual Reports
2001- 2010

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THE GARIFUNA HERITAGE FOUNDATION INC.

“Celebrating Ten Years of Building the Indigenous Heritage of the Caribbean”

SUMMARISED ANNUAL REPORTS – 2001 - 2010

In this regard the Garifuna Heritage Foundation is pleased to present our Summarised 2001-2010 Annual Report showing the work we have done over the past ten Years towards building linkages between the indigenous peoples in the region, the Garifuna in the Diaspora and the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Our Tenth Anniversary year commenced in August 2011 and will culminate in July 2012, as such we will highlight in this Report some important highlights of our work over the past ten years.

Organizational Profile:

The Garifuna Heritage Foundation Inc. is an organization formed in July 2001 which is dedicated to the main objective of promoting the Garifuna Heritage locally, regionally and internationally. The present geographic focus of our programme is in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as well as in the Caribbean.

In relation to our Governance, TGHF became legally incorporated as a Non- Profit Company under the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on October 11th, 2010. Our membership of over two hundred persons is drawn from persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as well as from the diaspora in recognition of the diaspora as a critical element for the survival of the Garifuna culture. We are managed by a Board of Directors consisting of volunteers. The Board is comprised of Eight persons two of whom are ex-officio members. The work of the Board is supported by an Advisory Body comprising a minimum of three and a maximum of fifteen International Representatives. The Membership of TGHF meets at the General Gatherings which are held twice a year to discuss the affairs and programmes of the Organization.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, TGHF has collaborated closely in its programmes with two important Government Ministries, namely, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education . We have also established links with Indigenous organizations in Belize, Martinique, Honduras, Guatemala, Dominica and the United States and are seeking to build relationships with other Indigenous regional organizations and Peoples as well as international organizations such as UNESCO and the OAS.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF PROGRAMME :

TGHF has developed five main components of its work :

- 1. Networking Programme**
- 2. Public Education, Training & Research Programme**
- 3. Garifuna Community Heritage Programme**
- 4. Economic Sustainability Programme**
- 5. Advocacy**

BRIEF REVIEW OF OUR WORK 2001 -2010:

Introduction.

Most of our work up to 2010 has been focused on the development and implementation of a Garifuna Retrieval Programme in St. Vincent and the Grenadines due to its historical significance as the ancestral homeland of the Garifuna people wherever they reside internationally. Our overall objective has been and continues to be the strengthening of the Garifuna Heritage and culture where it exists in the country and the deepening of the sensitization of the wider Vincentian population of the contribution made by the indigenous Calinago and Garifuna people to the Caribbean landscape and the need to harness the richness of this Heritage for national social and economic development in the longterm.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a small, open economy at present confronting serious economic difficulties brought on by a decline in the value of its main export commodity, bananas. This economic downturn is compounded by the relative weakness in the other economic sectors such as tourism and manufacturing as well as its overall limited natural resource base. Its small population is characterized by a relatively broad base of low skilled labour, mainly comprised of young persons between the ages of fifteen and thirty. It has been characterized in Poverty Reports as having a high percentage of persons who are poor and the indigenous population is disproportionately represented among this group. However services (education, health and social services) to persons living in areas of the country geographically identified with the indigenous population are rapidly improving. Nonetheless Studies are still to be done to assess level of unemployment in these areas, and to understand what employment opportunities can be generated utilizing the Indigenous Heritage.

Historical accounts indicate that the Garifuna indigenous group, formerly known as the Black Caribs emerged in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines sometime in the seventeenth century. They were involved in protracted warfare with the British who sought to colonise

the island and after losing the war, were exiled by the British in 1797 to Roatan , an island of the coast of Honduras in Central America. Since then, from the approximately 2,026 who arrived in Roatan, the population has grown to over 500,000 persons residing mainly in Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the United States.

The Garifuna culture is now being protected and promoted not only by the Garifuna people who are the descendants of those who were exiled but also by the world. In May of 2001 UNESCO declared the Garifuna Culture to be a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Mankind. This is highly significant in the light of the fact that UNESCO has dedicated this present decade to indigenous peoples.

Although it is now more than 200 years of separation from the motherland the Garinagu in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Belize and the United States have maintained that spiritual connection with their brothers and sisters in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SV&G). It is accepted that for Garifuna people who are descendants of exiles, the existence of St. Vincent and the Grenadines or Yurumei as the spiritual homeland is also vital to their spiritual and cultural survival. Over the years efforts have been made by both sides to maintain this relationship, though not on a sustained basis.

The support for cultural retrieval has been regaining momentum in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines since 2001 when the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines selected and honoured the Paramount Garifuna Chief Joseph Chatoyer as our first National Hero.

The Garifuna Heritage Foundation has already made a significant impact in its work .

2001: Our first major activity was a three week **Heritage Summer Camp** for two hundred (200) school children ages 5- 16 which was held in one of the rural communities of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in August 2001. This summer camp, which was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was very successful in that for the first time specific training sessions focused on teaching the Garifuna language in a structured way such a large group of children. The National Garifuna Council (NGC) of Belize participated by sending a representative to act as facilitator . A series of daily **Half hour radio programmes** which sought to introduce basic Garifuna words to the Vincentian public was also aired over the three week period on WE FM, one of the popular radio stations .

TGHF participated in the First International Conference of Caribbean Publishers held in Jamaica on November 2001 which was hosted by the network of Caribbean Publishers (CAPNET) and funded by UNESCO. As a result of this exposure valuable contacts were made with Publishing Houses and this provided more opportunities for TGHF to source publishing opportunities for materials on the Garifuna Culture.

2002: In January 2002, TGHF organized and hosted the first ever Regional Consultation of Indigenous people to be held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The week long Conference entitled “ Caribbean Consultation of Indigenous Craft and Culture” was organized in collaboration with UNESCO, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It was attended by over two hundred (200) participants from Belize, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana. In this year a very significant event took place in that TGHF participated in the official Ceremony organized by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on March 14th, 2002 to declare Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer as the country's First National Hero.

2003: In July – August 2003 we organized another successful summer camp for over 300 children between the ages of 5-16 years in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We collaborated with the Ministry of Culture in Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to bring a Garifuna Dance Trainer from Belize to teach our children the various forms of Garifuna Dance.

As part of our community outreach Seven Consultations were also held with traditional Garifuna Communities to assess their needs as Indigenous people. During this year also we were able to organize for the participation of fifteen Garifuna Children from one of the communities which we work, to participate in the Caribbean Tourism Week activities held in New York, USA. While there, our children displayed their knowledge of the Indigenous culture at various venues including the UN.

2004: In August 2004 we organized a one- month intensive dance and language training summer programme in which over One Hundred children participated. The programme was conducted by dance trainer and choreographer from Belize, Ms. Rosita Baltazar. We also conducted our first training workshop for primary and secondary school teachers in the teaching of Garifuna Heritage and culture in schools.

A highlight of this year was the bringing to St. Vincent of the well-known Belizean/ Garifuna Artist, Delvin Pen Cayetano who resided in Germany. He was able to bring a selection of his paintings and do several exhibitions in and around St. Vincent. He also delivered several exciting Drumming Workshops.

2005: The highlight of this year was the bringing to St. Vincent and the Grenadines of sixteen members of the Garifuna Ballet Folkloric Group of Honduras. This Group delivered several stunning performances at a show held at the Peace Memorial Hall, Kingstown. They also performed at the First ever National Heritage Month Schools Rally which was organized by TGHF in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The rally, which was attended by over five hundred (500) Primary and Secondary School Children from all over St. Vincent and the Grenadines, was held at the Arnos Vale Playing field.

During this year we also organized for the visit of the videographers Ms. Andrea Leland to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Ms. Leland has produced the very well known documentary “The Garifuna Journey” and she was able to display the documentary in many venues across St. Vincent during her visit.

2006: We conducted many training activities in drumming with school children on-site at various primary and secondary schools. In addition, in collaboration with the Ministry

of Education, a Needs Assessment workshop was held for Secondary School Teachers where we reviewed their issues related to support materials for the teaching of the Garifuna Heritage in Social Studies and History curriculum.

We also hosted a visit from a delegation of Garifuna from the National Garifuna Council of Belize./

2007 -2008: We commenced a new programme of community consultations in order to redirect our work towards building the base of our communities which had indigenous links . These consultations formed the beginning of our Community Gathering Project which was launched in 2009.

During this year we also provided support to a special Garifuna language teacher who come from Belize to St. Vincent to conduct a six month training programme to primary school children in the community of Sandy Bay.

2009: This year saw the beginning of a more intensive and strategic thrust toward building the Garifuna Heritage Network, an outreach programme designed to give TGHF a direct representation and membership strength in each community with indigenous links.

In August of this year we also organized support locally for the visit of a delegation of Garifuna persons from various parts of the United States, Guatemal and Honduras and established institutional links with a USA based organization, The Garifuna Coalition USA Inc. to retrieve the Garifuna Heritage and Culture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. During this visit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between TGHF, the Coalition and three other USA based Garifuna organizations in which we agreed to work towards a renaissance of the Garifuna Heritage and culture .

Our Public Education Programme and Networking Programmes were taken to a new level in November 2009 when we organized our first Regional Symposium on the Garifuna Heritage and Culture . At that event papers were presented by delegates from various parts of the Caribbean as well as North America. The Roundtable brought together local, international and regional researchers, practitioners and Indigenous peoples with a common interest in Caribbean Indigenous issues, in effort to create and strengthen links, as well as to identify possible opportunities for collaboration and communication. The theme of the Symposium was **“FORGING CONNECTIONS, RE-ENVISIONING FUTURES: RE-FRAMING THE EXPERIENCES OF CARIBBEAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES”**.

The Roundtable began the process of formulating possible analytical frameworks within which the Garifuna experience can be discussed . It also identified existing actions / research or other ongoing projects in the Caribbean and elsewhere which provided creative and innovative spaces for forging connections between Indigenous peoples . At that Roundtable it was agreed that an International Conference should be held to examine in-

depth the various elements of the Garifuna Heritage and Culture which exists locally, regionally and internationally. That Conference is scheduled to take place in 2011.

TGHF organized the first ever National Gathering of all traditional Garifuna and Calinago Communities at the village of Rose Hall, St. Vincent and the Grenadines in November 2009. Over 250 indigenous Callinago and Garifuna persons participated from communities all over the country. Participants shared information on their communities and developed strategies for the promotion of the Garifuna Heritage and Culture Nationally.

TGHF held its first National Garifuna Exhibition under the theme “From the Orinoco to Exile.” This Exhibition, which featured historical Maps, photographs, Artwork, Garifuna exhibits on the Dress, Spirituality, and other aspects of the culture, attracted over 250 visitors, many of whom were young Vincentians from various educational institutions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The students were amazed at this first exposure to information and images of the Garifuna Heritage and culture. Many expressed sadness over the absence of in present-day St. Vincent and the Grenadines of concrete manifestations of the culture such as the language, dance and music. This Exhibition has now become a prominent feature of the Annual National Heritage month Calendar in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

2010: Our Activities in this year have marked the continuation of our work to deepen our links with the traditional Garifuna communities in St. Vincent. In March this year we held a second Community Gathering in the village of Fancy which attracted over two hundred and fifty participants. We also organized a second National Exhibition in March under the theme :”From the Orinoco to exile...and beyond.” This was again very successful and we collaborated with the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Culture to ensure that all school children were able to view the exhibits.

Our linkages with the Diaspora which commenced in 2009 have continued to bear fruit as we hosted a second delegation of persons from the Diaspora in 2010.

During this Year our international focus and linkages have also been strengthened as for the first time, one of our members participated in the OAS Seminar for Mechanisms for Civil Society Organizations. We were able , through this Seminar to learn much about how the OAS functions and how our organization can benefit through its various programmes.

FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE:

The Garifuna Heritage Foundation intends to include a greater international component into our work, namely by promoting greater involvement of the Garifuna diaspora who view St. Vincent and the Grenadines as the Ancestral Homeland. Two main elements of our work will be the deepening of our networking and public education objectives through the establishment of two Flagship programmes. One is the **Yurumei House Programme** and the other is the **International Garifuna Research Center**.

The Yurumei House Programme will focus on Training, Public Education, Advocacy and Public Awareness building Activities . It is intended to offer services particularly in St. Vincent

and the Grenadines and in the Caribbean region in the delivery of training programmes on all aspects of the Garifuna Heritage and Culture. It house an Exhibition space will showcase the various artifacts related to the Garifuna Heritage and Culture. This space will be developed to attract artists of different genre to whom it will be available to mount Exhibitions throughout the year. It will also house programmes which seek to explore and develop the Economic potential of the Garifuna Heritage and culture as an income generating factor to contribute to the sustainability of TGHF . The lessons learned from these programmes will also be analysed for their application to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in general. Finally it will offer a physical space for all persons interested in the Garifuna Heritage and culture to meet, network and share ideas and experiences.

The International Garifuna Research Center will collect and maintain physical and virtual copies of all existing Garifuna arts, craft & technology, source documentation – in all formats – of existing published and unpublished research on the Garifuna Heritage and Culture, promote and conduct further research into the Garifuna Heritage and Culture and related aspects; design and implement projects and programmes to ensure that the information gathered is disseminated through various media locally, regionally and internationally in particular to Garifuna people and communities.

CONCLUSION:

Notwithstanding the above, there is still a great deal of work to be done. The challenge before us is a tremendous one. In the present context of globalization, not only is there a need to create symbols which will stand as constant reminders of the resilience, creativity and vision of Caribbean people but there is also a need to develop alternative development models. These alternatives must also be derived from an understanding of the past and an openness to new ideas and fresh interpretations of that past which can then inform the future.