



Caribbean Heritage Network Fact Sheet

What is the CHN?

The Caribbean Heritage Network is a newly formed regional network of cultural heritage and museum professionals, scholars, administrators, students, artisans, business firms, and interested citizens dedicated to the protection and promotion of the heritage of the Caribbean region. Its goal is to contribute to expanding the socio-economic benefits of regional cultural heritage as a vehicle for civic identity and a valuable public resource that can benefit a wide range of stakeholders through a new paradigm of public engagement. It is governed by a Director and Staff as well as a regional Advisory Committee and is hosted by the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus.

Why was the CHN founded?

The enormous socio-economic potential of the diverse range of cultural heritage resources of the states and communities throughout the Anglophone Caribbean has long been seriously under-realized. According to an initial needs assessment, the following serious regional challenges to the effective conservation and management of cultural heritage resources include:

- Limited resources for national administrators of cultural heritage, including declining public funding for culture, lack of continuous professional training resources, overly-narrow scope of national legislation pertaining to cultural heritage, shortage of sufficient personnel to manage officially recognized heritage resources, and deficient monitoring and enforcement of cultural heritage policies. This lack of resources has resulted in an increased threat, and in many cases, destruction to, or loss of tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources. Associated effects include the increasing dominance of private, commercial interests in conservation decisions; cultural heritage staff who are unequipped to handle the increasing scale and complexity of contemporary heritage management problems; significant classes of heritage resources (e.g. intangible, diasporic, multicultural) that are unprotected by current legislation; inadequate protection of even the officially recognized resources; and long gaps in the supervision and monitoring of nationally protected resources.
- The increasing dominance of international “mass” tourism interests in regional and national planning. This includes unsubstantiated and unrealized promises of employment and economic development related to mass tourism; the framing of cultural heritage as an exploitable resource to benefit foreign consumers and markets; the perceived appeal of the region’s climate, ecology, and culture for the mass tourist market; and the lack of viable economic alternatives for local



peoples throughout the region. This increasing dominance of the international tourism market has resulted in a loss of regional, national, and local control of the socio-economic benefit derived from cultural heritage. Related effects include the loss to foreign investors of economic activity and benefits, the increasing risk of overexploitation of coastal landscapes and cultural resources to commercial development and markets; increasing pressure to invest local and national value in cultural heritage primarily in terms of external market forces; and an overdependence on the international tourism market to the detriment of alternative, locally-sustainable economic resources.

- The decreasing significance of local traditions including the increased prominence and proliferation of global media; imbalance between rural and urban economic opportunities; replacement of local ingredients, cuisine, and subsistence strategies by imported food and foodstuffs; increasing formalization of education; and troubling changes to intergenerational relationships. The decreasing significance of local tradition has resulted in the disintegration of collective memory and shared identity. Associated effects include the breakdown of localized communicative channels; loss of knowledge of local ecological systems in rural areas and increasing population pressure in urban centers; the abandonment of culinary traditions and foodways (which may be more environmentally sustainable and economically viable); fewer opportunities for informal knowledge transfer among citizens; and an increasing discontinuity in local worldviews between generations, contributing to a breakdown in social cohesion.

Who are the CHN sponsors?

The CHN was created in the context of a project entitled “Expanding the Socio-Economic Potential of Cultural Heritage in the Caribbean,” coordinated by the Department of Tourism and Culture of the Organization of American States. This project was funded by the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the Organization of American States.

Which are the founding member states?

Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti (observer), Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.



What are the main activities of the CHN?

The CHN coordinates the research and capacity-sharing activities of regional interest groups that focus on the following themes.

- Heritage Education and Training
- Sustainable Heritage Tourism
- Inventories and National Registers
- Legislation and Fiscal Incentives
- The Socioeconomic Impacts of Heritage

In addition, the CHN hosts or supports periodic conferences and workshops throughout the region.

What are the benefits of membership?

CHN members enjoy access to a wide range of educational and technical resources relating to heritage protection, management, and promotion—and are invited to participate in the discussion boards of the network interest groups to pose questions and share case studies.

How can I contact the CHN?

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