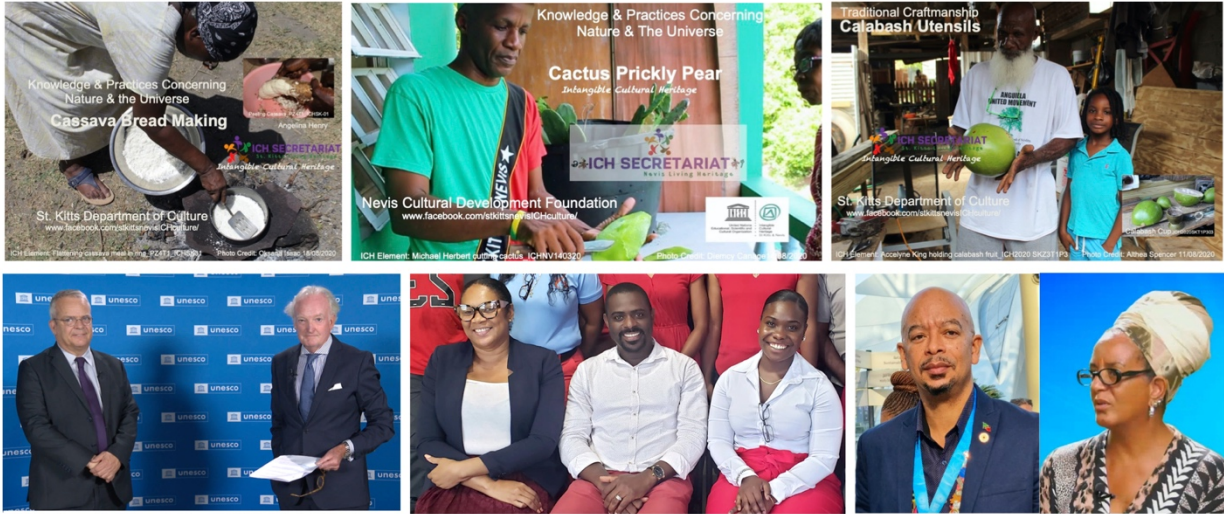


Safeguarding St. Kitts and Nevis’ Intangible Cultural Heritage soon to be encapsulated in a Policy Framework

15th October 2022, Ambassador David Doyle UNESCO St. Kitts-Nevis

St. Kitts and Nevis has energetically embarked upon the 2nd phase of a UNESCO-funded cultural heritage project entitled: ‘Safeguarding St. Kitts and Nevis Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – Developing a National Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy.’

St. Kitts and Nevis <https://www.facebook.com/stkittsnevisICHculture/>



UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) H.Q. Paris [L-R] Timothy Curtis - Section Chief 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH, H.E. Ambassador Dr. David Doyle – Permanent Delegate of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis to UNESCO

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis - Ministry of Creative Economy: [L-R] Valencia Syder – Permanent Secretary, Hon. Samal Duggins – Minister, Robertine Webbe - Director

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Focal Points [L-R] Nevis: Patrick Howell - Manager Research and Documentation NCF, St. Kitts: Marlene Phillips – Research and Documentation Specialist Dept. of Culture

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Photo. 14/10/2022 marlene.phillips@culture.gov.kn

Led by local ICH focal contacts Marlene Phillips (St. Kitts) and Patrick Howell (Nevis), and backed by UNESCO funds worth over US\$91,000, the ICH project will benefit from leading-edge UNESCO technical assistance, aimed at creating a structured National ICH Policy Framework to safeguard the knowledge of tradition bearers, and also to further identify and preserve individual ICH elements.

Welcoming news of the approval of the funding and assistance from UNESCO, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Valencia Syder, stated, “This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen an important aspect of the Federation’s rich cultural heritage. We anticipate a submission on the final ICH Policy Framework plan to be presented to the Minister of Culture towards the end of 2023”.

To mark the success of securing new ICH funds from UNESCO, the Federation’s resident Ambassador to UNESCO, H.E. David Doyle, met recently with Tim Curtis, head of the UNESCO ICH Programme at UNESCO headquarters in Paris to explore the opportunities for St. Kitts and Nevis.

Tim Curtis commended St. Kitts and Nevis on its success in securing ICH funds to develop an ICH Policy Framework. “It’s an encouraging sign”, he said that, “a Caribbean small island

developing state, like St. Kitts and Nevis, recognises the value of the intangible cultural heritage convention as a vehicle for identifying and protecting the traditions on how people live, their identities, legacies and ensuring that such practices provide a sense of continuity with the past”.

Referring to the dynamic nature of the ICH activity, especially on small islands, Mr Curtis emphasised the importance of “*living heritage*” linked to both the past and capable of adapting itself to current trends. “*This is why the involvement of youth in the St. Kitts and Nevis ICH project is critical; the ICH framework will reinforce the notion of intergenerational transmission of key intangible practices, customs and traditions*”. He noted that protecting ICH items and knowledge systems had a powerful impact on livelihoods of local communities.

One current positive trend UNESCO had identified was the ICH activity linked to sustainable development, through preserving traditional culinary dishes as a means of addressing food security challenges at a time of nervous impact brought about by climate change.

In terms of advice to the St. Kitts and Nevis ICH team on the ground, Mr Curtis stressed the need for continued wide community engagement, involving citizens, government officials, NGOs, and youth in galvanising both interest and input on the development of a solid and consensus-driven future ICH Policy Framework.

Ambassador Doyle thanked UNESCO’s Bureau of the Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ICH, and Tim Curtis for assisting St. Kitts and Nevis to secure this new ICH project, “*following on the heels of a previous UNESCO-funded ICH project completed in 2021, entitled: ‘Strengthening Inventory Preparation Capacity for Implementing the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in St. Kitts and Nevis. This enabled the ICH focal contact persons in the twin-island federation to build a solid foundation for implementing the project and, in particular, identify a number of credible intangible cultural heritage items’*”. The inventory project was also backed by nearly US\$100,000 UNESCO funding.

Marlene Philips, the lead ICH focal contact for St. Kitts remarked, “*Over the past three years, in close collaboration with my Nevis ICH colleague, Patrick Howell, we drove this ICH inventorying project sometimes against challenges posed by Covid 19, in interviewing citizens about their intangible heritage background. The focus was to identify ICH elements in need of safeguarding and developing an inventory to document them*”

Amongst the ICH items identified were Clay Pottery, Cactus Prickly Pear (the uses), Vernacular Architecture, Calabash utensils, Cassava bread, a Kittitian house-broom and tradition-bearers’ storytelling.

The newly-elected Minister of Culture, Hon. Samal Duggins, equally pleased with the news of this fresh UNESCO ICH funding and technical assistance said, “*This technical assistance and funding will massively scale-up St. Kitts and Nevis’ capacity and expertise in developing an indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy Framework for the government, citizens and everyone associated with preserving the cultural heritage, customs and traditions in the twin-island Federation*”.

Miss Roberitine Webbe, Director of St. Kitts Creative Economy was ecstatic to learn that UNESCO has continued to give significant support towards the protection and promotion of St. Kitts and Nevis cultural legacy.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 Convention, which the Federation ratified in April 2016, sets out to identify traditions included in an ICH List compiled by UNESCO embracing a compendium of customs, ceremonies, and traditions from around the globe. The ICH List currently consists at some 500 items from 186 countries.