

# Guyana's Framework National Cultural Policy

**DRAFT**



Department of Social Cohesion, Culture, Youth and Sport  
Ministry of the Presidency





# Guyana's Framework National Cultural Policy





The creation of this Framework National Cultural Policy would not have been possible without the input of the following:

*The Prince Claus Fund for Culture in Development*

Dr. Cheryl White

Dr. Mark Plew

Sharda Ganga

Louisa Dagers



“Guyana needs a cultural policy in order to explain that our heritage is fundamental to our identity as a nation and to our success as a society. That policy must be based on an understanding that an integrative nation fosters an inclusive society and a confident citizenry. We need a national policy that recognises the important positive part that culture and heritage play in national integration. It is because culture does have a role to play that serious consideration should be given to promulgating a policy rather than pursuing the present higgledy-piggledy approach. No one benefits from the absence of a national youth policy; no one benefits from the absence of a national sports policy and no one will benefit from the absence of a national cultural policy.”

*President David Arthur Granger (2013)*





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guyana has been without a new National Cultural Policy for forty years, ever since the publication of *Cultural Policy in Guyana* by A.J. Seymour in 1977. Previous attempts - in 1994 under Minister of Education, Dr. Dale Bisnauth and in 2008 under Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony - failed to either enter the public domain or serve as guidelines for a de facto cultural policy implementation agenda.

During the period 2010-2015, there has been a growing call nationally for the creation of a national cultural policy, as well as commitments to create such a policy under several international obligations. One of the leading proponents of a national cultural policy has been President David Granger, most notably during his tenure as then Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly. From the beginning of his administration, a mandate to create such a policy was given to the Ministry of Education in general, and the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport in particular, and an Advisor on Cultural Policy was attached to the Ministry to bring the policy to fruition. The mandate has now been passed to the Department of Social Cohesion, Culture, Youth and Sport within the Ministry of the Presidency to continue development and implementation.

This document provides the policy framework to guide the implementation of specific policy interventions in three main areas: Mainstreaming Culture in Development; Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion; and Creative Arts and Industries Development. An attached *Biennial Action Plan* for 2018/2019 provides the implementation framework for the first biennial implementation period of a general implementation schedule spanning 2018-2025.

## BACKGROUND

If there is a single document that provides the basic rationale for the development of a national cultural policy, as this framework policy is conceived, it is the Constitution of Guyana, the preamble of which states:

*“We, the Guyanese people,*

*Proud heirs of the indomitable will of our forebears, in a spirit of reconciliation and cooperation, proclaim this Constitution in order to:*

*Safeguard and build on the rich heritage, won through tireless struggle, bequeathed us by our forebears;*

*Affirm our sovereignty, our independence and our indissolubility;*

*Forge a system of governance that promotes concerted effort and broad-based participation in national decision-making in order to develop a viable economy and a harmonious community based on democratic values, social justice, fundamental human rights, and the rule of law;*

*Celebrate our cultural and racial diversity and strengthen our unity by eliminating any and every form of discrimination;*

*Value the special place in our nation of the Indigenous Peoples and recognise their right as citizens to land and security and to their promulgation of policies to their communities;*

*Acknowledge the aspirations of our young people who, in their own words, have declared that the future of Guyana belongs to its young people, who aspire to live in a society which respects their dignity, protects their rights, recognises their potential, listens to their voices, provides opportunities, ensures a healthy environment and encourages people of all races to live in harmony and peace and affirm that their declaration will be binding on our institutions and be a part of the context of our basic law;*

*Demonstrate our commitment to protect our natural environment and endowment...”*

The primary purpose of this document is to provide a framework of constitutionally-based commitment to ensuring that our diverse heritage is both celebrated and employed as a tool for cohesion in order that all Guyanese, our youth in particular, have access to a good, fulfilling creative life in a society in which the rights of all our citizens are respected.

Guyana’s first and until now only completed initiative in creating a national cultural policy was written by then Director of Creative Writing in the Institute of Creative Arts, the venerable AJ Seymour and published in 1977 with the support of UNESCO. In his introduction, Seymour early on acknowledges the critical role culture played in nation-building:

“A nation’s culture is its lifestyle and influences the way in which it assesses itself. Culture provides the framework within which the nation identifies its priorities and goals. It is the vehicle by which greater national cohesion may be achieved, greater national discipline inculcated, and greater self-awareness and self-reliance

inspired. More specifically, culture includes the expression of the arts, the prowess of the nation in the field of sports and athletics and those elements of the national life which contribute to the complex of traditions, beliefs and community values.”

If we are to consider that this publication came just ten years after UNESCO first convened its Round Table on Cultural Policy, and eight after the findings were published, Guyana as a fledgling nation would be considered extremely forward-thinking in placing culture high on its national policy agenda. Indeed, it could be said that - even as CARICOM is now in the midst of consolidating its own current cultural policy agenda - as early as 1972, Guyana had demonstrated its commitment to a regional cultural framework by convening and hosting the very first Caribbean Festival of the Arts (CARIFESTA).

It would be 30 years after Seymour’s policy that another significant attempt would be made resulting in, around May 2008, a Draft National Cultural Policy created by a small team headed by now former Director of Culture, Dr. James Rose, then Chairman of the National Trust. How this project differed significantly from Seymour’s is that it focused heavily on abstract proposed solutions to existing issues, rather than a historical review and assessment of existing policy initiatives.

The Department of Culture’s Action Plan (2014-2018) lists its first key activity as a commitment to “Review, enact and implement policy and legal framework for culture and national heritage” with 2015 slated for, inter alia, the development of cultural policy and “public consultations on the usefulness of the policies to be implemented”. There is no evidence however that - in keeping with this agenda - the Rose Draft National Cultural Policy was subject to stakeholder or public consultation or published in any final form, some seven years after it was first written - there is no reference to it in the DOC’s 2014-2018 action plan.

In the lead-up to the elections of May, 2015, the then opposition APNU+AFC Coalition articulated within its manifesto a menu of measures which constituted its core plans for cultural policy. This was in keeping with then Leader of the Opposition, Brigadier David Granger’s advocacy within the National Assembly over the life of that previous parliament.

The Granger administration, on assuming office, committed to the creation of a National Cultural Policy and accompanying Action Plan formed after meaningful consultation with experts and other stakeholders. Additionally, a national cultural policy has become an imperative both in terms of our national priorities on heritage conservation and creative industry development, but also our need to mainstream culture into development in keeping with various international commitments.

For example, under the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Declaration of Havana (2014) we have committed to a regional action plan that includes the commitments to “Undertake actions to recognize the merit of cultural policies” and “to formulate public policies and implement UNESCO Conventions as tools for development.”

In July of 2015, the Ministry of Education, under the new political administration, retained the services of Ruel Johnson as Cultural Policy Advisor with, inter alia, the specific task of guiding the development of a national cultural policy. Substantial work had already been undertaken towards this end under the aegis of a Prince Claus Fund grant awarded to Johnson for that express purpose in June of 2014. Coming out of consultations held between July and September of that year, the Janus Cultural Policy Initiative (under which the grant programme was executed) had outlined three areas of Cultural Policy Development. The first is *Mainstreaming Culture in Development* with the focus on the three sub-areas of *Environment, Education and Citizenship*; the second is *Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion*; and the third, *Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development*.

That work, executed under the Initiative, was integrated into the Ministry’s programme. This has aided in the

development of this policy in several key ways, the primary two of which should be noted here. The first clearly is that the design of the policy has benefited from integration of the most recent models guiding cultural policy development, particularly as provided for by UNESCO under the framework of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression.

The second is that the extensive consultations and research that occurred under JCPI served to foreshorten the time spent by the government of Guyana in those two areas, critical elements of the policy formulation process that would have been significantly impacted by the Ministry's involvement in the 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations or even the regular course of business. In addition to the foundation provided by the Janus Initiative, a series of public consultations was held in December of 2015, while smaller, more direct, engagement has continued with stakeholders since then. This Framework National Cultural Policy is the outcome.

The main objectives of the policy are to:

- \* Ensure that strong, sustainable systems are put in place to identify, protect and preserve both our tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to promote our diversity as our core national identity.
- \* Develop our creative arts and industries and other forms of cultural expression in order to both enrich the life of our citizens as well as to diversify our evolving economy.
- \* Ensure that culture is mainstreamed into development initiatives in keeping with both national priorities and international obligations.

## PILLARS

This document is not only meant to be a static framework policy in itself but also a strategy for implementation that is based on five main pillars:

*National Development Centrality* - this is inclusive of but not limited to the specific objectives of 'Section One, Mainstreaming Culture in Development'. The policy is meant to support national development in myriad tangible and intangible ways, including primarily those areas related to cultural and artistic expression, but inclusive of the spectrum of human rights and larger freedom. This is in keeping with the UNESCO 2005 Convention principle that recommends that we "Integrate Culture in Sustainable Development Frameworks", and "Promote Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."

*International Integration* - the policy comes at a time when the international community is mainstreaming culture in development as a core pillar of an overall sustainable development paradigm. It therefore recognizes that not only is Guyana bound by several international obligations, but that we can provide a critical leadership role via our inherent cultural diversity as a microcosm of a globalized world, as well as our unique strategic position as a vibrant member of the regional blocs UNASUR and CARICOM, and their wider framework organizations MERCOSUR and CARIFORUM respectively. The policy is also designed to take into consideration the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in general, and the UNESCO post-2015 recommendations for [re]shaping cultural policies post-2015. Consideration is also given to Protocol Three of the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement.

*General Resilience* - considering the critical importance of culture to development, cultural policy necessarily has to be sustainable in the long term, resilient to a variety of factors including the social, economic, technological, environmental and political. Consequently the primary focus in this regard has to be on consultation, consensus, resource mobilization and innovation.

*General Integrity* - cultural policy initiatives cannot be sustainable if there is little integrity in the processes and people involved in implementation, whether it speaks to competence or governance. In keeping with the UNESCO 2005 Convention, policy-based mechanisms for governance are a key component of this aspect of the framework policy. The policy implementation will therefore focus on transparency in the management of cultural initiatives and human resource development to ensure competence and integrity in the execution of programmes.

*Cultural Equity* - if the primary quality of Guyana's cultural landscape is diversity, it is critical that there is equity in the preservation and expression of that diversity. All policy measures will be developed within the context of that diversity, whether we are considering the religious, the ethnic or the geographical. Inherent in the concept of cultural equity is the decentralization of support for culture and the empowerment of communities for cultural self-expression and engagement.

## PARTICIPATING MINISTRY FRAMEWORK

While the Ministry of the Presidency (Department of Social Cohesion, Culture, Youth and Sport) will have overall responsibility for the general development, the complexity of the processes necessary for both policy formulation and implementation dictates an inter-ministry effort.

For example, *Mainstreaming Culture in Development* will see the need for collaboration among Ministry of the Presidency and the ministries responsible for Education, Communities, Indigenous Affairs and Governance (Natural Resources and the Environment) in addition to other portfolios within the Ministry itself, including Natural Resources and the Environment, and Citizenship.

In the area of *Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion*, the Ministry's efforts will need to be complemented by the Ministry of Public Security (illicit trade in heritage), Ministry of Communities (community heritage), Ministry of Business, Department of Tourism (heritage tourism) and the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (indigenous languages, practices, knowledge).

In *Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development*, the core ministry's policy will need implementation co-facilitated by the Ministry of Finance (some bilateral funding), Ministry of Business (creative industry development, concessions), the Ministry of Legal Affairs (enabling legislation, copyright), and the Ministry of Tourism (internal creative industry markets).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also be a critical partner in crafting and implementing policy in all areas.

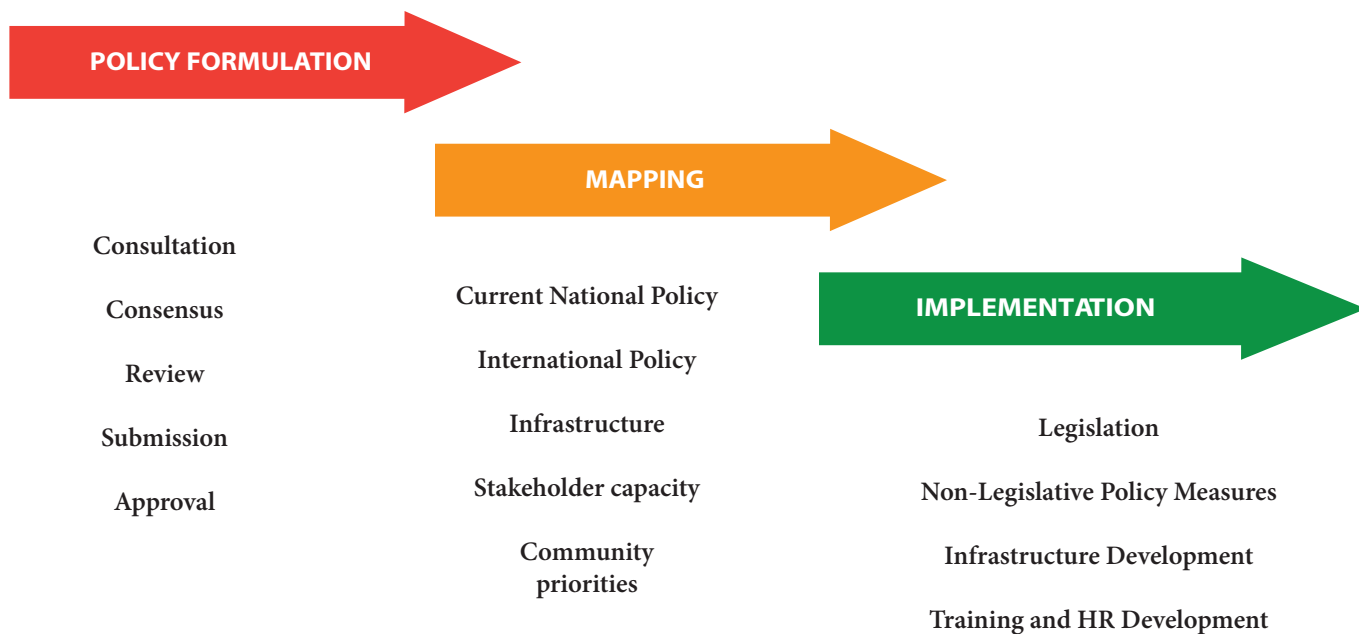




## POLICY PROCESSES

There are three primary processes that will be involved in making this a working policy. The first, *Policy Formulation* consists of ensuring that the text of the policy is informed by sub-processes that facilitate stakeholder and general citizen involvement, expert technical input, and senior policymaker imprimatur. The second, *Mapping*, involves as detailed as possible an assessment of the environment in which the policy will be implemented, inclusive of the physical, social, legislative and wider international aspects of that environment. The third, *Implementation*, speaks to the different aspects of implementing the policy as informed by the other two components. While the diagram below outlines the three components, these processes are neither necessarily separate nor sequential, but rather cyclical and overlapping.

They will be executed along a ten-year plan, 2016-2025, further divided into two five year policy formulation cycles. The larger plan will be further divided into five biennial implementation cycles beginning in 2016. This schedule is designed to provide integration with several related international policy timetables including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030), the UNESCO Workplan for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean (2016-2021), and various work plans for cultural policy development and implementation at the level of CARICOM and UNASUR.



2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Policy Cycle 1					Policy Cycle 2				
Implementation Cycle 1		Implementation Cycle 2		Implementation Cycle 3		Implementation Cycle 4		Implementation Cycle 5	

## CORE STRATEGY

### Internal Reform and Reconstruction

*DOC Assessment and Restructuring* – the Department of Culture is a relatively new entity, replacing the former agency responsible for much of its function, the National History and Arts Council. Operating as one of three eponymous departments under the former Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, it has suffered, particularly over the past ten years, from a litany of shortcomings, including poor governance structures, excessive politicization, institutional incapacity and limited scope of operation, and resulting corrupt practices. The Department has, for example, been the subject of two of the major audits commissioned by the current government, namely, the Sports and Arts Fund audit and the CARIFESTA 2008 audit. The Department’s own Draft Strategic Plan, 2011-2015 (May, 2010) identifies many of the key challenges facing the DOC, including, inter alia “duplicating of functions within the Ministry”; “lack of policy standards and guidelines”; “ineffective monitoring and evaluation framework”; and “technological [obsolescence]”. The DOC and the agencies operating under its aegis will be assessed and realigned where necessary to provide better, more transparent service delivery.

*Policy Development Unit* – a National Cultural Policy remains not only a priority area for the Government of Guyana but a key tool in aligning Guyana’s development priorities with international priorities, particularly within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the resources currently allocated for cultural policy development and implementation are inadequate - cultural policy is currently the purview of a single advisor when what is needed, and what exists elsewhere in the Caribbean, is a dedicated unit. The complexity of coordinating the strategies outlined in this report, even as they involve several partner entities, demands that there be a mechanism established to develop and execute specific policy initiatives.

*Interagency Synergy* – in tandem with the intended reform of the Department of Culture as a primarily policy development and support mechanism, and in keeping with the general goal of Component One of the National Cultural Policy, Mainstreaming Culture in Development, the creation of an interagency, intersectoral model for the creation and implementation of a National Cultural Policy is necessary (See Participating Ministry Framework). It should be noted that the Ministry of Social Cohesion has established an Inter-Ministry Social Cohesion Steering Committee, a mechanism that lends itself to the policy principle of Mainstreaming Culture in Development in the area of Citizenship.

### Stakeholder Engagement

*Consultation* – There continues to be a gap in consultation on culture, both with regard to client stakeholders having meaningful inputs into de facto cultural policy measures as well as there being an open channel for consultation between the Department of Culture and various government agencies, Cabinet in particular. Cultural policy development moving forward should ensure that the unit responsible for formulation and implementation develops channels in which information flows upward from stakeholders and then further upward to the senior policy formulation and implementation apparatus.

**Technical Facilitation** – There should be mechanisms in place to provide both technical and financial support to client stakeholders. Representation is being made for a properly [re]constituted Arts Development Fund, even as the Ministry provides guidance and other support in accessing local and overseas funding for culture and the creative arts, in addition to general technical assistance.

**Partnerships** – Outside of technical and financial support to client stakeholders, one area of development planned is partnerships with local agencies in the execution of policy initiatives within the established framework. For example, the Ministry of Education’s support of the 2016 University of Guyana Language Colloquium was intended to facilitate the development of a comprehensive national language policy as an extension to the Framework National Cultural Policy.

## **International Cooperation**

**Complementarity** – One intended purpose of the overall process of mapping is to ensure that there is complementarity in the development and implementation of the Framework National Cultural Policy and resulting initiatives, particularly with regards to culture as a pillar of our foreign policy coordination.

**UNASUR-MERCOSUR** – Guyana enjoys a strategically critical membership in the regional blocs UNASUR and MERCOSUR, both of which have as of 2016 committed to convergence and complementarity in their operations. As of September, 2015, the Cultural Policy Advisor has been the Government of Guyana’s representative on the UNASUR Executive Council on Culture, ensuring Guyana’s interests are given serious consideration, particularly within the convergence framework. While the primary focus over the next few years will be accessing technical support in the area of cultural heritage preservation and protection, the strategy also includes technical support for institutional development in some areas of creative industry. As of the Executive Council meeting in April of 2016, the bloc has committed to ensuring that all territories develop national cinematographic authorities in order to optimise equitable engagement in RECAM’s programmes. This gives Guyana time to develop a National Film Commission and movement has already been made with regard to mapping existing legislation or policy relative to same.

**CARICOM-CARIFORUM** – After roughly two decades of attempting mainstream culture in its integration agenda, CARICOM is finally poised to achieve tangible, sustainable progress in this area, particularly with regard to creative industries development. Major funding opportunities exist under the current 10th and upcoming 11th EDF coming out of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA as well as under the International Fund for Cultural Development (IFCD) as administered under the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression. For its part, CARICOM is on the verge of concluding and ratifying a Regional Cultural Industries Development Strategy and its expected that Culture will be the sole item on an upcoming meeting of the Council On Human and Social Development (COHSOD). The government of Guyana, through the Minister of Education, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, has committed not only to engagement in this programme but also to providing the sort of leadership on CARICOM cultural issues that Guyana once possessed a reputation for, particularly during the 1970s.

**UN System** – The United Nations system is critical in achieving Guyana’s cultural policy initiatives, particularly via engagement with a few key agencies. Foremost of these is UNESCO, with the greatest potential support for policy development and implementation coming under the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression. While Guyana acceded to the Convention in 2009, we failed to honour our obligations to produce the first scheduled Quadrennial Periodic Report (QPR) in 2013 as well as our subsequent scheduled QPR in 2017. Relative to the Culture and Citizenship component of the policy framework, the Ministry of Social Cohesion’s Inter-Ministry Steering Committee is a mechanism established to, inter alia, review

the UNDP-funded Social Cohesion Strategy Plan, and independent engagement has also been made with UNDP's social cohesion experts with regard to policy development. With regard to the issue of language in early childhood development, which comes under the Culture and Education component of the policy framework, there is engagement with UNICEF on rolling out bilingual early childhood education programmes.

***Bilateral Initiatives*** – There are a series of initial bilateral engagements with various states towards exploring areas of direct cooperation on culture in specific areas. These include Brazil (film, publications, translation services), Argentina (publications, continuation of art restoration project), Mexico (arts education), and Trinidad and Tobago (creative artist registry). Further engagement with several key nation state partners is expected as the policy is implemented.

## FINANCING

Cultural policy formulation in itself and the establishment of derivative initiatives inevitably need substantial financial support. The initial research and consultation upon which this policy has been based, the Janus Cultural Policy Initiative was funded by a Euro 20,000 grant provided by the Prince Claus Fund.

Taking into account Guyana's limited resources and a global trend towards shrinking financing of cultural policy and cultural initiatives over the past few years, creative and complementary methods of financing cultural policy will need to be developed as part of a general financing strategy. This strategy will be built upon the following main pillars:

***Government of Guyana*** - since 2015, the government of Guyana has put significant resources into the funding of cultural policy and derivative initiatives, and in more targeted ways than previously obtained. The retaining of a Cultural Policy Advisor and investment in a Language Policy Colloquium held at the University of Guyana are two examples. However, much work still needs to be done in mapping total government expenditure on culture across ministries and departments under the policy areas outlined in this document, eliminating overlaps and redundancy and targeting gap areas.

***Multilateral and Intergovernmental Programmes*** - precisely because international financing support for culture is shrinking, particularly with regard to heritage protection and preservation, innovative ways of finding and successfully accessing previously untapped areas of such support will be critical during the policy process. Examples of current initiatives that may well be threatened include the US government Ambassador's Fund for Culture and Museums Connect. Tremendous opportunities for funding will be created via our eligibility to access the International Fund for Cultural Development (IFCD).

***International NGO Partnerships*** - even as there has been marked decrease in the funding for cultural programmes, Guyana's inability to substantially access such funding previously implicitly means that there is opportunity for a growth in support, particularly via partnerships, in funding or otherwise supporting such programmes. It will also help tremendously that such partnerships will be established within a larger policy framework that focuses on mainstreaming culture in development.

***Private Sector Initiatives*** - private sector inputs will be critical in supporting and sustaining the financing of initiatives coming out of the Framework National Cultural Policy in all three areas of policy development and implementation. In mainstreaming culture in development, there is tremendous opportunity for partnerships between the private sector and government in ensuring that, for example, large-scale investment agreements contain cultural contribution clauses, whether in the spirit of corporate citizenship or as part of the menu of obligations for incentives. While private sector support will no doubt be welcome with regard to Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion, private sector *investment* will be the critical component in Creatives Arts and Cultural Industries Development.



## MAINSTREAMING CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“For the first time at the global level, the recently adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 acknowledges the key role of culture, creativity and cultural diversity to solving sustainable development challenges.”

**Irina Bokova, Secretary-General of UNESCO (2015)**

## INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to the 1977 National Cultural Policy, AJ Seymour notes that the then government of Guyana dedicated an entire chapter, Chapter 23, of its 1972-1976 National Development Plan to integrating the development of culture and sports into the overall development framework. The introduction to that chapter reads:

“It is germane to any developmental plan that specific attention be paid to identifying and cultivating those values and sensibilities which are common denominators of the different groups and interests which comprise a nation. To this end, a programme has been devised to establish a multi-dimensional base from which our cultural activities and our prowess in the field of athletics and sport will be projected. Such a programme is designed to: (a) develop and foster a sense of national identity and national unity; (b) develop an awareness of the heritage of the past and its assimilations; and (c) develop pride in the achievements of Guyanese at home and abroad so that a spirit of self-reliance and self-confidence will permeate the Guyanese nation and the spirit of co-operation and team relationships among the various sectors of the population will be emphasized.”

In contrast, Guyana’s National Development Strategy (2001-2010) mentions culture only in a tangential sense, except where it speaks generally to the preservation of Amerindian traditional culture. There is no specific component of the strategy which speaks to cultural concerns as critical to the development paradigm, inclusive of development of creative and cultural industries as an option for economic diversification and growth.

Under the Prince Claus Fund-supported Janus Cultural Policy Initiative (2014), coming out of both research and consultations, three areas were identified under the general theme of Mainstreaming Culture in Development:

**Education**  
**Environment**  
**Citizenship**

These three areas correspond directly to three of the six thematic policy areas coming out of the UNESCO Post-2015 Dialogues on Culture in Development, namely: Education; Environment and Climate Change; and Inclusion and Reconciliation, respectively.

The intention is to focus on these three areas for the policy development and implementation cycle of 2016-2020, with Sustainable Urbanization, Gender, and Poverty Reduction being the focus areas for 2021-2025, and review and reinforcement of all areas for 2026-2030.

In addition to the UNESCO framework for mainstreaming culture in development, the implementation of this component of the Framework National Cultural Policy will be integrated with with the Framework Green State Development Strategy. The thematic colour for this component is green, symbolic of sustainable development.



## CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Guyana has traditionally operated under a dichotomous geographical philosophy wherein the coastal region is seen as [relatively] developed while the Hinterland region, particularly those areas traditionally occupied by indigenous communities, is seen as backward or underdeveloped. As we continue to see the devastating impact of climate change, coupled with a coastal culture of consumption and wastage, this philosophy is slowly being reversed as is happening globally.

The UNESCO Post-2015 Dialogues on Culture report, Chapter 3.5 (Culture, The Environment and Climate Change), notes that “Indigenous and local communities play a central role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity [and] indigenous languages and cultural expressions such as songs and stories often contain valuable information about the environment in which they were developed.”

According to Project COBRA, a Guiana Shield environmental initiative supported by the European Commission, “Culture and ecology are tightly interwoven in a complex dynamic that maintains the social-ecological system. For Indigenous community members, maintaining traditional practices also ensure that the environment is used in a sustainable way.”

The Project also notes the importance of transmission of culture in sustainable environmental practices warning that “without strong support for maintaining Indigenous culture in young people, the capacity to play this role in the near future is threatened.”

The Guyana Framework Green State Development Strategy also places a premium on environmentally sustainable cultural practices.

Within this context, over the next five years, as a critical part of its commitment to a green economy, the government of Guyana will:

- \* Empower Indigenous communities in maintaining and transmitting their culture to future generations.
- \* Create channels of communication among Indigenous and other hinterland communities.
- \* Create and maintain mechanisms for Indigenous inputs into national programmes for sustainable development.
- \* Create monitoring and evaluation as well as impact assessment models for external engagement with Indigenous cultural spaces.
- \* Recognize and reward best practice initiatives on cultural preservation both within Indigenous communities and from external operators.

## CULTURE AND EDUCATION

If international consensus on the role of culture in sustainable development has been consistent on one thing, it has been the nexus between culture and education, including both the opportunities and challenges that come with it. According to UNESCO's *Cultural Policy, A Preliminary Study* (1969):

“The problem of the links between the ministry of culture or cultural affairs and the ministry of education comes up everywhere - one of its forms being that cultural affairs are often only one department of the ministry of education. This may be due to the fact that a clear distinction is not always drawn between knowledge and culture, between access to knowledge and access to the resources that culture offers. Furthermore, because training is traditionally a matter for the ministry of education, training in the arts is also placed under that ministry. Lastly, it is chiefly during school years that individuals are brought to take an interest in the arts and in the world in general.”

Guyana's placement of 'Culture' as a department within the Ministry of Education persisted until the mid-1990s when a Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport was created. A directorate was subsequently introduced. In 2015, this Ministry was brought under the aegis of the Ministry of Education with the directorates for Culture, Youth and Sport retained as a distinct department within the Ministry of Education. In September of 2017, the decision was taken to delink the Department of Culture from the education portfolio and merge it with the Department of Social Cohesion under the Ministry of the Presidency. Close linkages remain however, between the Ministry of Education and what is now the Department of Social Cohesion, Culture, Youth and Sport.

The post-2015 Dialogues on Culture (2015) report notes that “When mainstreamed in education, culture builds confidence and encourages dialogue, better preparing young people for life in a multicultural society” and that “Cultural expressions are essential for the holistic development of young people, helping them to achieve better educational results.”

At the level of CARICOM, the Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD), in its bid to create a regional strategy has identified human resource development based on a strong arts and culture education as a critical component for cultural industries growth and overall regional development. The government of Guyana recognizes that the challenges engendered by our diversity provide opportunities for innovative, relevant solutions, particularly when education is examined through the lens of culture. Towards this end, from 2016 to 2020, we are committed to:

- \* Comprehensively examine the challenges faced by students, particularly in the Indigenous community, and implement courses in the language of first instruction.
- \* Enhance arts education in schools within a comprehensive STEM+A policy paradigm.
- \* Ensure that cultural equity is created and sustained within the public education system.
- \* Enhance the role of multicultural education as a critical component of curriculum reform.

If there has been one enduring characteristic of our cultural plurality it is has been the historical divisions that have stymied our development, despite our being a resource rich country. Today, as globalization accelerates resulting in significant demographic shifts, cultural conflict is increasingly featured on the global stage. If culture can be a cause for division, it also can be the catalyst for cohesion, providing that the right policy measures are in place. The role culture plays in building bridges has been important enough for UNESCO to include 'Culture, Inclusion and Reconciliation' as one of the action agenda areas in its post-2015 Dialogues on Culture report:

“Cultural practices that integrate members of different communities contribute to dialogue and decrease psychological distances. The consultations offered many successful examples of using culture for dialogue, in particular in places where there have been recurrent inter-ethnic tensions or marginalization of minorities.”

During the Janus Cultural Policy Initiative, a programme called 'Conversations on Citizenship' was initiated consisting of pre-conversation consultations exploring issues of race/ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, nationality, peripherality and politics, followed by a three-day programme of conversations in which participants included representatives of the Chinese Association, the Guyana Rastafari Council, the African Cultural Development Association, the Indian Arrival Committee, the Amerindian People's Association, several religious bodies, and the then Speaker of the National Assembly, Raphael Trotman.

From its formation in 2015 to the departmental merger in 2017, the Department of Social Cohesion has had widening consultations in various communities across Guyana and has hosted various fora promoting deeper levels of understanding among the countries various religious, ethnic and cultural groups.

Coming out of those dialogues, as well as further research and consultation, the government of Guyana commits to:

- \* Establish mechanisms under which there are regular fora for national dialogues on citizen identity, rights and access to participation in national life.
- \* Establish mechanisms for community-organized, government-supported historiography projects and inter-community cultural knowledge sharing.
- \* Support creative arts initiatives that speak directly to the issue of citizenship and social cohesion.



## **CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION, PROTECTION AND PROMOTION**

“The safeguarding of cherished cultural heritage sites and of the ensemble of the intangible cultural expressions, knowledge and skills that collectively define a community can be considered in itself to be a contribution to human wellbeing. Without the cultural heritage – the familiar landmarks of our cities and landscapes, the traditions and particular ways of life inherited from our ancestors – our very existence as individuals would be hard to imagine.”

**UNESCO (2013)**

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion is currently the strongest area of operation for Guyana with long-established programmes particularly in the area of protection of built heritage. The successes here have been reflected most recently in the National Trust of Guyana winning an internationally recognized Green Apple Award in 2016 for its work on built heritage protection. That said, these successes have been achieved in a generally poor policy and operational environment with most cultural heritage mechanisms suffering from poor governance or increasingly dilapidated or otherwise inadequate infrastructure. Additionally, the successes in Tangible Cultural Heritage protection have been offset by significant failure in Intangible Cultural Heritage Stewardship.

While Guyana has ratified the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, no steps have been taken to fulfilling obligations under the convention even as the country is at the cusp of offshore oil drilling for extraction of petroleum resources. Of the other two UNESCO conventions related to culture, Guyana has accepted the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and acceded to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (2005) although the country has twice missed its scheduled Quadrennial Periodic Reports in 2013 and 2017.

The general policy thrust in this area will be to:

- \* Assess the correct current state of our tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- \* Develop mechanisms to strengthen weak areas of cultural heritage preservation, protection and promotion.
- \* Bring Guyana inline with out international commitments and obligations on cultural heritage preservation, protection and promotion.

The thematic colour for this component is blue, symbolic of heritage protection.

## A NATIONAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

Going forward, it is not enough to establish general policy on national heritage without the administrative oversight to implement and evaluate policy objectives. A clearer case for the rationale behind such a mechanism could not be made than that put forward by President David Granger, speaking at the time in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, when he proposed in January of 2013, in Parliament, that:

“Doling out dollops of cash to one or two ethnic groups, one or two times a year is not a clear articulation of a coherent cultural policy. Public money must serve the public good. It should be expended to ensure equity, to educate everyone and to establish standards of excellence in the arts. It must enrich our national heritage by making it easy for everyone to be exposed to work that encourages integration, enhances our solidarity, energises the young and enriches the quality of human life. The National Assembly, for these reasons, is urged to establish a National Heritage Commission that is inclusionary in its composition and that is integrative in its ideology... The proposed Commission can be charged, also, at the more practical level, with the direction of commemorative events and the establishment of memorials which, as the Constitution prescribes, ‘Celebrate our cultural and racial diversity and strengthen our unity by eliminating any and every form of discrimination.’”

Brigadier Granger would then go on to outline his unfruitful deliberations with then Minister of Culture, Dr. Frank Anthony, including his concession that there be a National Commemoration Commission instead of a National Heritage Commission. It should be noted that the basic framework for National Cultural Development Commission was drawn up at some point under Anthony’s tenure but no steps were made to develop it further.

A de facto Commemoration Commission established late 2015 under the aegis of the Ministry of Education to provide supervisory support to the 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations was in 2016 moved under the Office of the President. The Commission was then streamlined to the Office of the Coordinator of National Events (CNE) working in conjunction with state agencies responsible for various state-level initiatives. Without prejudice to the establishment of the CNE, a National Heritage Commission should be established to coordinate all heritage activities and fulfill, in keeping with the thrust of President Granger’s initial submission, the following mandate:

- \* Establish a mechanism that recognizes and rewards those who exemplify the embodiment, stewardship or celebration of Guyana’s rich heritage.
- \* Coordinate and create standards and guidelines for national symbols.
- \* Establish mechanisms to formulate, nurture a sense of Guyanese identity, recognizing not only its intrinsically diverse core nature but also its amorphous and fluid nature.
- \* Establish a protocol to integrate Guyana’s heritage as a central component of our national development agenda.
- \* Create a strategy for the sustainable documentation of Guyana’s cultural heritage, including a national protocol for heritage research and a database to serve as a repository for all available heritage research.
- \* Have general oversight for Guyana’s ratification of and commitment to UNESCO conventions on culture as well as all other international obligations.

## TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE, GENERAL

According to UNESCO:

“Tangible heritage includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant to the archaeology, architecture, science or technology of a specific culture.”

Perhaps the best counterpoint from which to contextualise the status of tangible cultural heritage in Guyana is VS Naipaul’s infamous assertion that, “History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies.”

As a relatively young nation, and one birthed in a space originally inhabited by pre-Columbian civilizations that placed a greater emphasis on sustainable engagement with nature than grand monuments and architecture, Guyana’s tangible heritage is largely comprised of indigenous artifacts and sites, followed by artifacts and architecture from the fairly recent colonial era to the present day. Our tangible heritage has been enriched, by the diversity of cultures that have come together here.

In villages and towns across Guyana it is not an unusual occurrence to see historic mandirs, mosques and churches in close proximity, and while Georgetown has lost much of its ornate colonial era architecture, enough of it remains to warrant a comprehensive programme to restore the remaining edifices. Additionally, as extractive industries and other explorative interests push further into areas previously inhabited by either indigenous or colonial era communities, artifacts and other forms of tangible cultural heritage (petroglyphs for example) are being discovered.

Primary current responsibility for the preservation of Guyana’s tangible cultural heritage falls among several institutions, namely: the National Museum; the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology; the African Heritage Museum; the National Archives; the Environmental Protection Agency; and the National Gallery at Castellani House. Some private galleries, private and state agency museums, and commercial entities also serve as smaller repositories of TCH. Considering that there is no overarching TCH policy framework, the government of Guyana resolves to, over the next five years:

- \* Establish and improve fundamental systems for the preservation, protection and promotion of our Tangible Cultural Heritage.
- \* Establish a clear delineation of responsibility for TCH management oversight.
- \* Devolve direct oversight power away from the Department of Culture and invest policy implementation responsibility in board mechanisms.



## BUILT HERITAGE

Guyana's built heritage has, as is reflective of so many other aspects of our society, evolved over the ages to reflect an often tenuous balance between functionality and culturally-defined aesthetic appeal. Between the Dutch-derived koker system, the English colonial era houses with their distinctive Demerara shutters, the Amerindian benches, old Dutch forts and the ornately designed mandirs featuring depictions of Hindu deities like Hanuman and Ganesh, Guyana represents a wealth of built heritage.

The National Trust was established by the eponymous Act in 1972 with the mandate of identifying and preserving built heritage of culturally significant value. According to Seymour,

“The trust [sic] was also empowered to preserve furniture, pictures and chattels of all descriptions, having national, historic or artistic interest. Finally, the trust was charged with the responsibility of providing access to and enjoyment of such buildings and places by the general public.”

While excellent work has been undertaken in recent years by the National Trust, gaps with regard to policy remain. A fledgling effort circa 2004 to have Georgetown designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the basis of its colonial era architecture was aborted, and circa 2012 a dubiously legitimate lease for the gazetted national monument Red House was awarded to a private corporation comprised of persons affiliated with the then ruling People's Progressive Party, including former Chairman of the National Trust and then Director of Culture, Dr. James Rose. In 2013, the 40-year-old heritage site, the Umana Yana was consumed by fire purportedly of electrical origin, while the historic City Hall has been allowed to deteriorate. There is no clear long term plan to designate newly built heritage sites, particularly using the powers afforded under the National Trust Act. Against this backdrop, the Government of Guyana commits to, during the upcoming five years:

- \* Update the National Trust Act to offer more comprehensive protections to built heritage.
- \* Establish a national built heritage preservation strategy and protocol that categorizes built heritage sites and assigns a menu of preservation, protection and restoration measures to each.
- \* Create a five-year strategy for the identification and classification of built heritage sites, including the commissioning of new sites.
- \* Create a protocol for the creation of an architectural heritage standard based upon new structures created in the traditional style, the establishment of a contemporary aesthetic, and innovation in design.

## ART AND ARTEFACTS

One of the more iconic place names in Guyana is Timehri, from the indigenous word for “rock painting”, the earliest example of the practice of visual art in Guyana. From pre-Columbian times to the present day, Guyana has accumulated a wealth of art and artifacts, ranging from indigenous utilitarian tools (clay pots, arrowheads) to the master works of art housed in the national collection.

Responsibility for the protection, preservation and restoration of historically significant art and artifacts in Guyana falls under the purview of several key institutions: the National Gallery at Castellani House; the National Museum; the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of African Heritage. Of significance is the privately run Guyana Heritage Museum at Kastev, West Coast Demerara. The National Trust Act, it should be noted, vests some account of responsibility in this area in the Trust.

Mismanagement at the National Museum in recent years has seen the disappearance, degradation and destruction of items in the collection and the misappropriation of funds in at least two major infrastructural enhancement projects, namely a walk-in aquarium and a digitalization and digital display project. Infrastructural issues continue to plague the heritage building currently housing the Walter Roth Museum, and the National Art Gallery has also struggled in recent years with coordinating preservation and restoration efforts both nationally and internationally funded.

In light of these issues, the government of Guyana, during the period 2016-2020, commits to:

- \* Sign on to the UNASUR Ministerial Declaration of Commitment to Prevent and Combat the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage Property, and implement measures to support same.
- \* Finalise and implement the National Museums Policy.
- \* Establish a National Museums Board via a National Museums Act, and initiate a National Museums Improvement Plan based on auditing, cataloguing and carrying out a physical assessment of both private and public museums throughout Guyana.
- \* Formally establish the National Art Gallery via act of Parliament and establish a multi-year strategy and protocol for acquisition, preservation and restoration of works held by the National Gallery.

## ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

The National Archives of Guyana was established in 1954 to house any material of significant public including “any manuscript, newspaper, picture, painting, document, register, printed material, book, map, plan, drawing, photograph negative and positive pictures; [and] recorded information of any medium.” While as early as 1977 Seymour put forward the idea of “introduction of legislation, the provision of a fully equipped and well-designed archival building, the training of professional staff, the establishment of a National Archives Advisory Council”, this would only be done until 1982 with the passage of the National Archives Act.

Circa 2009, the Archives was moved from Main Street to Homestretch Avenue and renamed the Walter Rodney National Archives. The facility has benefited from some management training as well as the provision of equipment, particularly under the Indian Immigration Records digitization project but remains short of both human resource, equipment and infrastructural capacity to fulfill its mandate. During the 2016-2020 five-year policy implementation cycle, the Government of Guyana commits to:

- \* Update and enforce the National Archives Act of Guyana.
- \* Establish the National Archives Advisory Committee as provided for in the current Act.
- \* Establish, without prejudice to the Advisory Committee, a coordinating mechanism for identification and archiving of material, headed by the National Archives, and including the National Library, University of Guyana, Office of the Commission of Information, Department of Public Information, and the public service media.
- \* Create a comprehensive National Archival Policy, particularly to include a protocol for the storage of original/exclusively digital archival material.
- \* Create and implement a multiyear national preservation, expansion and digitization strategy plan, 2018-2021.

## NATURAL HERITAGE

Guyana's diverse cultural heritage is matched in equal measure by - and is inextricably linked to - the splendor of our natural heritage, one which features dramatically varying landscapes and a bounty of flora and fauna. Our natural heritage is integral to how Guyanese define our identity and live our diverse culture and subcultures, particularly how we engage in the landscape in both concrete and abstract ways. Our rivers for example are both a source of livelihood as well as spiritual succour, whether the inspiration of poetry like Ian McDonald's *Essequibo* or the source of powerful mythos, from the water mama folklore to the story of Kaie.

Guyana's fauna is also a critical component of our heritage - from the Canje pheasant, our national bird, to the harpy eagle, the jaguar, the giant river otter, the arapaima and hundreds of other species, our animal biodiversity is a rich analogue to our human diversity. Plant life is also of extremely significant to Guyanese self-definition, integral in housing, economic activity, traditional medicine, food culture and aesthetics. The traditional saying that "If you come to Guyana and eat labba and drink creek water you never want to leave" is in essence the best summary of how geography, fauna (labba) and flora (creek water has its particular black or red colour due to the infusion of colour from fallen leaves) combine to define an intangible sense of place.

Currently, primary responsibility for the management of natural heritage in Guyana falls under the aegis of National Parks Commission and the Protected Areas Commission, the latter being established under the Protected Areas Act (2011). As of 2016, moves were under way to merge the two entities. The Ministry of Natural Resources, under which aegis the Environmental Protection Agency, has overall executive government responsibility for this area.

At the time of the writing of this policy, there are five designated protected areas: Kaieteur National Park; Shell Beach; the Kanuku Mountains; the area falling under control of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development; and the Konashen District, a community-owned conservation area. Beginning with the Desmond Hoyte administration's designation of Iwokrama as an internationally managed protected area in 1989, Guyana has shown demonstrable commitment to environmental conservation, notably former President Bharrat Jagdeo's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and President David Granger's Framework Green State Development Strategy. In recent years, indigenous communities have become increasingly involved and innovative in monitoring areas under their control, particularly with the assistance from local NGOs such as the Amerindian People's Association under the leadership of Jean La Rose, and international organisations.

Despite these notable conservation efforts, critical challenges remain, particularly with regard to the impact of the extractive industries on land. Against this background, the government of Guyana commits to:

- \* Consolidating and strengthening all mechanisms that relate to natural heritage protection into one.
- \* Create a standing partnership on national heritage protection linking government, non-governmental bodies and communities.
- \* Ensuring that the principle of free prior and informed consent is consistently applied to all projects that are being executed in ecologically sensitive areas.

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE, GENERAL

As a direct result of Guyana's rich and variegated ethnic and religious diversity, a convergence of points of origin and the impact of socio-historical processes, contemporary Guyana is rich milieu of social practices, rituals and festivals, from Diwali to Queh Queh to Mashramani to celebrations of the Chinese New Year. While many of these traditional practices are rooted in particular religious theology and ritual, what is beautiful about this is that these practices have transcended their particularity and enjoy national participation and reverence. Christmas, Eid Ul Adah and Phagwah are the three most fitting examples of this phenomenon, one unparalleled in the world in terms of equitable representation both from a legal as well as socio-cultural perspective.

Additionally, this diversity has resulted in a linguistic richness that we have placed far too little value on in preference of a monolingual tradition that has not only impoverished our diversity, handicapped our competence and capacity for interacting with other cultures, but would have also served to effectively deny significant sections of the population equitable access to education.

The hitherto absence of a National Cultural Policy has had the most significant impact on this area of Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion and the resultant loss has been incalculable. In recognition of this, the main objectives of policy in this area will be to:

- \* Reinforce the intrinsic value of all aspects of our Intangible Cultural Heritage and establish equity as the basic principle for all ICH policy and programme efforts.
- \* Establish the National Archives Advisory Committee as provided for in the current Act.
- \* Establish, via legislation, a National Public History Council.
- \* Establish, without prejudice to the Advisory Committee, a coordinating mechanism for identification and archiving of material, headed by the National Archives, and including the National Library, University of Guyana, Office of the Commission of Information, Department of Public Information, and the public service media.
- \* Create a comprehensive National Archival Policy, particularly to include a protocol for the storage of original/exclusively digital archival material.
- \* Create and implement a multiyear national preservation, expansion and digitization strategy plan, 2017-2020.

## TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, SOCIAL PRACTICES, RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

The area of Social Practices, Rituals and Festivals constitutes the most comprehensive and complex component of intangible cultural heritage since it covers all other areas and very often includes a hybrid configuration of two or more areas. For example, the traditional practice of what is often referred to as an Indian wedding is a ceremony rooted in Hindu traditional marital ritual but which includes elements of hybrid religious wedding practice (often featuring an Islamic or Christian/Western component), tassa drumming as a traditional performing art, traditional craftsmanship in the icons and other artifacts used in the ritual, traditional food production as well as eating rituals, traditional wear/fashion and of course certain traditional oral expressions. Mashramani remains our best example of a secular festival with a relatively short existence but which has nonetheless elevated to a level of national buy-in, partially from official state support, partially from organic participatory growth.

While some practices remain stable, and while others grow and evolve, many are in danger of extinction or entering an unrecoverable pre-extinction phase. The traditional masquerade band for example has declined from a vibrant practice heralding the advent of both Christmas and Mashramani seasons across the country to a handful of practitioners, often without the full complement of drummers, dancers and stilt-walkers that comprise the traditional troupe. There are also other more personally, familiarly or communally practiced cultural rituals that face extinction as well. This considered, over the next five years the government of Guyana commits to taking the following actions:

- \* The creation of a multitiered, multimedia database of Social Practices, Rituals and Festivals with categorization according to state support, private sector support, transmission mechanisms, documentation, and ubiquity of practice.
- \* Developing and implementing a comprehensive intellectual property rights regime that covers traditional knowledge.
- \* The creation of a library of anthropological studies on the Guyanese people and the establishment of protocol covering anthropological research on Guyana with a particular focus on knowledge sharing.
- \* A multi-year, promotion-based public education campaign on the full range of social practices, rituals and festivals in Guyana with a focus on the importance of preservation via documentation and transmission of knowledge.
- \* An incentivized support regime for organisations, community-based ones in particular, engaged in preservation, protection and promotion activities.

## ORAL TRADITIONS AND EXPRESSIONS, LANGUAGE

While Guyana's official language is English, our rich linguistic heritage is most apparent in our place names which run a gamut of languages, for example: Dutch (Uitvlugt), Spanish (Santa Rosa), French (Chateau Margot), and Kabakaburi (Arawak). In addition to the nine Amerindian languages, a small number of Guyanese are also known to speak Hindi, Portuguese, French, Spanish and Dutch, while the majority of Guyanese speak various dialects of a more or less standard Creole.

Today, our linguistic heritage faces a few key challenges divided roughly between the loss of old languages and the expanding influence of new ones. With regard to the former, not only are several of our indigenous languages facing virtual extinction but some less documented dialects as well, for example, what is known as Berbice Dutch. With the loss of these languages, we also face the loss of the rich tradition of folklore and idiom they encapsulate. With regard to the influence of new languages, we are presented with the challenge of migration (Brazil, China, Cuba, Venezuela) and regional integration into UNASUR and other multilingual blocs. In summary, our challenges in this area are concerned with preservation and integration. Against this backdrop, over the next five years the government of Guyana commits to:

- \* A mapping of the entire traditional linguistic heritage of Guyana and the official recognition of the validity of non-English languages as part of our national patrimony.
- \* The sourcing and allocation of resources targeting priority areas to mitigate the loss of oral and other linguistic heritage
- \* The development and integration of education programmes designed to instruct Indigenous children in particular in their first language.
- \* The promotion of language preservation and education in the public service media.
- \* The development of both traditional and non-traditional language competence certification in the public service.

## TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS

Guyana has a rich history of performing arts in general, ranging from popular, commercial performing arts, classical performing arts, and performing arts aligned more or less to a specific tradition. The entry on “**Performing Arts**” in the section on Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development provides some background on creative arts in Guyana while the policy recommendations in the entry on “**Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events**” in this subsection of the document, ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’, apply to the Traditional Performing Arts.



## BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONCERNING NATURE AND THE UNIVERSE

The Constitution of Guyana (Cap 1:01, 146) recognizes the Guyanese citizen's inherent right to freedom of conscience, freedom to choose and practice their own faith in particular. Since independence, the state has made provisions for six officially mandated religious holidays distributed evenly among the three major religions in Guyana: Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. While this remains a credit to Guyana's recognition and celebration of our diverse heritage, our wealth of 'knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe' is far more complex and includes not only subsets of the primary three but also, obeah, Rastafarianism, and the shamanic tradition of the Indigenous.

Guyana represents a multiplicity of faiths, some of which have enjoyed seemingly unshakeable hegemony, others which have been marginalized including some to virtual extinction. There is also the issue of real and perceived hegemony both among and within faiths. For example, the issue of Christian prayers being standardized in schools has attracted national attention in recent times, as well as the issue of the official designation of certain Hindu religious holidays as proposed by opposing Hindu organizations. In recognition of this diversity and the challenges posed, the Government of Guyana, over the 2016-2020 period, commits to:

- \* Reaffirm that Guyana is a secular state respectful of the right to freedom of conscience, with no single religion enjoying hegemony in the public sphere.
- \* Ensure that there are clear, unbiased avenues for the reasonable integration of the views of all religious communities and representative organizations into public policy and implementation processes.
- \* Ensure that there is adequate documentation of endangered traditional and historically significant religious practices with reasonable attempts at preservation.

## TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

AJ Seymour, in his 1977 policy, fixes the beginning of a Guyanese craft tradition firmly in the life cultures of the indigenous populations of Guyana.

“To meet the challenges of their environment, the Amerindian peoples living in Guyana developed an intricate pattern of crafts, making use of the various substances near their dwellings. Wood, straw, balata, cotton, leather and clay were among the more common elements used although the excellence of the craft varied from one tribe to another depending upon the emergence of master craftsmen and the needs of the time.”

From independence onwards, craft not only flourished but diversified with the advent of techniques like batik and tie-dye, the advent of a more pronounced Afrocentric or Rastafarian aesthetic, and the introduction of animal-based products, particularly leather and reptile skin products.

Early in the new millennium, a traditional craft collective, the Rupununi Weavers' Society rose to national recognition via its collaboration with the Walter Roth Museum under which, having received a small subvention from government, the society would produce hand-woven hammocks and other craft items for sale. Government support for this initiative has ceased however and the society appears to be dormant. For government's intended policy on Traditional Craftsmanship, see [*Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development: Craft*].

## CREATIVE ARTS AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT

“The cultural industries can be a major target for policy leading towards development that is both economically and culturally sustainable; policy initiatives to support the growth of these industries can yield significant long-term economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits.”

UNESCO, *Reshaping Cultural Policies* (2015)

## INTRODUCTIION

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that trade in creative goods and services grew 134 percent between 2002 and 2011, reaching a total of US \$646 billion in the latter year. Creative Industry development is increasingly become a central pillar of economic development and/or diversification for developed and developing countries alike yet Guyana has perpetually failed to develop any significant movement on CI policy, and even basic information on actual outputs remain unavailable.

Guyana is a fledgling creative industries environment, but one with tremendous potential for growth based on our diverse multicultural heritage and a spirit of creative innovation that has found expression in a multiplicity of ways from indigenous architecture, to our hybrid culinary culture to our creative arts. Additionally, our landscape provides a rich and variegated backdrop for the development of cultural industry initiatives such as filmmaking and festivals.

Growth of the creative industries will not only take comprehensive research and planning but also sustainable management and implementation over the medium to long term, across the two five-year implementation cycles and beyond. While in the short term a policy unit would be capable of crafting initial plans, execution and implementation require the establishment of an overarching body to manage creative arts and cultural industries development over the long term.

The central thrust for this component of the national cultural policy process will be the establishment of an intelligence collection mechanism for current creative industry sectors; the mapping of human and institutional resources nationally and internationally; and strategic support for creative industry stakeholders. ranging from direct technical and financial support from government to the enactment of intellectual property legislation.

The general objectives of policy in the area of Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development will be to:

- \* Create an environment where the creative citizen has a fundamental right to exist as an individual and to contribute to society to the best of their ability without fear.
- \* Establish innovative educational mechanisms to enhance the development of the creative citizen.
- \* Establish and maintain mechanisms that sustain and reward artistic excellence through transparent and innovative systems.
- \* Create an environment where the creative citizen can earn a fair and dignified living.
- \* Affirm in policy as well as practice the critical role that creative expression has to play in economic development as well as national social cohesion.

The thematic colour for this component is orange, symbolic of the creative economy.

## A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The sheer range and scope of activities required to enhance the artistic and creative industries environment will require a level of coordination and strategic planning that is only possible through the establishment of one central intelligence-gathering, planning, promotion, monitoring and evaluation body.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company Ltd (CreativeTT) is the state company created and managed under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Barbados has gone further, in 2015 implementing one of the core recommendations of the CARICOM Draft Strategic Plan for Cultural Industries Development and passing the Creative Industries Development Act which established the Creative Industries Development Authority.

In keeping with national imperatives and using the guidance of the CARICOM framework, the government of Guyana commits, within the 2016-2020 policy cycle, to the establishment of a National Creative Industries Development Commission tasked with the following key objectives:

- \* Coordinate research and data gathering on creative industries in Guyana.
- \* Create a strategic development plan for each sub-sector to be fully deployed in 2021-2025 policy cycle.
- \* Monitor and evaluate the growth of creative industries and plan interventions to stimulate same where necessary.
- \* Advise government of Guyana on ways of further diversifying the national economy via development of the creative industries.
- \* Establish a national mechanism for the financing of cultural and creative industries, from the individual artist to sector corporations.
- \* Promote the local consumption and use of Guyanese cultural goods and services through a strong advocacy, marketing and incentives regime.
- \* Ensure that creative sector development is based on increased access to external markets including MICSUR, CARICOM, the EU, North America, Africa, India and China

# MUSIC

## Background

### *Historical*

The full richness of Guyana's cultural diversity finds an embodiment in music second only to the culinary arts. It is an unparalleled symphony with distinct traditional strains from virtually every continent in the world as well as fusions and idioms distinct to the Guyanese experience. While Guyana has not in recent times reached the level of global recognition as our counterparts in the Caribbean community, this has more been a function of poor infrastructure than it has been that of the absence of talent. The post-independence era saw an upsurge in big band music as well as the rise of steel pan bands, followed by international pop hits from Sammy Baksh ('To Be Lonely') and Lionel Abel ('Lonely Man'), which further gave way to the superstardom of Eddie Grant in the 1980s. Since then, Guyana's music industry, though enriched by a wave of calypso greats during the eighties and chutney greats during the 1990s, has perpetually failed to launch although artistes of [partial] Guyanese heritage - Rihanna, Leona Lewis, and Deborah Cox - have gone on to create international music careers.

### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

Guyanese music from 2010 to 2015 saw a particularly rich flourishing of talent, particularly in the areas of pop music and soca and to a lesser degree, hip hop. There was however a clear decline in the more traditional forms of music, chutney and calypso with the latter particularly suffering from increasingly overt political control and marginalization. While music studios like Brutal Tracks and Kross Kolors increased production relative to recent years, music production as an enterprise continued to suffer from poor intellectual property legislation and enforcement infrastructure and no development and marketing support from government.

### **Current Status**

The emergence of new talents like Poonam Singh, Mystic (Romeo Nirmal) and Kwacie Edmonson, and Lisa Punch's stellar performance on the US television show America's Got Talent, are an indication that Guyanese music continues to throw up great potential. In 2016, the Georgetown Chambers of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) launched an EU funded export diversification and enhancement project geared in part at the music industry. The growing Rupununi Music Festival has proven an innovative way of linking festival promotion, music tourism and indigenous life.

### *Situation and Challenges*

The challenges facing Guyanese music run the gamut from the impending loss of traditional music forms to poor legislative, physical and promotional infrastructure for commercial production to diminished capacity within the sector to consolidate and advocate on clear objectives.

## Recommendations

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Establish a comprehensive intellectual property monitoring, collections and enforcement infrastructure targeted in specific parts towards sustainable development of the music industry.

- \* Research, map and archive traditional musical practices and create sustainable systems for preservation inclusive of leveraging as protected intellectual property.
- \* Establish initiatives to facilitate, both in and out of Guyana, the development of exceptional creative musical talent.
- \* Incentivize private sector investment in the musical arts, from production to performance.
- \* Establish a marketing and promotion mechanism for Guyanese musical output both in and out of Guyana.
- \* Establish partnerships with music as a basis for international cultural integration and exchange.
- \* Create a national multitiered pathway in music education and appreciation, from nursery to tertiary.
- \* Assist local stakeholders in the industry to build capacity in relevant areas of operation.
- \* Develop and promote initiatives geared toward public appreciation of locally produced music.
- \* Establish production infrastructure to complement state initiatives in music support.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Subsequent to mapping, encourage the creation of a distinct Guyanese genre of music as influenced by our diverse heritage.
- \* Establish Guyana as an alternate destination for music festival tourism, particularly the country's interior.
- \* Establish music as a key contributor to economic diversification and a significant earner of foreign exchange.

## PERFORMING ARTS

### Background

#### *Historical*

The performing arts in this sense cover theatre, single performer comedy, and dance. In this regard, the first recorded public performances in Guyana started in the early 1800s with various performance venues being constructed and several troupes providing entertainment primarily to the colonial upper crust. Over the next century and a half, this sort of public entertainment would wax and wane, evolve and transform, in some places finding segregation, in other integration, appealing to exclusive audiences or to large working class followings. The Theatre Guild (with its playhouse) - established officially in 1961 - represents the only lasting institution that came out of that tumultuous era in the pre-Independence period.

The post-Independence era saw the establishment of the Institute of Creative Arts and state support thrown in particular behind dance with the establishment of the National School of Dance under the tutelage of the legendary American dancer Lavinia Williams. The period also saw a flowering of theatre under the Theatre Guild and the emergence of iconic personalities such as Ron Robinson and Habeeb Khan. Of note should during this period should be the formation of The Messenger Group by veteran theatre personality (her parents co-founded the British-Guiana Dramatic Society) and cultural activist, Rajkumari Singh, whose work in developing arts among Indo-Guyanese saw not only literary work being produced but also, with additional input from the Indian Cultural Centre, the emergence of Indian dance forms to the national stage. The 1980s would prove a particularly fruitful period for performing arts with ascendancy of acts like the annual satirical review, The Link Show and the also annual Nriyageet dance spectacular put on by the Shah sisters, in addition to continuously strong performances put on by the National Dance Company, the troupe attached to the National Dance School. The twenty years from 1990 onward saw a rise in the production of popular comedic plays, and then a subsequent waning, particularly with the increasing liberalization of the television sector and the advent of cheap new video technology, and then advent of the Internet.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

[Requires more a comprehensive exploration of complete performing arts environment that would fit better as annexed document.]

### Current Status

#### *Situation and Challenges*

The key challenges facing the performing arts in Guyana remain financing and infrastructure. There are only three theatrical/multipurpose facilities, the National Cultural Centre and the Theatre Guild Playhouse, both in Georgetown, and the LICHAS Hall in Linden. Not only has this resulted in congestion with relation to available performance dates but it also restricts shows to one locale and by extension an intrinsically limited audience. This in term limits capacity for box office revenue, rendering virtually every performing arts project dependent on sponsorship to cover venue rental fees.

The issue of accreditation and programme structure remains a hurdle with regard to the activities carried out under Institute of Creative Arts' National School of Dance and National School of Theatre Arts and Drama (NSTAD)



suffering from unsupervised planning and with no mechanism for evaluation or oversight. Finally, while theatre has enjoyed slightly greater stability than most creative art forms, it has also suffered from a fair amount of stagnation and fragmentation with little movement in the leadership in the sector for about two decades. A National Theatre Company has been established under NSTAD but suffers from the same issues with regard to leadership, accountability and cohesion as the wider theatrical society.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Coordinate with the Ministry of Communities in mapping all municipal and local government facilities with the aim of retrofitting some facilities as community-based performance spaces.
- \* Establish a baseline operational cost for all state-owned performing arts staging facilities and introduce a phased programme of rental reductions to a nominal fee that is as close to zero dollars as feasible for predetermined categories of cultural performances.
- \* Incentivize private sector investment in the operation and maintenance of performance spaces.
- \* In keeping with the recommendations coming out of the CARICOM Regional Development Strategy and Action Plan for the Cultural Industries, explore the feasibility of establishing a performing arts high school.
- \* Upgrade existing facilities for performance arts education even as the groundwork is being prepared for the more permanent Creative Arts Centre.
- \* Empower emerging new leadership in the performing arts by providing arts management scholarships and training support for young stakeholders and establish good governance practices within performing arts groups as a prerequisite of government engagement.
- \* Establish performing arts exchanges with international partners, both regionally and further afield, in order to both expose Guyanese audiences to global performing arts culture and to expose our performers to various audiences.
- \* Create a national multitiered pathway in performing arts education and appreciation, from nursery to tertiary.
- \* Develop and promote initiatives geared toward greater public appreciation and consumption of local performing arts.
- \* Research and document traditional crafts and provide support for transmission of knowledge where necessary.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Establish the performing arts as an integral component of social life across Guyana.
- \* Establish Guyana as a leading regional centre for performing arts tourism and the performing arts as a sustainably integrated component of our overall tourism services.

## LITERARY ARTS

### Background

#### *Historical*

Guyana has been a source for indigenous literary production since the end of the 19th century. Since then, the country has produced a prodigious amount of literary talent from pioneers like Edgar Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris and Jan Carew to the generation that included Pauline Melville, Rupert Roopnaraine, John Agard, Grace Nichols and Michael Gilkes, followed by the era that produced Jan Shinebourne, Mahadai Das, Sharon Maas, David Dabydeen, Paloma Mohammed, Harold Bascom, Rooplall Monar et co. While most writers migrated, the post-independence era saw a flowering of not only local writing but also state-funded publication up to about the late 1970s which gave way to cottage industry publishing in the 1980s. In 1987, President Desmond Hoyte initiated the Guyana Prize for Literature with the intention of developing and rewarding Guyanese writing “at home and abroad”.

#### *Six-Year Review (2015-2020)*

The years 2010 to 2015 remained relatively stagnant with the exception of the emergence of a handful of new writers either winning the Guyana Prize for Literature or making the shortlist, most notably Cassia Alphonso, Ruel Johnson, Mosa Telford and Subraj Akash Singh. The number of Guyanese writers participating in regional or international festivals remained low, as did publication opportunities. Most notably, Guyanese writer Imam Baksh won the 2015 Burt Award for his book, *Children of the Spider*. The Caribbean Press, a government initiative originally intended to promote contemporary local and regional writers, remained mired in controversy in its delivery of that mandate and on accountability issues even as it reproduced several texts of primarily historical value.

#### **Current Status**

In 2016, there was slight improvement with Guyana coming under the radar of regional and international creative writing initiatives. A Commonwealth Writers' Programme/Cariblit fiction editing and publishing workshop was held in Georgetown early in the year and the Minister of Education met with the management of Trinidad's Bocas Lit Fest with a view to establishing functional ties between the ministry and the festival. This year also saw Guyana being represented for the first time at the Iowa University International Writers' Programme in the US.

#### *Challenges*

More than any other area of the arts, the literary arts suffer from a paucity of education resources and infrastructure. Current programmes lack structure and accreditation and there are no established mechanisms for promoting emerging writers both within and outside of Guyana. With the Caribbean Press initiative suspended due to grave accountability concerns - particularly concerning the number of books it has actually delivered - there are no national publication mechanisms for local writers.

Despite the Guyana Prize for Literature entering its 30th year, its mandate to stimulate local writing has not significantly progressed beyond allowing resident writers to submit manuscripts. There is no permanent creative programme at the University of Guyana, which runs the prize, and outside of ad hoc short creative writing clinics, the management of the Prize has refused to create more permanent workshop mechanisms as recommended by both judges and past winners.

The Prize has expanded to include a Caribbean component but no similar investment has been made towards the development of the local creative writing.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Create the mechanisms necessary for the integration of creative writing education into the primary to tertiary curriculum.
- \* Establish initiatives to facilitate, both in and out of Guyana, the development of exceptional creative writing talent.
- \* Incentivize private sector investment in the literary arts, from publication to performance.
- \* Establish a central state mechanism to develop and produce creative writing output, both for the education system as well as for wider society.
- \* Establish legislative and supporting measures to protect literary output.
- \* Establish a marketing and promotion mechanism for Guyanese literary output.
- \* Establish partnerships with literature as a basis for international cultural integration and exchange.
- \* Reform/replace the current management of the Guyana Prize for Literature and retool the prize to become a critical partner in the development of Guyanese writing and the development of literary arts tourism.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Establish Guyana as a regional centre of literary excellence.
- \* Establish Guyana as a regional hub for publication.

## AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION

### Background

#### *Historical*

If a precursor event were to be identified to mark the history of audiovisual creative endeavour in Guyana, it would be a project that only secured a visual component two decades after its debut. Francis Quamina Farrier's serial radio drama, *The Tides of Susanburg*, was first aired in 1966 to tremendous popularity in the immediate post-Independence era, Guyana's first broadcast drama, with a play based on the script emerging in the mid-1980s. While not truly audiovisual, it was a pioneering project in exploring what was possible in the most ubiquitous broadcast media at the time. Guyana's first foray into audiovisual production would be nine years after independence with *Aggro Seizeman* (1975), followed a year later by the much more popular if not commercially successful Vivian Lee's *If Wishes Were Horses* (1976). Guyana's first documentary film would make its debut in 1979, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine's iconic *The Terror and the Time*, an examination of the struggle for independence from Britain. Film production in Guyana between 1980 and the mid 2000s would be sporadic, whether slavery/indentureship dramas like Randolph Baichandeen's *Songs of the Sugarcane* (1980) or Rohit Jagessar's *Guiana 1838*, or one-off foreign films shot on location such as *Mustard Bath* (1993) or documentaries such *Thunder in Guyana* (2003) and Werner Herzog's *The White Diamond* (2004).

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

The government of Guyana launched the President's Film Endowment in December, 2010 an initiative that was sold as an annual financial support of \$10 million towards the production of ten films. During 2011, the initiative was named CineGuyana and succeeded in producing several short films, most notably *Beached* by emerging director Kojo McPherson. McPherson would go on to win several accolades regionally. The period also saw the emergence of prolific filmmaker Mahadeo Shivraj who has averaged about one film per year since 2010. During this time, the Catholic church also launched the Loyola Documentary Film Festival. Additionally, over the period under review, there was a marked increase in foreign production companies producing material on location in Guyana, particularly reality and nature television. In terms of local audiovisual production on television, despite the awarding of several new licenses, there has been little new creative content.

#### **Current Status**

While CineGuyana started with government funding, it lasted for one year and was subsequently abandoned by government and today now runs as an NGO. Government has provided support for a Michael Gilkes production, *Moirra and the Jaguar People* slated for release in 2017, and an externally funded McPherson film is currently in production - both feature hinterland settings. The National Film Censor Board is supposed to be an entity that falls under the Ministry of Education but has been inactive for many years and there has never been a National Film Commission - at present, film permits for specific hinterland locations are administered through the Environmental Protection Agency. The government of Guyana was committed in 2016 to produce and deliver our installment of the UNASUR-supported documentary series but no progress has been reported on this from the Department of Culture. There was one small film festival in 2016, The Timehri Film Festival organized by an overseas-based Guyanese while a proposal for a Guyana Film Festival has been submitted. Additionally, the Guyana Animation Network Inc was launched in 2016 and has since then been networking with various counterparts in the Caribbean to provide training and development.

## *Challenges*

The absence of a National Film Commission, a policy-based strategy plan for development of the audiovisual industry, and inadequate financing for existing efforts has hampered what was once a promising film production locale forty years ago. As traditional mainstream studios are both seeking diversity in both characters and location for productions, Guyana has tremendous potential but lacks the necessary infrastructure to both attract and benefit from such investment. The productions that are coming here currently do so under little regulation with the bulk of services provided to them being done so by expat-owned companies.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Procure, catalogue and archive all existing audiovisual media produced by Guyanese and/or shot on location in Guyana.
- \* Establish a strategy for the development of commercial audiovisual production in Guyana including strong academic and extra-curricular programmes beginning at the secondary education level, a fiscal incentives regime to encourage investment in the sector, and a standing mechanism to manage the growth of the sector.
- \* Market Guyana as a destination for production of both television and cinematic projects, particularly with a focus on emerging media and markets such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hulu.
- \* Secure technical development cooperation from partners in both the developing and developed world.
- \* Establish state financing mechanisms and creative incentives for private sector investment in film via both grant and equity financing.
- \* Establish a coproduction treaty arrangement with at least one South American partner and at least three CARICOM partners.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Establish a self-sustaining audiovisual industry which produces quality content for local viewing as well as for regional and global consumption, ensuring that the sector reflects a substantial and growing component of both FDI and revenue.

## VISUAL ARTS

### Background

#### *Historical*

According to Seymour, “Early in the twentieth century, an indigenous art movement began to develop in Guyana out of the growing tradition of house painting, the preparation of signs for advertisement of imported products, and home decoration for aesthetic and religious purposes.”

As the century progressed, there would be the creation of a national artistic movement which saw some pioneers like Samuel Broodhagen establishing a local aesthetic, followed by the efforts of Hubert Moshett and E. R. Burrowes in organizing Guyanese artists into associations, with Burrowes eventually establishing the Working People’s Art Class in the mid-1950s. A new generation would emerge, foremost of whom would be Denis Williams who would go on to found the E.R. Burrowes School of Art two decades after his mentor had founded the WPAC. During the 1970s, 80s, and 90s other names would emerge, diversifying the production of visual art in Guyana - Bernadette Persaud, Stanley Greaves, Stephanie Correia, Oswald Hussein, Desmond Alli et co.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

During the period under review, visual arts in Guyana showed uneven progress or sum stagnation. The national visual arts competition was revived for example but public buy-in was tepid. Castellani House hosted a number of events and exhibitions, ranging from mainstream displays to poetry readings and body art exhibitions.

#### **Current Status**

Despite the temporary resuscitation of the biennial during the period, the years 2010-2015, the competition has not been held for 2016 despite the jubilee year celebrations. The Guyana Women Artists’ Association (GWAA) remains the most vibrant sector NGO in Guyana. Most notable among emerging young artists is Dominique Hunter who has, since graduating as Best Student from Burrowes in 2007, scored an enviable collection of accolades culminating most recently with a residency at Prince Claus Fund-supported Ateliers ’89 in Aruba. Established sculptor, Winslow Craig, most recently won a Sabga award for his contribution to the Arts, the first visual artist from Guyana to attain the award.

With the increasing accessibility of digital photography has come a renaissance of Guyanese photography as exemplified by persons like Nikhil Ramkarran, Brian Lam and Khadijah Benn; and amateur photographer Brian Gomes has carved out a particular niche for himself with his stunning photographic celebration of the female form.

A small group of artists and sculptors, unable to afford the overheads associated with Hibiscus Plaza, and whose work might not otherwise make mainstream gallery or showcase display organized themselves into the Main Street Art Group, a body that is now gaining some traction.

### *Challenges*

While art education is free, both through Burrowes and the TVET Council, materials continue to represent a prohibitive barrier for entry of working class students into the field. At Burrowes, as with the other arts education facilities coming under the Ministry's purview, the issue of accreditation remains a problem, with concerns about equivalency even with the University of Guyana's BA in Visual Arts. There is no stable market or market space for visual arts and inadequate gallery spaces for display, with whatever little there is available existing exclusively in Georgetown.

### **Recommendations**

#### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Legally establish the National Art Gallery, Castellani House as a board-run entity, catalogue the national collection, and establish a restoration preservation schedule, 2017-2020.
- \* Incentivize the creation of private gallery and visual art marketplaces, both as stand-alone entities and as incorporated into existing businesses.
- \* Review, integrate and streamline the visual art curricula for secondary schools, the TVET Council, Burrowes School of Art, Cyril Potter College of Education, and the University of Guyana.
- \* Establish municipal galleries in all Guyana's townships in collaboration with the local government system.
- \* Integrate visual arts into juvenile offender remedial education and training programmes as well as into the adult penal system.

#### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Aim to host at least one regional biennale, either the UNASUR biennale currently in development or a CARICOM/CARIFORUM biennale.
- \* Expand municipal art gallery programme as nodes in a national community visual arts production and promotion network.

# CRAFT

## Background

### *Historical*

As covered in the section on 'Traditional Craftsmanship', the 1977 Seymour Policy notes that the history of craft in Guyana begun with the utilitarian creations of the indigenous peoples and expanded, particularly in the post-Independence era, to include new forms.

### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

Craft in Guyana has had mixed fortunes over the period under question. While there has been a growth in the variety of products available at existing venues and while there has been some streamlining in distribution infrastructure, there has been a failure by craft producers, particularly under the Guyana Arts and Craft Producers' Association (GACPA), to organize to take full advantage of available opportunities like Carifesta representation. Hibiscus Plaza, a group of small craft shops established outside of the National Post Office building, has seen some improvement and government interventions over to provide export development aid have proven unhelpful, including trade show participation facilitation. A small group of artists and craftsmen, unable to afford the overheads associated with Hibiscus Plaza, moved to ply their goods on Main Street with many of them forming the Main Street Arts Group under the leadership of Brian Clarke. A promise of multimillion dollar state support made in 2010 by then President Bharat Jagdeo never materialized. Outside of fairly inflated claims on the National Tourism website, there has been no dedicated effort to use the Internet to market local craft - a GACPA Facebook page started in 2014 became almost immediately inactive.

### **Current Status**

The Guyana Arts and Craft Producers' Association and individual artisans are currently benefitting from the same EU funded export diversification and enhancement project as the music sector. The Ministry of Education, under the TVET Council, has a Craft Production and Design Division but at the time of the writing of this policy, it was unclear what the average annual cohort of this division was.

### *Challenges*

The production of craft as a creative industry suffers from several factors. The first is that Guyana does not possess a large enough internal market for the sustainable growth of the sector, an issue compounded that Guyana remains one of the least visited countries in the world, a fact which means that we miss out on a valuable opportunity for tourism-based export of craft products. As with most non-agricultural manufactured products, sustainable export distribution infrastructure remains poor and there is little to no brand recognition for Guyanese craft to create and feed the sort of demand that would warrant and reward investment in distribution.

## Recommendations

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Provide technical support to sector stakeholders with regard to capacity building, quality assurances standards, individual and collective branding, and market access.



- \* Provide basic financial assistance to sector stakeholders for startup and expansion financing.
- \* Expand and streamline state-supported craft education initiatives.
- \* Research and document traditional crafts and provide support for transmission of knowledge where necessary.

*Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Establish bilateral and multilateral trade initiatives in which locally produced craft is included as eligible for special tariff and other considerations.
- \* Align internal tourism infrastructure to accommodate craft market integration.

## CULINARY ARTS

### Background

#### *Historical*

The culinary landscape of Guyana represents the richest offerings of our diversity and the most concrete example of cultural exchange, integration and syncretism. The average Guyanese diet is one comprised of foods derived from Asia, Europe, Africa and pre-Columbian Americas in addition to wholly new concoctions created during the colonial experience. The curries of India brought here by Indentured laborers find equal pride of place beside the slave food innovation that is cookup. While Chinese immigrants have resisted integration more than most Guyanese, Chinese food in Guyana as sold in their restaurants possess a particular Guyanese flavor and such restaurants continue to thrive. During the late seventies to the early eighties, the Burnham government experimented with import substitution via the restricted importation of certain items, a policy measure intended to stimulate self-sufficiency and reduce the food import bill. While the substitution of ingredients - rice flour for wheat flour, for example - was meant to spur innovation and as well as the production and consumption of local agricultural products, the results were vastly unpopular. This episode serves to underscore the importance of cultural concerns in development planning and there is no aspect of our cultural identity that Guyanese guard more jealously than our food. The mid-nineties onward saw the introduction of several popular fast food franchises and the subsequent decline of many small family-owned businesses selling traditional Guyanese food. While some of those franchises have disappeared, others have been established with bigger and better facilities employing dozens of Guyanese - Camex Restaurants is currently the industry leader with several brands under its management.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

During the period under review, the Guyanese culinary arts landscape diversified with the introduction of Indian restaurants cooking food from the subcontinent, the mainstreaming of Brazilian churrascarias, and the popularity of coffee shops with Oasis Cafe being the pioneering establishment in this sub-sector. Under the leadership of second-generation owner, Clinton Urling, the popular working class restaurant German's upgraded its original site to a modern facility. The republication of the traditional Guyanese cookbook, *What's Cooking in Guyana*, in glossy format was complemented by the recipe column in *Stabroek News*, Cynthia Nelson's 'Tastes Like Home' in bringing public documentation to Guyanese recipes.

#### **Current Status**

Guyanese experience with the culinary arts continues to expand with the opening of two Amerindian restaurants, a Syrian gyro shop and several grills. A local tourism promotion initiative, Guyana Restaurant Week, is now in its third year although not only has it been primarily Georgetown-based but public engagement has also been lukewarm at best. A critical feature of the contemporary culinary landscape is the blurring of lines when it comes to ethnic cuisine is the rising incidence of cross-cultural cooking, traditional cuisine of one ethnic group being cooked exclusively by a member of another ethnic group in a particular location and lauded as 'authentic'. This has extended in some locations to what has previously been perceived as an impenetrable preserve, the cooking of Chinese food in restaurants.

## *Challenges*

At present, only the Carnegie School of Home Economics offers any consistent programme in traditional Guyanese cooking and little or no opportunity exists for sustainable livelihoods in the traditional culinary arts.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Enhance the culinary arts component of the secondary school home economics programme.
- \* Encourage and support the development of traditional food cultures clubs in and out of the school system.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Create a high-level culinary arts programme at the Carnegie School of Home Economics.

## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

### Background

#### *Historical*

As Seymour notes, the development of Guyanese art production at the beginning of the 20th century was closely linked to marketing and promotion. Indeed, before the cost-indexed ubiquity of photography and videography, marketing and promotion was largely a traditional visual arts venture. Newspapers from the middle of the 20th century featured hand-drawn advertisements for a range of products, from bicycles to candy. With the advent of radio, music and drama would also enter the creative dynamic of marketing and promotion, something that would be further pushed as television ownership grew in Guyana in the mid-nineties. Respected theatrical personalities like Richard Narine, Ron Robinson, Margaret Lawrence, Desiree Edghill, Henry Rodney, Andre Subryan and others found new popularity and new income from a range of popular commercials from the period.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

As the cost for technology went down and the quality of equipment went up, marketing and promotion has seen the growth of a new category of creative industry talents, the people producing the advertisements. From Raul Couchman and John Greene using videography to Michael Leonard and Mark Chand specializing in graphic design, creative industry entrepreneurship in the area of marketing and promotion.

### Current Status

In addition to the enhancement of creativity in marketing and promotion in traditional media, after fairly slow growth in initial years, web-based initiatives have shown rapid and exponential growth in recent years, with an increasing number of private companies and some state agencies turning to website and integrated social media accounts to promote their business. Leonard, Ranveer Rickford and Tanika Van Sluytman-Jones are young website developers who have integrated an artistic flair into their creation of client promotion sites.

#### *Situation and Challenges*

The state sector has been slow in developing a machinery that streamlines efforts at arts, entrepreneurship and marketing education and there is no policy or coordinated approach relative to improving even a particular component of this creative industry - for example, even with the presence of qualified website designers the former Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the responsible agency for creative industry development, outsourced its main website and the website of the National Archives to an Indian company. With regard to the private sector, the wave of companies using local voice, performing arts and local production is ebbing with an increasing number of agencies outsourcing voice-over and graphics production to companies in North America.

### Recommendations

#### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Review, enhance and - where possible - integrate creative arts, marketing, and entrepreneurship programmes in the public education system.

- \* As part of a larger creative industries incentives package, create mechanisms that reward the engagement of local creative talent in the production of marketing and promotional material.
- \* Create government policy that offers preferential and priority treatment to competent local marketing and promotion companies employing local creatives.

*Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Establish Guyana as a regional/international centre for the outsourcing of high-quality, cost effective marketing and promotional content.

# ARCHITECTURE

## Background

### *Historical*

Writing in the publication *The Co-op Republic of Guyana* (1970), in a paper entitled “Architecture... building under our sun”, noted Guyanese historian Rory Westmaas observed that:

“There is a distinctive architecture of Guyana. It is to be seen in the many examples of timber domestic buildings for the most part in and around Georgetown. It is an architecture which has been derived from the many European States which at one time or another controlled the country.”

Westmaas’ paper was focused primarily on colonial European derived architecture and there is no evidence that he or other contemporaries considered non-European construction classifiable as architecture. In 1972 however, the government of Guyana took the progressive initiative of construction the Umana Yana, a large Amerindian benab constructed of wallaba posts and palm leaves by a team Wai Wai builders, as a recreational area for that year’s Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Georgetown.

### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

The traditional wooden architecture of Guyana was definitively overtaken by concrete construction, particularly during the housing boom in new housing schemes that were established during the period in question. While this phenomenon has been based mainly in the coastal areas, its impact is also further inland, the initial cost of building in concrete even at inflated prices in interior areas preferable to the maintenance costs of wood. Arguably out of security concerns, there were no publications or media features focusing on architectural innovation in Guyana, such as it exists, with newspaper articles focusing on existing heritage type buildings primarily from the colonial era.

## Current Status

The architectural landscape across Guyana at present is an eclectic one, as various within municipalities and neighborhood democratic councils as it among them - it ranges from the multimillion dollar stone and glass commercial buildings in Georgetown to the humble community benab in the Rupununi. Still no architectural review exists.

### *Situation and Challenges*

The absence of an overarching aesthetic and vision, poor municipal and NDC planning and management, inadequate resources allocated to the National Trust and heritage protection in general, and a growing trend towards ostentatious displays of newly acquired wealth have resulted in an increasingly poor architectural landscape marked by some good buildings, many gaudy new edifices, and a dilapidated traditional architecture - this is most apparent in the capital city of Georgetown. New public infrastructure presents challenges, particularly in the education

sector - uniformity in the school building code does not adequately account for variations in climate and cultural concerns.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Create a system of involving community inputs in the design consultation phase of new public buildings within specific areas.
- \* Enhance the architectural talent pool by providing internships, scholarships and fast-track public service seniority for exemplary young architects.
- \* Conduct a village architectural heritage survey.
- \* Create a municipal heritage buildings identification and preservation work plan, combining the resources of municipal management, central government and the National Trust.
- \* Create and task an architectural and artistic working group with creating a national Public Buildings Aesthetics Code.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Implement national Public Buildings Aesthetics Code.
- \* Enact legislation requiring a preset percentage of public infrastructure financing to go towards public art installation.
- \* Task the architectural and artistic working group with creating contemporary private residence styles.
- \* Create a menu of incentives to reward home owners for building according to approved contemporary styles.

# FASHION

## Background

### *Historical*

Guyana's fashion influences have traditionally been from two sources - popular Western fashion and traditional Indian wear. During the majority of the pre-Independence era, Western European fashion enjoyed hegemony while in the post-war period, American influence, particular as transmitted through increasingly popular American films, grew exponentially.

Arguably the most significant local phenomenon in local fashion in the post-Independence period and since did not come out of pop culture or traditional influence but the political space. This was the men's tunic, the shirt jac, a staple component of the fashion ensemble of L.F.S. Burnham, replacing the previous jacket, shirt and tie. What was essentially a government uniform would become an iconic popular fashion piece that still has adherence in the present day. The Black Power and Global Pan-African movements of the 1970s also had some influence on fashion here, with the introduction of traditional African wear, particularly the dashiki.

The early 1990s saw a renaissance of traditional Indian wear, particularly its introduction to the national mainstream, as evidenced most notably by the advent of several successful sari pageants. The late 90s and early 2000s saw increasing competition for top place among several designers, most notably of whom were Sonial Noel, Pat Coates, Derek Moore, Michelle Cole, Donna Ramsammy-James and, later, Olympia Small-Sonaram.

### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

The period under review saw Noel emerging as the most prominent design brand, with significant influences overseas as locally, and her establishment of the flagship national designer showcase, Guyana Fashion Weekend. In Indian-wear, Chandini Rambalak's Apsara design represented the only significant entry. A Guyana Fashion Designer's Council was launched in 2013 with the intention of accessing funding from the EU but the project shortly after fell apart.

## Current Status

With Noel having transitioned her franchise into promotion more than design per se, a new batch of designers have emerged, both locally and foreign-based. The most prominent have been reflective of what has been a gender shift in the sector with young male designers like Mwanza Glenn and Randy Madray representing the new faces of contemporary fashion, although Keisha Edwards is a female young designer of consistently high quality output. Other notable industry players are Ashma John with her fashion blog, the Online Runway, and more recently Brooke Glasford who has been engaged in garment factoring and more recently fashion design.

## *Situation and Challenges*

While fashion has the most immediately marketable potential among the various creative industry sectors, it suffers the same critical shortcomings - lack of sector coordination among stakeholders and poor policy infrastructure for promotion and growth. Additionally, the same problems that plague other non-creative industries in manufacturing pose a challenge for the growth of the industry, most notably cost of production and poor supply chain infrastructure.



## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Promote the exploration of a Guyanese aesthetic in fashion design.
- \* Provide scholarship support for students interested in fashion design and marketing.
- \* Provide promotion and incentives for retailers carrying local fashion designers.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Provide incentives for garment manufacturers producing local designs.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND EDUCATION SOFTWARE

### Background

#### *Historical*

The history of entertainment and education software is necessarily a new one. It arguably began with a false start in 2006 when a man called Euburn Forde sought to introduce a web-based tutoring platform to Guyana, called Tutornet. Access to the site was purportedly based on prepaid cards but an investigative story in the Guyana Chronicle showed the system did not work and Tutornet folded soon after.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

Since then, more credible players have emerged, the pioneering company being BrainStreet Software which has moved from providing basic online education software to a range of service applications including CGI animation and digitization of public records.

### Current Status

The Ministry of Public Communications in 2016 launched a Hack-aThon in which several competing software groups took place, some functional companies, others amateur grouping. One firm to have distinguished itself during 2016 was IntellectStorm which was one of five winners of the World Bank, government of Canada-sponsored Pitch It award for software innovation in the Caribbean.

#### *Challenges*

The absence of intellectual property legislation remains an obvious challenge in a country in which most of the public service runs on pirated software but more challenging issues are the absence of a financing infrastructure for applied innovation in the field and a traditional conservatism in businesses that would otherwise benefit from software applications across a range of services. For companies like IntellectStorm and BrainStreet which transcend these challenges by attracting overseas clientele, the issues of a regular electricity supply and low-cost bandwidth remain considerable challenges.

### Recommendations

#### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Establish a standing fund for innovation in education and entertainment software development.
- \* Engage the software development community in the creation of applications for education and other government services.
- \* Incentivize the engagement of local software development services by companies operating in Guyana.
- \* Facilitate the marketing of local software development services overseas.

*Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Introduce coding into the primary curriculum at select high schools in each region and expand the programme to universal application.

## TOURISM-RELATED ACTIVITIES

### Background

#### *Historical*

Categorizing tourism-related activities into either cultural heritage preservation revenue strategies of cultural industries may seem difficult but the intrinsic presumption of profit weighs these activities more towards cultural industries inclusion although there may/should be some element of sustainable preservation where applicable.

Tourism-related activities, in a general sense, run almost the full gamut of both cultural heritage and creative industries. For example, the recently initiated Rupununi Music Festival is an annual event that highlights an important geographical component of our natural heritage, the Rupununi Savannah; places a focus on indigenous culture, from livelihoods to traditional architecture to food; and offers a broad cross-section of musical genres performed by Guyanese and international talent.

Guyana's branding has unfortunately historically been both unfocused and amorphous. Most tourism businesses have focused on destinations in the interior of Guyana with a particular focus 'discovering' nature. The US-AID-funded Guyana Trade Investment Support initiative highlighted bird-watching as a niche area for development, complementary in part to yachting in Guyana's largest river, the Essequibo.

This intentional focus has arguably been at the expense of coastal and urban tourism, and the development of both heritage sites and creative industry mechanisms to cater to same. Guyana's hosting of CARIFESTA X in 2008 provided a brief window of linking tourism and cultural industry but there is no data to measure the impact on cultural industry-related tourism outside of Georgetown during the festival.

#### *Six-Year Review (2010-2015)*

During the period under review, the most consistent and sustainable tourism related cultural industry activity was Jamzone, a combination of pageant and music festival featuring international headliners in combination with local musical acts and fashion. The Rupununi Music Festival, a fledgling initiative that incorporates, has shown some growth

### Current Status

Jamzone as international music-based tourism has waned with smaller shows at a new venue taking its place, focusing more on themed parties than on live musical performances. Some local operators offer specific packages to heritage sites in the interior, particularly the old fort sites, and a new Georgetown heritage site walking tour by initiated by former beauty queen, Ruqayyah Boyer has grown commendably during its year of operation. Interior location tours continue to the primary focus of promotional activities with "Guyana - South America Undiscovered", the current theme leaning heavily towards the Hinterland.

#### *Situation and Challenges*

Guyana has been listed several times as one of the least visited tourist destinations in the world, even as there have been several articles advertising the country as a hidden treasure, more often than not referring to its interior. The historical lack of a comprehensive tourism brand that takes advantage of both nature tourism as well as cultural

tourism continues to deny the promotion of a holistic image. The key challenge has to been to bridge the dichotomy of coastal cultural tourism and interior nature tourism. Additionally, not enough consideration is expressly given to cutlural heritage preservation, protection and promotion nor to creative industries development in de facto tourism policy.

## **Recommendations**

### *First Five Years (2016-2020)*

- \* Review National Tourism Policy to specifically facilitate integration into all relevant components of the Framework National Cultural Policy.
- \* Establish a special consultative relationship between the ministries responsible for Culture and for Tourism in policy and project coordination.

### *Second Five Years ((2021-2025)*

- \* Incentivise investment in tourism-related creative arts and cultural industry activities.

## CONCLUSION

The question has been asked, 'What is Guyanese culture?' The difficulty in offering an answer is two-fold. First, the definition of what constitutes culture beyond the general abstraction is nebulous in itself, even before it raises questions of what is 'good' culture and what is 'bad' culture and the often hazardous difficulty of discerning which is which.

The culture of post-harvesting imbibing and intoxication is a central aspect of canecutter life in Guyana for example and a means of forging bonds between men in a fairly large section of Guyana's population; on the other hand, alcoholism and the related effects of poor health, interpersonal violence and the breakdown of familial relations remain key components of what has been labeled as 'rum culture'.

The legendary exploits of the archetypal Afro-Guyanese journeyman gold miner, the 'porkknocker' has been captured in the mythos surrounding such names as Ocean Shark and Itaname, the latter captured in a play, and their free-spending, womanizing culture. Yet the abstract cautionary tales they embody have found particular and concrete significance in the era of epidemic communicable diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis and drug-resistant strains of malaria, as well as in an environment where trafficking in persons and the negative sociological impact of mining has come into sharp focus.

Culture thrives and is transmitted via memetic code and the structures in which it is contained and through which it travels - ritual, art, commerce, technology. We live in a world where the latter is gaining increasing relevance, both as a way of preserving and transmitting as well as transforming cultures.

While technology has an inherent capacity to serve as a catalyst for culture understanding and exchange, more often than not, what we are seeing played out as global theatre is a clash of cultures as mediated often by commerce, what Benjamin Barber referred to in his seminal eponymous essay as 'Jihad vs. McWorld'.

What is now playing out across the world however is something that has long been our experience in Guyana, the irrevocable compression of various cultures into a relatively small space. And while it is true that cultural division has crippled our development, cultural diversity has in fact laid the foundation for our growth in an increasingly divisive world.

This is where the Guyanese historical experience and evolution of culture become critical not merely for our own survival but arguably relevant to the survival of the world. In his well-known cryptic, perhaps apocryphal poem, 'You are involved', Martin Carter exclaims:

"Like a jig  
shakes the loom;  
like a web  
is spun the pattern  
all are involved!  
all are consumed!"

What this policy is intended to do is to create the blueprint for the machinery that will not merely transform Guyana via ensuring that the unifying fabric of our collective history and diverse heritage is mended and made whole, but that this tapestry will provide a mosaic that can be replicated to save a world that is being torn apart at the seams. Culture is the loom upon which the fate of the world is being threaded - we can become involved, or we can be consumed.

