



# Quarterly Newsletter

December 2021

## CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Just in time for the holidays, *Ella Bendeito* and *Eliesel Ramirez Dorsett* took a look at one of the creole Christmas traditions of St Kitts and Nevis, *Niega Business* (also known as Nega, Neaga or Nyega Business).

Traditionally in our islands, the “Christmas Season” refers to the entire period lasting from Christmas Eve and through to New Year’s Day. Many Nevisians (and Kittitians) today cling tenaciously to a number of traditions, some western/Christian – having streamed down through both school and church – and some African – an irrefutable part of the identity of the majority of the islands’ current inhabitants.

The earliest settlers to the islands from rural England brought mediaeval country performance and festival traditions with them, such as strolling mummers. These were joined by other European influences such as quadrille. Enslaved persons, in turn, brought their traditions of costume, dance, and music when they were permitted to enjoy themselves during the brief holiday season. Over time, the result was a creolisation of holiday musical and performance activities, now locally known as “Christmas Sports”, which include Mummies, Big Drum, Moko Jumbie, Clowns, Bull Play, Masquerade, and Niega Business.

In the late 1950s “Niega Business” was one of the most popular Christmas sports, mimicking and mocking the trials and tribulations of the working class. The participants were often fishermen and labourers, generally in groups of three or four, and were accompanied by musicians who played Guitar, Triangle or the Baha (a long piece of metal pipe that is blown). Wire masks were sometimes worn and occasionally participants used grease



Masquerade. Photo: courtesy of National Archive St. Kitts & Nevis

# From the Director...

Allow me to take this opportunity to extend wishes to all of our readers both at home and abroad for an exuberantly happy New Year ahead! Little did we know at the beginning of this pandemic in 2019 that two years later we would still be navigating new ways to live and socialise freely with the ones we love (or just like and tolerate!). This quarter however, saw signs of light at the end of the tunnel as vaccination rates climbed and restrictions declined. The once taken for granted sight of tourists milling through our museums and absorbing the fresh air and greenery of our grounds was something akin to a cold glass of water after emerging from the desert. While at first limited to 'bubble tours', we were soon able to ditch the barriers and once again allow locals and visitors to explore at their leisure.

Here at the Society, we were most excited to gather with our peers to celebrate life in all of its facets. We bode farewell to our stalwart supporter Amba Trott in a fitting memorial service held in November, and we celebrated our members and friends still with us at our holiday mixer at the end of December. While the sense of normalcy was of course welcomed, we did not throw all caution to the wind with our programmes. Understanding the need to strike a balance, we introduced new programmes to safely stay in touch with our members ("Dem Say", our expert interview series), and modified other activities to make them safer for all involved: our Arbour month "tree-sure" hunt went semi-virtual as families explored their neighbourhoods for different trees, photos of which they submitted online.

As the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of COVID-19 sweeps through our beloved island, we cling to hope that the New Year will continue to allow us to gather safely. We are anxious to reintroduce our monthly Meet the Artist and Movie Nights, not to mention our annual Jumble Sale. In the meantime, stay safe, follow protocols and boost those immune systems with both vaccination and a healthy lifestyle. We look forward to seeing you soon!



"Mongoose Play", particular to St Kitts Christmas sports. Image reprinted from *Wide World Magazine*, VII, 38 (May, 1901)

and soot to cover their faces. The clothes they wore were unique: a derby hat, long black scissors-type frock coats, a ruffled tie or a big bow tie, and trousers decorated with sewn rags. The musicians lead the troupe as the performers danced, and their first stop was the local police station.

One typical play was based on a fisherman who caught a barracuda and discarded it for fear of being poisoned, only for the fish to be retrieved by the "Village Glutton" who cooked it in his yard over three stones, and in his greed consumed it all by himself. Later that evening he was woken by his erupting bowels, and his ordeal reached a climax when he could not switch his chamber pot fast enough to accommodate both his vomit and bowel movements. As the tragedy unfolded,



Nevis Cultural Development Foundation's rendition of "The Sweet Lemon"

accompanied by lively music and dancing, the crowd would be in hysterics.

Another play concerned a righteous man of the cloth who preached water but drank wine. While his sermons warned to not "covet thy neighbour's wife", he would whisper amorously to the sisters as he kneeled to pray with them.

The play unfolded to show that the preacher was as passionate in his condemnation of adultery as he was in his commitment to it! A village rum shop owner and his wife were devout members of his flock, and the preacher would often visit her to administer to her “non-spiritual” needs. When an inquisitive neighbour eventually revealed what was happening, the guilty lovers were descended upon and beaten in the street.

Christmas sports make up an important part of St Kitts and Nevis folklore. Niega Business, in particular, gave “common people” of those times the ability to turn ordinary events into comical episodes. They not only used this medium to caricature others, but to mock and expose social and moral corruption. It should be noted, though, that “permission” to ridicule was limited only to the Christmas Season!

While several Christmas sports are dying out, some – like Niega Business – are witnessing a revival thanks to the Ministry of Culture and the Nevis Cultural Development Foundation. Watch their take on it with [“The Sweet Lemon”](#).

Do you miss old time Nevis Christmas? Musicologist, writer, and producer Alan Lomax spent over six decades working to promote knowledge and appreciation of the folk music around the world. In 1962 he made an extensive survey of traditional music in the Eastern Caribbean. The Nevis and St. Kitts album of the [Caribbean Voyage](#) series is a beautiful collection of his recordings and includes lesser-heard songs from Christmas sports, official tea meeting ceremonies, and children's songs.



Further resources:

- *Christmas Sports in St Kitts-Nevis, Our Neglected Cultural Tradition*, by Frank L Mills, S B Jones-Hendrickson and lessons by Bertram Eugene (Fredericksted, Virgin Islands, Eastern Caribbean Institute, 1984).
- [The Survival of the Christmas Sport](#), by Fidel O'Flaherty and Victoria Borg O'Flaherty.
- *Caribbean Voyage: The 1962 Field Recordings*. 1997-2002 by Alan Lomax, Antoinette Marchand, Anna Lomax Chairetakis, Roger Abrahams, J. D. Elder, Kenneth Bilby, Morton Marks, Jeffrey A. Greenberg.



Left: Photo courtesy of L. Abungu  
Above: Photo © 2019 Nevis Culturama Secretariat

# PROJECTS: CURRENT & UPCOMING

While our borders re-opened at the end of 2020, tourism remained virtually non-existent, many of our overseas members were unable to return, and overall 2021 saw many challenges in all sectors. During our 3rd wave of Covid-19 cases, our museums and Gift Shop remained closed for several months out of an abundance of caution, but our staff were very busy working behind the scenes to raise funds for a variety of projects! We are delighted to share that we were successful in several grants and we look forward to continuing and/or embarking on a number of important projects in 2022. Among these include:

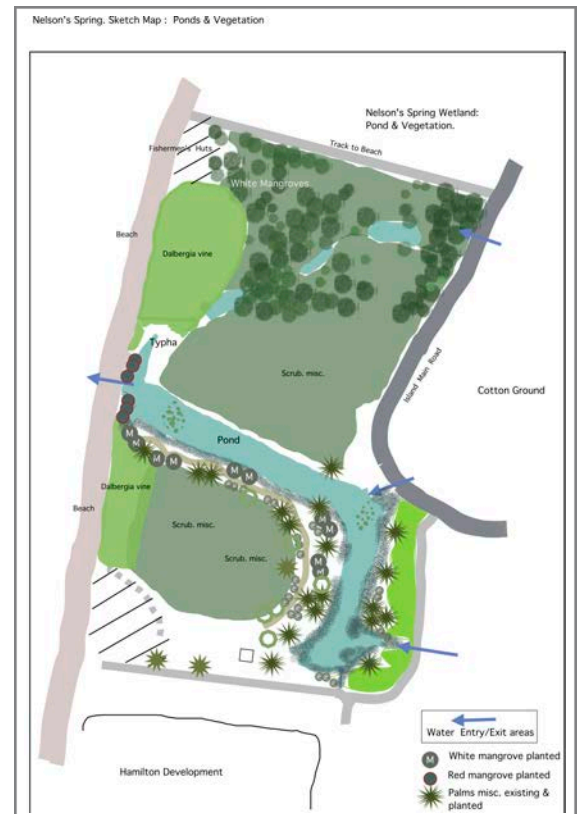
## RESTORATION OF NEVIS WETLANDS

In May, we were invited by the Natural Infrastructure for Caribbean Resilience (NICaR) Program, part of the U.S. Forest Service to develop and submit a concept note for funding. They received over 70

compelling concept notes from deserving organisations, and ours was among only 24 that were shortlisted, and ultimately among the final 12 proposals that were accepted towards the end of 2021. The project aims to undertake a comprehensive reclamation and restoration of Nelson's Spring and Fort Ashby, important and historic wetland areas, which will also result in improved capacity within the



Federation for landscape restoration, promoting our natural infrastructure and developing resilience to climate change. The project, which is set to commence in early 2022, will improve the existing water management and erosion control at the wetland sites and restore the once vibrant habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. The Society will be managing the execution of the project, with Mr Keithly Amory and Ms Jenny Lowery as project coordinators. The project will also work closely with the St Thomas' Improvement Group and community members, and in liaison with the Nevis Department of Physical Planning and Environment.



## DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: HAMILTON'S LEGACY ON HIS ISLAND BIRTHPLACE

Building on our excellent relations with the Public Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy Bridgetown (Barbados), we were thrilled that our proposal for their annual Public Diplomacy Small Grants was accepted for funding. Through a series of Secondary



school competitions (slam poetry, essay, and art) and debates, the project aims to encourage creative output and foster dialogue on

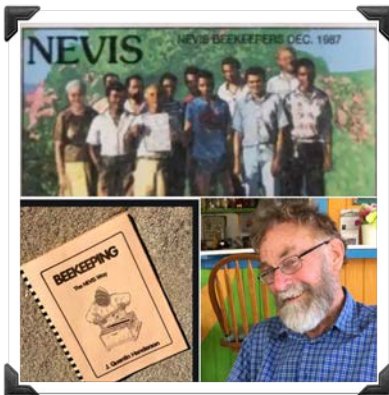
democracy and civic education among Nevisian youth. The project will also promote Hamilton's legacy and strengthen the

historic ties between Nevis and the USA. The grant includes an iMac desktop computer and graphic design software, which will go a long way in boosting our in-house capacity for professional marketing and communication materials.



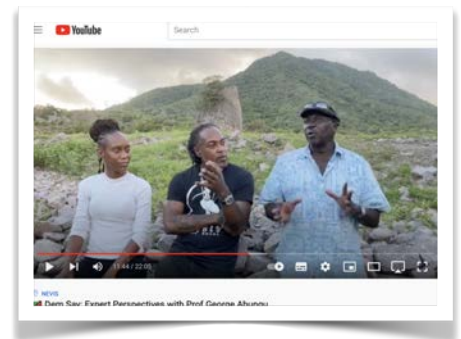
## BEEKEEPING: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRAL BREEDING FACILITIES

The work of Quentin "Beeman" Henderson was an inspiration to many, and following his unexpected death in 2020, a number of members expressed a desire to revive beekeeping in Nevis in his honour; among these was Ms Cathy Drew, who went the extra mile in organising a series of meetings with the Society, beekeepers and other stakeholders. When we were alerted to the opportunity for funding within the Regional Apiculture Project through the UNDP's Global Environment Facility ([GEF](#)) [Small Grants Programme](#), we jumped at the chance, and our proposal for the national component of this regional project was successful. The [project](#) aims to increase bee colonies on both islands, thus increasing bee populations, leading to biodiversity conservation and improved food and livelihood security for farmers and beekeepers. Master beekeeper Mr Richard Matthias of St. Lucia visited the Federation in December for a meeting with beekeepers to introduce the online beekeeping course and hive app and review proposed apiary sites on both islands and make recommendations.



Other proposals are awaiting approval, so keep your fingers crossed for us! Meanwhile, ongoing projects continued apace. The new **Nevis Archaeology Centre** is nearing completion, estimated for Summer 2022. Our benefactor, Dr Elaine Morris, will be here in early 2022 to finalise the selection of interior finishes and fittings.

Given that Covid-19 regulations disrupted in-person activities, we launched an in-house virtual discussion platform, "**Dem Say**" on our [YouTube](#) channel, where we invite members to discuss topics within their field of expertise in an informal setting. It goes without saying that other important institutional activities also continue, including weekly staff meetings, monthly Board meetings, the annual audit, and maintenance and upkeep of our museums, sites and structures.



Major projects for 2022 include an overhaul of the **Nevis Island Archives** with the guidance of Mr Christian Goodwillie of Hamilton College, New York (USA), and the extensive transformation of the current Nelson Museum into a more inclusive **Nevis Maritime Museum**, with the support of a team of international historians, curators and museologists.

# ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

## NEVIS AT THE DUBAI EXPO 2020

St Kitts and Nevis has been ably represented at [Dubai Expo 2020](#) by our teammate Patrick Howell as Logistics Manager. Patrick is an amazing ambassador for SKN, sharing information about our Federation's Intangible Cultural Heritage, Alexander Hamilton, and the important work of the Society and the Nevis Cultural Development Foundation. Watch the highlight of SKN on [Dubai TV](#) [تلفزيون دبي](#).

## VISITING HERITAGE EXPERT

At a special meeting of the Board of Directors in October, we were privileged to have Society member and [UNESCO World](#)

[Heritage](#) expert Prof (Dr) George Abungu from Kenya lead our management team through a discussion on developing site management plans - a crucial step in safeguarding Nevis' cultural heritage sites. Prof Abungu has long-standing family ties to Nevis and has been visiting regularly since the 1990s. He is a Cambridge-trained archaeologist and Emeritus Director-General of the [National Museums of Kenya](#). Currently the CEO of Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants and a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement in Defence of Art by the Association for Research into Crime against Art, he is also a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters of the Republic of France for his outstanding contribution to heritage at local and global levels. Prof. Abungu has researched, taught and published widely in the fields of archaeology, heritage management, museology, culture and development, and was Kenya's Representative to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and Vice-President of its Bureau (2004-2008). We are grateful to Prof Abungu for sharing his vast knowledge and experience as a valued member of the Society.



## UNESCO NATIONAL COMMITTEE COURTESY CALL



A small contingent representing the St. Kitts & Nevis National Commission for UNESCO paid a courtesy call on visiting UNESCO World Heritage expert Prof. George Abungu on Wednesday 27th October, 2021. The informal meeting was hosted by Society President, Richard Lupinacci, and Director Jahnel Nisbett. Present at the meeting were Secretary General, Ms. Dorothy Warner; Project Officer, Mrs. Shirmel Dore-Henry; and Manager of [Brimstone Hill National Park](#) Society, Mr. Percival Hanley. Interim Chair of the SKN Ad Hoc Tentative List Committee, Dr. Cameron Gill, joined the meeting via video call.

## FIRST CRUISE TOUR!

After almost two whole years, the Society staff were excited to welcome international tourists to the Museum of Nevis History and the Hamilton House Museum. At the end of October, MS World Navigator was the very first cruise ship to visit the island in the past 18 months. The passengers made us their first stop and were not disappointed! They absorbed the rich history of Nevis from our exhibitions, and danced to the sounds of the Hamilton Musical in our courtyard.



## SOCIETY DIRECTOR HONOURED WITH YOUTH IMPACT 12 AWARD

Heartiest of congratulations to our Director, Jahnel Nisbett, who was honoured with a Youth Impact Award in the area of “Patriotism”. The ceremony, hosted by the Nevis Department of Youth, was held on 4th November and saw 9 young individuals being highlighted for their contributions to Nevis. Join us once again in saying Congratulations to our Director and all of the other deserving awardees!



## FARE THEE WELL, AMBA TROTT

On 25<sup>th</sup> November in front of Hamilton (aka “Trott”) House, family and friends of the late Amba Trott gathered together for a moving celebration of his life. Speakers included Clayton Huggins as Master of Ceremonies, Hope Trott, Halstead Sooty Byron, Austin Trott, Wesley Trott, and Isabel Byron on behalf of the Society. Befitting of his passion for the arts, there were also musical performances by the Coelis Classical Choir, the Nevis

Theatre Guild, and Donald Thompson. Amba was a vocal and unwavering supporter of Nevisian arts and culture, and his memory will live on in the important legacy he left behind, especially in the preservation of Hamilton House. Amba will be greatly missed but his warmth, kindness and gentle spirit will be remembered forever. The family requests that [donations can be made in his memory to Society.](#)

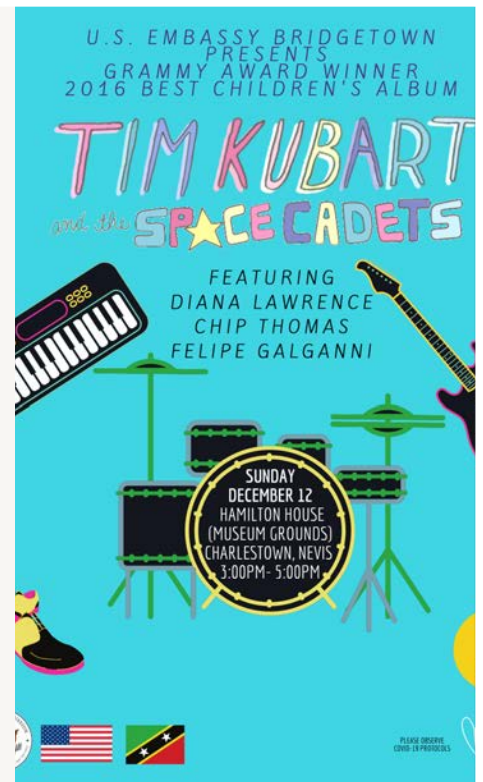


In November, we joined the world in celebrating  
ARBOUR MONTH with a variety of activities and our COASTAL CLEANUP.

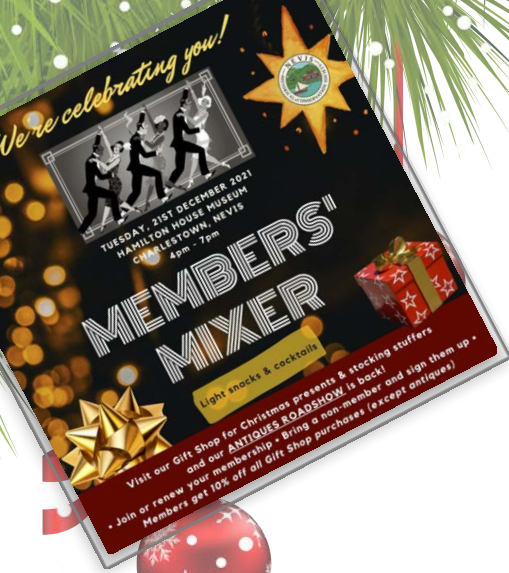
Read more about these activities of our Biodiversity Committee on pg. 10

### US EMBASSY BRIDGETOWN HOSTS MUSICAL SHOW ON THE MUSEUM GROUNDS

Following the successful screening of 'Hamilton' in 2020, we were excited to once again partner with the U.S. Embassy Bridgetown (Barbados) for a special musical afternoon on the Museum grounds in Charlestown. Grammy award-winning Tim and the Space Cadets performed on 12th December at a free concert for children and their families. Despite a rainy start to the day, the concert was a great success, and both young and old got in on the action.

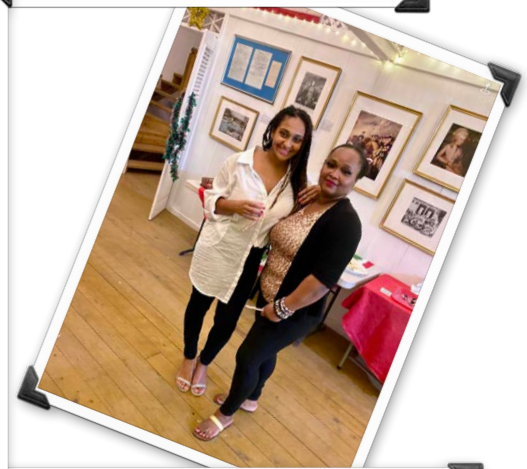
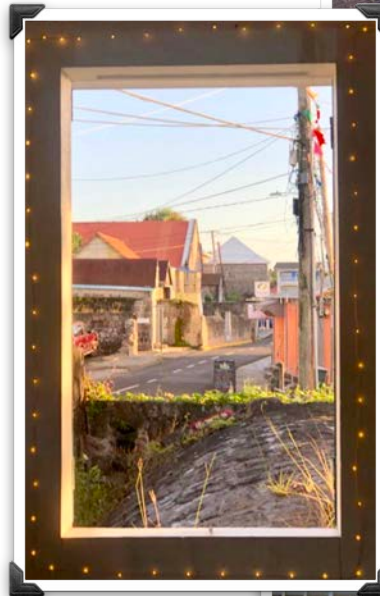






## END-OF-YEAR MEMBERS' MIXER

On 21st December, we held our end-year social event for members and friends. Our indomitable member, Mrs Miriam Knorr, ensured that the hall was decorated to perfection, and that delicious light bites and cocktails flowed throughout the afternoon and evening! The Museum Gift Shop was open for last-minute Christmas shopping of stocking stuffers and stunning handmade ornaments; and our Antiques Roadshow made a comeback – both did brisk business. We extend a hearty **THANK YOU** to all who attended, and especially those who took the time to enjoy, buy AND renew (or take out new) membership! And of course, to all the staff and volunteers who made the event a success!!



Above: Photo courtesy of Sheila Cohen



# BIODIVERSITY

**Ella Bendeito reports on the activities of our Biodiversity Committee in the last quarter of 2021, including the International Coastal Cleanup that was postponed in September**

## COASTAL CLEANUP

Ocean Conservancy's 2021 International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest volunteer effort to keep our oceans free of trash. As a result of our 3rd wave of Covid-19 cases in the Federation, the Coastal Clean-up in Nevis was postponed from September 25th to November 27th. This year we partnered with a number of organisations: Ocean Conservancy, IWECO St. Kitts and Nevis, Clean Seas, Nevis Solid Waste Management, Department of Youth Empowerment St. Kitts, St. Kitts and Nevis Clean Seas, The Ripple Institute, Anjolieque Dance Company, and Caribbean Youth Environment Network.



We had 11 teams that signed up, and seven teams successfully completed and returned their data cards to be analysed.

Data was collected from the following sites: Gallows Bay, Pinneys Beach, Pinneys Beach to TDC, Jones Bay, and Indian Castle/Windward Beach. In total, an estimate of 44 bags with 2,180 items of trash were collected, weighing approximately 690 lbs., spanning 4.875 miles. Indian Castle/Windward Beach was found to accumulate the most trash of all the beaches documented, with the total of 1,085 trash items. Among the trash, the most collected item calculated thus far is plastic pieces; the top five most collected trash items were:

- Plastic Pieces: 436*
- Plastic Bottle Caps: 356*
- Plastic Bottles: 208*
- Other Plastic Bottles: 157*
- Rope: 90*

Overall, 'plastic' made up 82% of the trash collected with 1,515 items that were made of plastic. Foam is the second highest of material, accounting for only 9% with 175 items made of foam.



## Arbour Month Tree-sure Hunt November 19th - 26th



### Requirements:

- Primary School Students Grades 3-6
- Parental consent and supervision

### Participation:

- Register with NHCS (661-0408)
- Get clues via Whatsapp
- Find the Trees
- Snap a Pic with each Tree Identified
- Submit via Whatsapp



Prizes awarded to the first 3 fully correct submissions.  
Registration deadline: November 17th 2021

## ARBOUR MONTH

Arbour Month is held annually to recognise the immense value of trees in our environment. Trees are essential to the survival of our planet yet are increasingly endangered due to relentless human activity. Forests are being destroyed at ever more alarming rates to make space for roads, towns and cities, agricultural and mining projects.

Trees are vital to combat global warming and climate change: they store carbon, provide shade and wind breaks, prevent erosion, provide organic matter to build soils, attract and hold moisture. They give us food, fuel, medicines, building materials and are habitats for a multitude of species. The planet needs billions of trees to replace those we have destroyed throughout history.

This year, our Arbour Month activities went virtual with a Tree planting video essay competition and a Tree-sure Hunt. THANK YOU to all who participated, and CONGRATULATIONS to all our Winners!

## Tree Planting Video Essay Competiton



We want to see your tree planting process:  
from your location search to watering your labour of love!

### Entry Requirements:

1. Ages 11 - 17 Secondary School Students
2. One entry per student
3. Video no longer than 1 minute, 30 seconds
4. Post to facebook
5. Tag Nevis Historical and Conservation Society - NHCS on Facebook

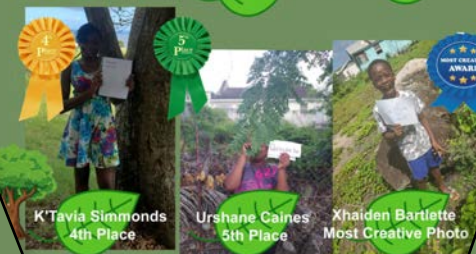
1st  
2nd  
3rd place prizes!

Special Peoples Choice Award for video with most likes



Submission deadline: November 19th 2021

## Meet our Tree-sure hunt winners!!!!



# STAFF NEWS



After five years, Nevena “Babita” Seelal left the Society in October to pursue further studies in physiotherapy. Babita’s energy and flair will be greatly missed by staff and members alike, and we wish her the best as she embarks on her new professional

adventures - we know that she will continue to be a dynamic ambassador for Nevis history and heritage!

Following Babita’s departure, we embarked on a competitive recruitment for a Gallery Supervisor/Administrative Assistant, and after shortlisting and interviews, Eliesel Ramirez Dorsett emerged as the successful candidate. Born in the Dominican Republic, Eliesel grew up in Nevis and completed his schooling at Charlestown Secondary School. He has over five years’ administrative and client relations experience with various law firms in Nevis, and is currently pursuing online studies with the Global University of the Americas and Penn Foster International College. Eliesel, who is fluent in both English and Spanish, is no stranger to public service and volunteerism; he has served as Vice President of the St. Kitts and Nevis Disaster Management Youth Ambassadors and was voted Most Outstanding/Promising teen at the Youth and Sports Job Attachment Programme. Eliesel will also double up as our Membership Officer, and will undoubtedly be an asset to the Society as we expand our community engagement and outreach. Oh, and did we mention he’s an accomplished singer? It’s incredible to add yet another



young, capable and vibrant individual to our team – join us in saying congratulations and welcome aboard to Eliesel!

# thank you!

**We extend special thanks to the following members & friends for their generous contributions in cash or kind!**

Christian Goodwillie  
(Hamilton College, NY)

Elaine Morris

Alice Young  
& Tom Shorthall

Miriam Knorr

Insurance Company  
of the West Indies



# Member's Corner



## MONKEY MADNESS WITH THE VERVETS OF ST. KITTS & NEVIS

**Lily Datz** is a student at Syracuse University, studying magazine journalism and geography. For her senior thesis she is creating a digital magazine about the food, culture, and environment of Nevis. Datz spent the month of December in Nevis interviewing sources and completing historical research for the project. Her work is inspired by the extensive amounts of time spent in Nevis throughout her childhood, as her family has owned a historic home

on the island for nearly 30 years. Loathed by locals but adored by tourists, monkeys on St. Kitts and Nevis pose a nightmare for many; Lily shares with us here how the handling of the species' population has some concerned, both for the livelihoods of local farmers and for public health.

The screeches of the monkey pierced the air around her, ringing through the research site as if blasted through loudspeakers. Dr. Kerry Dore stood stunned. A half alive vervet monkey lay stuck under the rusted metal bar of a clamp trap. Dore, a primatologist who has spent the past eleven years of her

*"We're talking about something incredibly humanlike, incredibly intelligent and incredibly closely related to us."*

— Kerry Dore

career studying vervet monkeys on the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, was visiting an area of farmland nestled in the lush jungle up-island with one of her local friends who occupies the land. The farmer turned towards Dore, visibly annoyed, and said that he would leave the monkey to force others in the monkey's troop to leave his property alone. The local troop constantly

pillaged his land, taking single bites out of the cucumbers he grew and ripping up entire rows of carrots. Frustrated, he took matters into his own hands with traps. The monkey's shrieks acted as a warning cry to others: *Do not come here.*

Dore's experience that day reflects a larger debate about monkeys on St. Kitts and Nevis. The current monkey population across both islands stands at 40,000 or more. On Nevis specifically, locals believe there are between 10,000 to 15,000 monkeys. With the World Bank's [estimated](#) human population of about 53,000 people there is nearly a one-to-one ratio of humans to monkeys on St. Kitts and Nevis, which is the smallest country in the Western Hemisphere. Past efforts to curb the monkey population included temporary sterilization of females and sending a certain number of the species to the U.S. for biological scientific research. The government also completed regular culling while the sugar industry operated, which meant as recently as 2005 on St. Kitts. But the sheer number of monkeys rendered each project unsustainable, and the monkey population continued to boom.



*A green vervet sits to eat scraps found on the edge of the beach. Photo Courtesy of Kerry Dore*



A young green vervet peaks its head out from behind a beach bar counter.  
Photo courtesy of Kerry Dore

Now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nevis is facing a lack of tourists. With less people on the island the monkeys take even greater advantage of every opportunity they get to overrun the island. They destroy everything from flower boxes to home gardens to entire crop fields. Given the extent of the overpopulation and economic impacts, the Federation chose monkeys as the most problematic invasive species to focus on under the regional Global Environment Facility and the [United Nations Environment Program](#) project. Dore leads this initiative, called *Preventing COSTS of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Barbados and the OECS Countries*, as the national coordinator. The project aims to research the impact of the monkeys on “biodiversity, agriculture, tourism, and households,” with the ultimate goal of creating a scientifically-informed and sustainable plan to manage the monkeys on the islands.

Fewer tourists visiting Nevis also uncovered a hushed point of conversation on the island about eating monkey meat. A local farmer named Burnett Thompson, who goes by the nickname “Nutsy”, estimated that 35-40% of locals eat monkey meat, which Nevisians call tree mutton. For decades the consumption of monkey meat remained a private practice unknown to most tourists. But in September, for the first time in my family’s 20-plus years of visiting Nevis, a post from the Department of Agriculture circulated in the Nevis Nice Facebook group advertising the sale of fresh monkey meat. The ad called widespread public attention to the monkey meat. At \$2.50 USD a pound it was a deal for dog meat or homemade curry. But some believe the ad is a sign of pandemic-related changes on the island. “I do think it is not coincidental that we are having more public advertisement of monkey control and monkey meat consumption and selling during a time when there are not really tourists here,” one local, who wished to remain anonymous, says. Two days after the post was shared, it was taken down from Facebook.

*“They’re spiteful, badass animals!”  
– Burnett (Nutsy) Thompson*

The issues regarding the sale of monkey meat today reflect a larger, complex history for the species since it arrived on the island as early as the 1560s during the slave trade. Most historians believe that green monkeys, a species previously found only in Africa, came to St. Kitts and Nevis as exotic pets of European colonizers. Researchers don’t exactly know the original number of monkeys brought to the island. But Woodrow Denham, a retired scholar who spent his life’s work studying cultural anthropology, says in his book, titled *West Indian Green Monkeys: Problems in Historical Biogeography*, that “thousands of monkeys could have reached the British West Indies” by 1624 based on historical references.

However, some residents have other theories, including Richie Lupinacci and his father Richard Lupinacci Sr. The family owns and runs [The Hermitage](#), one of the oldest former plantations in the Caribbean that’s now a cottage-style hotel. The Lupinaccis speculate that the monkeys were brought as a source of food for slaves. The explanation makes sense, as Europeans also [brought breadfruit](#) to various islands across the Caribbean as a cheap and fast-growing food for slaves forced to work on sugar estates. Within just 25 years monkeys arriving to St. Kitts and Nevis there was a bounty for monkey tails because of a population boom, which the Lupinaccis say probably can’t be justified by the monkeys as pets only.

The species, known scientifically as *Chlorocebus sabaesus*, started to adapt to the island over the next 300 years. Some monkeys mainly inhabit the trees and have small nimble bodies for swinging between branches. The others reside mainly on the ground, especially near beach areas, and have a large and aggressive stature. Up through the 1980s the monkeys mostly lived up-island in the jungle, surrounding the top of the inactive volcano. But when hurricane Hugo hit Nevis particularly hard in 1989 the monkeys fled down the mountain in search of food. Finding yards plentiful with fruit trees and manicured gardens with vegetables, locals say that the monkeys never really went back up.



*Two small green vervets hide in a Caribbean almond tree on St. Kitts.  
Photo Courtesy of Kerry Dore*

Today, monkeys are a part of everyday life for just about everyone who lives on Nevis. You see them hanging on colorfully painted fences and in front yards while driving. Some sections of the main road have bright yellow MONKEY X-ING signs for highly populated areas. Merchandise at almost every hotel boutique or local shop is printed with drawings of monkeys. You may even be woken up in the morning by the loud barking sound of a male monkey, alerting his troop whether it is safe to advance. But the challenges with their presence persist. “They’re evil things, even though they look cute,” Lupinacci Sr. says.

**This is an excerpt of Datz’s story, “Barrel of Monkey Madness with the Green Vervets of St. Kitts & Nevis,” on *Medium*. You can read the full story [here](#).**



*A monkey sits on the beach, picking at their teeth. Photo Courtesy of Kerry Dore*

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



**Please get in touch if you'd like to donate towards, or get involved with, any of our activities!**

- ▶ 11 January: Alexander Hamilton's Birthday
- ▶ 31 January: Deadline to receive for nominations to the Board
- ▶ February: Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- ▶ February: Jumble Sale (date to be announced)
- ▶ February: Evening with the Arts (date to be announced)
- ▶ March: Slam Poetry competition (part of the "Democracy in Action" project)
- ▶ April 22: Earth Day
- ▶ 18 May: International Museum Day
- ▶ 22 July: Unveiling of Alexander Hamilton statue on the museum grounds
- ▶ September: Coastal Cleanup (date to be announced)
- ▶ November: Arbour month
- ▶ Last Tuesday of every month: "Meet the Artist" at the Museum Gift Shop
- ▶ 3rd Thursday of every month: meeting of the Board of Directors
- ▶ Monthly "Movie Night": Nevis Past & Present (footage from the Archives)

**Public events will resume as and when permitted.**

## Q4 MUSEUM STATISTICS (OCT-DEC)

Fifteen cruise ships called at the Charlestown pier in the 4th Quarter of 2021! These statistics reflect the Museum of Nevis History and Hamilton Museum only.

888

TOTAL  
MUSEUM  
VISITORS

331

VISITORS  
FROM  
33 TOURS

557

WALK-IN  
VISITORS



Please note that only paid-up Members will be eligible to participate in the AGM.

# RENEW OR JOIN TODAY!

We've partnered with the GivenGain Foundation to provide a secure platform for our members to pay **ONLINE!**

Members who have not yet renewed their membership – and those wishing to join – are encouraged to do so by coming by the Museum of Nevis History and renewing/joining in person, and paying by cash, EC\$ cheque or credit/debit card.

You can also join/renew by submitting the online form at **[www.nevisheritage.org](http://www.nevisheritage.org)** and following the prompts for online payment.

**Your support DOES make a difference!**



## A HAMILTON FOR HAMILTON

**Since the establishment of the first museum in 1986, our Admission fee has remained at US\$ 5 for visitors and EC\$ 1 for nationals and residents. Since then, we have added two more museums, and in 2019 we unveiled a new exhibition in the Museum of Nevis History.**

Given the staggering loss of revenue during the pandemic, and the rising cost of maintenance for our buildings and exhibits as well as programming and general operations, we are implementing a rate increase w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. We hope that our international visitors will feel that US\$10 for a memorable Hamilton experience is worthwhile!

**SKN nationals and residents still pay only EC\$1 for entry and entry is FREE for Members and all children under 10.**

**Please note that US\$10 (or equivalent) is a combined entry fee for the Museum of Nevis History, Hamilton Museum, Gift Shop and museum grounds.**

# SHOP TALK

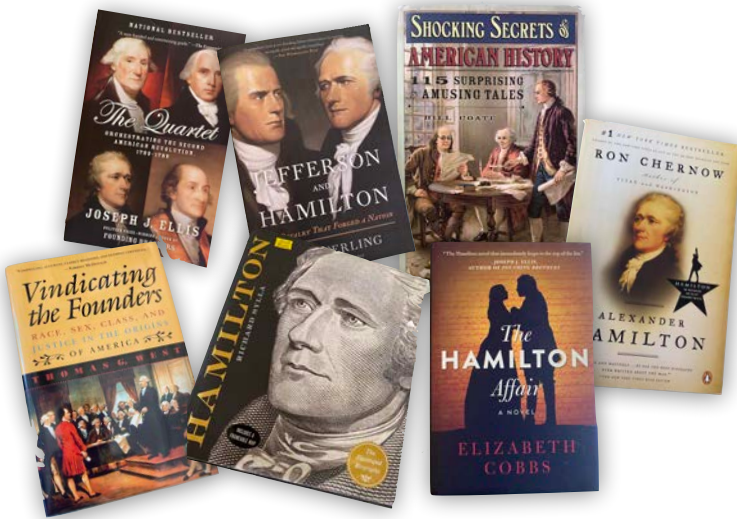
New stock just in: **BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS!**

All things Hamilton!

T-shirts: Only \$15 US (\$40 EC)

as well as other Hamilton gifts:

books, socks, collectible coins, and MORE!



We also have new kids' books, as well as **unique and handcrafted gift items** like ornaments, frames, paracord key chains, carved whistles, pottery, one-of-a-kind jewellery, original paintings, photographs, and maps!



**DON'T FORGET:**

**FLASH YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP CARD  
AND GET 10% OFF\* !**

*\* except antiques*



Free WiFi in our  
Museums & Gift Shop

*All Covid-19 protocols observed*

# *In Memoriam*

Nevis has lost yet another icon. The late Mr Spencer Howell was a staunch supporter of the Society, and of Nevisian culture. A prominent businessman, he was one of the early pioneers of horseracing on Nevis and could frequently be seen sporting his favourite Stetson hat.

*“Spencer Howell, the Welfare Officer of Nevis, agreed to squire the Lomax entourage; Spencer, our next-door neighbor and friend, had arranged for the recording sites in Gingerland and St. George parishes on the farthest reaches of this tight little island. He had let the word go forth that Mr. Lomax was coming to the island to record musical talent for which he would pay a day's wage. Such largesse was welcome.”*

From: *Recollections of Collecting With Alan Lomax in Nevis & St Kitts* — by Roger Abrahams, Hum Rosen Professor Emeritus of Folklore and Folklife, University of Pennsylvania

## **SPENCER HOWELL (1932-2021)**



Left: With his daughter, Donna Howell-Vinson. Photo: Courtesy of the Howell family.

Right: From an interview with his grandson, Patrick “DaddyPlay” Howell at Montravers Estate, Pinneys.



*May he Rest in Eternal Peace*



## NEVIS HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION SOCIETY

### Our Team

Jahnel Nisbett – Director  
Gail Dore – Senior Archivist / Ag. Administrative Officer  
Eliesel Ramirez Dorsett – Gallery supervisor/Membership Officer  
Arcquela “Ella” Bendeito – Gallery attendant/Assistant archivist  
Jonathan Ward – Gallery attendant/Admin. assistant  
Deus Herbert – Gallery attendant / digitisation  
Jamilah Clarke – Museum Gift Shop attendant  
Miriam Knorr – Museum Gift Shop supervisor  
Lorna Abungu – Museum / Communications advisor  
Patrick Howell – Audio-Visual support

### Executive Board 2021

Richard Lupinacci – President  
Todd Miller – Vice President  
Warren Moving – Treasurer  
Anthony Gajor  
Gillian Hobson  
Kris Liburd  
Terence “Tee” Liburd  
Sylvester Meade - Heritage Manager, NIA  
Maurisha Robinson  
Charles Ward

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[#museumofnevishistory](https://www.instagram.com/museumofnevishistory)

Design and Layout: in-house © 2022 Nevis Historical & Conservation