

**NATIONAL
INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL
HERITAGE
(ICH)
INVENTORY OF
ST. MAARTEN**

BY:

**THE DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURE &
ST. MAARTEN NATIONAL
COMMISSION (*NATCOM*)
FOR UNESCO**

**MINSITRY OF EDUCATION,
CULTURE, YOUTH, AND
SPORT (*MECYS*)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
MINISTER OF ECYS FOREWORD.....	4
PREAMBLE BY ST. MAARTEN NATCOM FOR UNESCO SECRETARY GENERAL.....	5-6
REMARKS BY THE DEPARTMENT HEAD OF CULTURE.....	7-8
TIMELINE OF ICH ACTIVITIES.....	9-11
PICTURES.....	12
CONCLUSION.....	13

INTRODUCTION

What is

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)?

According to the definition provided by UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is made up of five domains (1) oral traditions, (2) Performing Arts, (3) Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events, (4) Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe, and (5) Traditional Craftsmanship Knowledge and Techniques.

“The cultural heritage of a nation or region is not solely composed of monuments and museum collections, but also of living intangible expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants...” -- UNESCO

MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Sint Maarten, through the Office of the Secretary General of UNESCO in collaboration with the Department of Culture, we have done a great deal of work to document and register the elements of our local identity. Our cultural heritage is rich with generational lessons of flora and fauna, food and drink, music and dance, language and trade. As Sint Maarteners, we have much to be proud of.

The history of our people is embedded in the stories of our ancestors, the music and dance of our souls, the food and the remedies of our soil, and the occupation of our hands. Intangible Cultural Heritage has been recognized by the United Nations because of its value to the people of every nation, creed and tongue.

To quote Maya Angelou, “I have great respect for the past. If you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going.” As we launch the Inventory of our Intangible Cultural Heritage on the ninth anniversary of the establishment of our Constitution, we are preparing ourselves and the next generation to reflect on our history, appreciate our present and design the next stage of our growth.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport applauds this mission, the organisers, stakeholders and participants. Sint Maarten’s future is secure because our foundation is strong and rich with intangible cultural heritage.

Wycliffe Smith, MA, M.Ed.

Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

PREAMBLE



By the Secretary-General of NatCom for UNESCO Sint Maarten:

The Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO is honored to have spearheaded the process that has led to the development of Sint Maarten's first ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) inventory.

From 2014 to present, the National Commission (NATCOM) facilitated the process that has enabled students, youth groups, senior citizens, NGOs, cultural activists and groups, government officials, civil servants, and the community at large to participate in contributing, documenting and verifying the information that was collected on Sint Maarten's intangible cultural heritage. With the assistance of the ICH Committee, which consisted of individuals from the Department of Culture, National Institute of the Arts (NIA), a youth representative and Sint Maarten National Commission of UNESCO, a number of face-to-face sessions and national consultations were held over the years.

Hosting the first Joint Training on the Implementation of the 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage on Sint Maarten in September 8-12, 2014 was another milestone. Representatives of Sint Maarten participated in all Joint Training sessions to develop and strengthen our local capacities and knowledge of the ICH convention, community-based inventorying, and the development of Safeguarding Plans for Intangible Cultural Heritage (SAFE).



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Sint Maarten
National Commission
for UNESCO

PREAMBLE (CONT.)

The National Commission is pleased to have partnered with the Department of Culture and the Department of Foreign Affairs, which resulted in Sint Maarten co-ratifying the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in May 2014. Further collaboration with the Department of Culture resulted in the creation and launching of a national ICH survey from June-August 2016, where over two-hundred thirty (230) responses from persons in the community were collected.

The Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO is also proud to have organized three (3) successful field inventory exercises targeting young people from various youth organizations and high schools, namely, Charlotte Brookson Academy and St. Dominic, with the assistance of the ICH committee and the National Institute of Arts (NIA). The in-class sessions focused on developing the young people's knowledge and understanding of cultural heritage (intangible and tangible), and the importance of identifying, safeguarding and inventorying Sint Maarten's Cultural Heritage. Whilst the field excursions allowed them to apply the knowledge and skills, (interviewing and videotaping) learnt, to interview persons about the Ponum Dance, local drinks and desserts, and how agriculturists and craftsmen prepare and minimize the effect of natural disasters on their practices and transmission of knowledge and skills. The documentary video, 'The Ponum Dance' was one of the successful outcomes of this project.

The next phase and way forward for the National Commission will be to collaborate with the Department of Culture, the ICH Committee, and others to create posters, instructional materials, booklets, and more documentaries about Sint Maarten's Intangible Culture Heritage. Workshops, seminars, and information sessions to educate the public, teachers, and visitors will also be organized. Moreover, social media, the UNESCO Sint Maarten and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport Facebook pages, the Government of Sint Maarten official website page and the NATCOM website (www.unesco.sx) and others forms of media will be used to share and build awareness about Sint Maarten's intangible cultural heritage.

REMARKS



By the Department Head of Culture:

The journey into St. Maarten's ICH began in 2014, at the first UNESCO training for Intangible Cultural Heritage, 5 years ago. The evolution quickly developed into a marvelous journey in rediscovery of a treasure trove of stories from the archives and vaults of the St. Maarten Peoples story. The ICH investigative process revealed an untapped vault of resources, traditions, sayings, activities, and practices in cultural treasures.

This journey of revisiting and story gathering, cements the invaluable contribution that the UNESCO ICH process brings to safeguarding and restoring cultural traditions and practices. This expedition brings to the fore the necessity, and urgency of employing a systematic approach to documentation, and bringing about awareness regarding safe guarding the practices of our elders and the relevance they have in modernity.

In my capacity as committee member of the ICH committee, we can proudly say, we embarked on a thorough journey of gathering vital voices together to build the first layer in the list of ICH Sint Maarten. We are doubly proud that our approach involved a new generation of Sint Maarten young people hither fore not exposed to traditional way of life. This process functioned as a means to bridge the gap between generations and instill in them a sense of appreciation for those that paved the way and built Sint Maarten.

At the inception of this project, many of the young people expressed not only their lack of knowledge with traditional culture practices, but also an almost irreverent and apathetic disregard for them. Witnessing the student's growth through their interactions with the older heads, and their exuberance as they embraced the information was a personal joy.

REMARKS (CONT.)

More than just generating data for a list, we created a rich, dense learning experience to the benefit of these young people who grew up far removed from the traditions of their elders. Additionally, this forum provided a much-celebrated afternoon for reminiscing amongst the elders and an opportunity to gather the practitioners to share, network, and exchange among themselves and a new audience. The outcomes of the sessions, meetings, discussions, and training provided much needed data that will be used for but not limited to:

- **Cultural Orientation projects for teachers and the tourism sector**
- **Content for curriculum for in-school and afterschool programs**
- **Media campaign for nation building projects**
- **A Sint Maarten branding campaign**
- **National strategies for recording, restoring, and protecting the heritage sector**
- **Designing a system for integrating the multiplicity of other nations into the Sint Maarten cultural fabric**

Embarking on this journey is the first layer of building educational and creative possibilities into the far-reaching benefits of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

ICH JOURNEY **2014-2018:**

- i. Sint Maarten participated in the 'UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Kingdom: A Joint Starting Point' meeting in Aruba, April 15-17, 2003.
- ii. Sint Maarten co-ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on May 21, 2014.
- iii. Sint Maarten participated in the workshop 'The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Kingdom of the Netherlands: a common starting point', in Aruba, April 15-17.
- iv. Sint Maarten organized a National Consultation on St. Maarten, July 3-4, 2014. A number of key cultural stakeholders from a variety of different backgrounds, came up with a list of the island's intangible cultural heritage worth safeguarding, and the island's first draft ICH Inventory list.
- v. St. Maarten organized the first Joint training on the Implementation of the 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage was held on Sint Maarten, September 8-12, 2014.
- vi. A number of face to face presentations were held in the later part of 2014 and throughout 2015 and 2016 with senior citizen groups, various government officials and departments, schools, youth groups, afterschool programs, service clubs, and other organizations within the community, to share the draft ICH inventory list and to gather more information on St. Maarten's ICH.

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

ICH JOURNEY 2014-2018:

- vii. Various ICH Elements were also posted on the UNESCO Sint Maarten Facebook to engage Facebook users in a dialogue about Sint Maarten's ICH and to make Sint Maarten's ICH more visible.
- viii. Sint Maarten participated in the second Joint training on community-based inventorying in Curaçao, February 22-28, 2015
- ix. A five day Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) field inventory exercise targeting young people from various youth organizations in the community was organized in July 2015. The sessions focused on developing the young people's knowledge and understanding of Cultural Heritage (Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) & Tangible Cultural Heritage), and the importance of identifying, safeguarding and inventorying Sint Maarten's Cultural Heritage. They also got the opportunity to interview persons about the ICH element the 'Ponum Dance'.
- x. To get the wider community to give their opinion on Sint Maarten's ICH, in June 2016, the Culture Department and the Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO launched a national survey, where the community were asked to fill out a questionnaire on Sint Maarten Intangible Cultural Heritage either online or on hard copy. See below link which will continue till August 2016. The intention was to get at least 250 responses from persons in the community.
<http://www.sintmaartengov.org/government/ECYS/Pages/Intangible-Cultural-Heritage-Inventory.aspx>

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

ICH JOURNEY

2014-2018:

- xi. Sint Maarten participated in the third joint island training 'Developing Safeguarding Plans for Intangible Cultural Heritage (SAFE)' in Curaçao, May 17-20, 2016.
- xii. Second National Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Consultation facilitated by UNESCO ICH trainer David Brown on St. Maarten, September 4, 2017.
- xiii. Third National Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Consultation: 'Finalizing the First Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of St. Maarten' was held on St. Maarten, May 9, 2018 to get the cultural organizations and activists to review and validate the ICH inventory that was compiled over the 4 years.
- xiv. The third field inventory exercise and case study targeting students from the Charlotte Brookson Academy was organized from August 27 to September 25, 2018. The objective was to investigate how natural disasters impact the ICH elements, ICH knowledge, practices and transmission. For this project, it was decided to focus on how agriculturists and craftsmen prepare for natural disasters, and how these disasters impact their practices and transmission of their knowledge and skills. Investigating how they have adapted to minimize the effect of these natural disasters, and their recovered process after natural disasters were goals of this exercise as well.
- xv. Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO and the Culture Department presented the draft ICH inventory on October 22, 2018 to the Minister of Education Culture Youth, and Sport, Minister Wycliffe Smith.
- xvi. Sint Maarten participated in the fourth joint consultative meeting in Suriname October 30- November 2, 2018.
- xvii. Council of Ministers approves St. Maarten's first ICH inventory on January 31, 2019.

PICTURES



CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it is crucial that Sint Maarten puts forth a National ICH Inventory in accordance with the UNESCO convention. As recommended within the convention, future goals should encompass the adoption of a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in society as well as incorporating the safeguarding of such heritage into strategic programs and projects. In order to execute such initiatives, a competent body needs to be established to help safeguard the intangible cultural heritage present in Sint Maarten. Furthermore, adequate research needs to be carried out to determine ICH elements in danger of disappearing and which methods can be used to curb this issue. Government is therefore strongly encouraged to adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative, and financial measures aimed at facilitating the establishment and/or strengthening of institutions which engage in ICH training, management, documentation, and transmission.

Access to ICH must also be ensured as the Convention reminds us that communities must identify with the ICH and the inventories on which they are based. Education, awareness raising, and capacity building are essential tools required to teach, engage, and learn from communities, groups, and individuals involved with ICH activities and transmission. We must gain their participation in all processes while tapping into UNESCO. UNESCO offers cooperation and international assistance; therefore, Sint Maarten has a plethora of opportunities for funding, knowledge and best practices.