

BERMUDA FOLKLIFE
DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Ronnie Chameau: *Banana Doll Maker*



Sturdy Guide



Ronnie Chameau



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Ronnie Chameau: *Banana Doll Maker*

Study Guide



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports
Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

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From top left to right: Ronnie as a baby, Ronnie at 9 months, Ronnie frying fish and Ronnie and Michel's wedding day.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Bermuda Folklife Documentary Series aims to capture the intangible heritage capital of Bermuda's tradition bearers in a way that is easily accessible to all. This Study Guide aims to reinforce and increase your comprehension of the information presented in the Documentary. Each chapter in the Study Guide corresponds with the chapters in the Documentary. As the information in the documentary is only an hour out of the approximate 14 hours of interview footage collected, this guide was created to facilitate a deeper discussion and understanding of the information presented.

The Bermuda Folklife Documentary Series episode *Ronnie Chameau: Banana Doll Maker* gives viewers the opportunity to look into the life of Bermudian artisan Ronnie Chameau. In addition to the information presented in the DVD, we want you to use this guide as a reference when considering the social, economic and political factors that have shaped the life of this extraordinary creator and tradition-bearer of Bermudian heritage.

Teachers and students are encouraged to use the Study Guide in conjunction with studies in social studies, history, English, geography, civics and economics in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of these subjects as they relate to the lives of Bermudians.

In Chapter 1, we look at the effect of the American military base construction on Bermuda and specifically the St. David's Island community. It is important to understand Bermuda's role in global politics and how this has affected social and political life on the island.

Chapter 2 focuses on Bermuda's 'oldest inhabitants' – our plant life. This chapter is meant to provide an outlook into just how valuable the island's natural resources are for the purpose of banana doll making and for the livelihood of Bermudians.

Chapter 3 reveals the steps involved in making banana dolls.

Chapter 4 takes a closer look into life in old St. David's and the linkages with Native American culture.

Chapter 5 takes a deeper look into the importance of apprenticeships.

Chapter 6 encourages us to acknowledge and appreciate Bermuda's heritage assets.

The Critical Thinking and Research Skills sections in each chapter of this study guide can serve as the basis for research projects. The Enrichment suggestions are intended to enable educators to build on lesson plans with practical examples as they relate to real-life situations.



Chapter 1: Introduction



Chapter Summary

Ronnie Chameau is a tradition-bearer of Bermudian culture. In chapter 1 of *Ronnie Chameau: Banana Doll Maker*, Ronnie explains how her upbringing in St. David's influenced her artistry. As an artist whose materials are entirely natural, Ronnie has developed a business that promotes the sustainability of Bermuda's cultural heritage.

Did You Know

- Veronica Chameau was born in St. David's in 1943 to parents Reginald and Nina Smith. Her mother was supportive of her artistic ambitions by encouraging Ronnie to use her imagination to create. Reginald was in the army during the Second World War.
- St. David's Islanders did not frequently engage in exchanging money on the island until the American military bases were built in 1941 during the Second World War. Trade was based on livestock and vegetables and as a result there was very little crime as, according to Ronnie, 'there was nothing to steal'.
- St. David's Island was connected to the rest of Bermuda for the first time in 1934 with the construction of Severn Bridge.¹ This made St. David's the last large island to be connected to the rest of the mainland more than 50 years after construction of the Causeway. Before this time, most travel to and from St. David's was by boat. This meant that many St. David's residents rarely left the island and naturally formed close ties within their community.
- Ronnie Chameau was dyslexic and had challenges in a traditional learning environment. She used art and crafts as a way of coping with her struggles. Her aunt and grandmother were deaf mutes who did not receive a traditional education, but were very artistic and creative.

Chapter Themes

Being an Artist in Bermuda

Bermuda has served as a place of inspiration for many artists who are captivated by the island's natural beauty and charm.

In 1610 or 1611, it is believed that William Shakespeare, the famous British playwright, was inspired by Bermuda when he wrote his play *The Tempest*. After encountering a vicious storm, the play is set on a remote island. It was only months before this in 1609 that British settlers on route to Virginia encountered a storm which would leave their ship the *Sea Venture* wrecked on Bermuda's reefs.

¹ Bermuda National Trust p. 138

Mark Twain, a famous American literary figure best known for his children's story *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, also found respite in Bermuda's serene environment. Twain once said 'You can go to heaven if you want, I'd rather stay in Bermuda'. Over his lifetime, he made numerous trips to the island and it became his second home during the last years of his life.

Graham Foster is an example of a Bermudian artist who has created a viable career in Bermuda. Most notably, Graham painted the 'Hall of History' which is a 1,000 square foot mural which covers 4 walls in the Pillared Hall of Commissioner's House in Dockyard. It is estimated that Graham spent 7,000 hours painting the mural over 3 ½ years.²

These artists are just a few of an endless number of historians, writers, painters and collectors who love Bermuda and have been inspired by our island.

Life On Old St. David's Island

Life in Bermuda was simple when Ronnie was a child. Based on her description, it is evident that there was not much material wealth on St. David's in those days. An explanation for this is that for many years following settlement in St. David's, much of the island was owned by the Bermuda Government or a few wealthy land owners and was leased to residents there. This meant that like many other Bermudians during that time, St. David's Islanders were classified as living in poor households because "they owned little or no land".³ In 1758 when shares of land were auctioned to the public, "only two St. David's Islanders purchased the right to the land they occupied. The rest were either turned off their land or became sub-tenants of those who bought the use of the land".⁴

Although many St. David's islanders possessed valuable maritime skill sets such as whaling, fishing, shipbuilding and piloting, creating a viable business in these trades was limited by the fact that "most lacked the capital needed to purchase ocean-going sloops and thus profit from intercolonial trade".⁵

The American Base

Ronnie describes herself as a 'war baby'. This means she was born during the period of the Second World War which lasted between the years of 1939-1945. Developments during the Second World War affected all Bermudians. In particular, residents of St. David's Island experienced a major change in their landscape. As the war with Nazi Germany continued to escalate, it became evident that assistance from the United States, which had adopted a neutral position, would be needed in order for the Allies to win the war. Because of Bermuda's strategic position in the Atlantic Ocean, it would prove to be the ideal destination for an American army base.

In 1939, a contract was signed between the United States and the United Kingdom allowing America "rent-free use of the Bermuda lands"⁶ for the purpose of building a military base for land-based army planes. In 1941, construction of Fort Bell, later known as Kindley Field, began on some of the islands of Castle Harbour. This was the first American base to operate on British soil.

² Foster, Jones p. 18

³ Jarvis p. 272

⁴ Bermuda National Trust p. 138

⁵ Jarvis p. 273

⁶ Jones p. 182

This proved to be a trying time for some St. David's Islanders who had to leave their homes in order to make space for the military base and felt inadequately compensated for their loss. Before long, thousands of Americans would descend upon the Bermuda islands. Many St. David's Islanders were not happy about the change in their landscape and community.

Key Terms

- **tradition-bearer:** A member of a community who practices and safeguards the traditions of that community
- **sustainability:** the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance
- **entrepreneur:** a person that organises and manages any business enterprise, usually with considerable initiative and risk
- **culture:** the total range of activities and ideas by a group of people with shared traditions which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group
- **dyslexia:** a developmental disorder which can cause learning difficulty in one or more of the areas relating to reading, writing or numeracy.

Critical Thinking



- Why is it important for Bermuda to encourage the development of its artists?
Why is art and culture important for Bermuda?
Can you imagine a country without art and culture? What would it look like?
- What are the differences between traditional and non-traditional forms of education?
Is it important for Bermuda to offer both forms of education to its citizens? Why or why not?
Do you think that non-traditional education can help with the social problems our island is facing? Why or why not?
- Think about Bermuda's position as a Dependant Territory of Great Britain. If Bermuda were an independent nation, do you think the US military bases would have been constructed? Consider if Bermuda decided against the Bases; how might this have changed the course of the Second World War or our relationship with Great Britain and the United States?

Research Skills



- Research a Bermudian artist such as Sharon Wilson or Desmond Fountain. How have the works produced by the artist contributed to Bermuda's heritage? Is their art displayed in an area of public significance? What inspired the work, or what does the work reference? What is their favourite medium?

- Research Bermuda's role throughout history as a military base. During Bermuda's early settlement there were fears of Spanish and French invasion. Bermuda was also actively involved in the American Civil War. Create a timeline which demonstrates when and how Bermuda has responded as a military base over the centuries. How important is Bermuda militarily over the centuries?
- Bermuda's economic stability is influenced by events happening nationally and internationally. Think about how events such as the tobacco trade, the rise in tourism during the 1950s, the Belco Riots and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have affected Bermuda.

Enrichment



- Visit a local art gallery and critique the art on display. Some galleries are home to single or multiple artists. In what ways is the art inspired by Bermuda?
- Visit Bermuda's forts and think about their significance to Bermuda.
- Visit Kindley Field or Morgan's Point and try to visualize how Bermuda looked before and after the major reconstruction of these lands. What are the new or interesting aspects of the landscape that you see? How does the architecture differ from traditional Bermudian architecture?

Further Reading



- Foster, Graham and Jones, Rosemary. *Bermuda Hall of History*. Bermuda: National Museum of Bermuda, 2011.
- Harris, Edward. *Bermuda Forts 1612–1957*. Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1997.
- McCallan E. A. *Life on Old St. David's Bermuda*. Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust, 1948.



Chapter 2: The Banana Patch



Chapter Summary

Ronnie Chameau collects natural materials for her art from all over the island. There are various factors that affect what she is able to collect at any given time. Thus, she has developed an acute understanding of nature and knows where and when to collect the particular plant materials she needs for her dolls.

Depending on the time of year, the banana patch will yield materials that can be used to construct various parts of the doll. Some months she will find leaves that are only appropriate for dresses. Other months will yield leaves more suitable for the base. All of her materials are collected and prepped ahead of sitting to construct a doll.

In this chapter of the Documentary, we follow Ronnie through the banana patch where she reveals her method for using banana leaves as an artistic medium.

Did You Know

- In the early 19th century, men and women's hats were made of palmetto leaves.
- Ronnie Chameau makes necklaces from Pride of India berries and cassia seeds.
- When banana leaves are partially yellow they still have moisture in them and are not ready for making dolls. They should be left under their tree until they turn brown. However, leaves should not be left until they are too dry because they become brittle and will break when manipulated.

Chapter Themes

The Bermuda Palmetto

The first accounts of uninhabited Bermuda describe a lush, fruitful landscape covered by endemic Bermuda cedars and palmettos. The Bermuda palmetto, also known as *sabal bermudana*⁷, is the only endemic palm found in Bermuda. The palmetto leaves, which have a distinctive yellow colouration at the base, are often confused with the Chinese fan palm which is an invasive species. The Chinese fan palm differs from the Bermuda palmetto as it has spines on the leaf stem and blue-green oval berries about the size of grapes.

⁷ The Garden Club of Bermuda p. 80

Palmetto trees were important to early settlers. The large leaves were used for thatching the roofs of houses and churches. The inner leaf was cut and used for weaving hats, bags, mats, rope and all sorts of items that were used domestically. By the early 17th century, hats woven from plaited palmetto leaves became a popular fashion among Londoners. The plait industry would provide the island with income which had to be protected by law. The palmetto's young leaves, when carefully dried, bleached, stripped, plaited and sewn to the required standard in England resulted in a hat which was declared to be the 'neatest in the world.'⁸ The palmetto hat eventually fell out of fashion by the 18th century.

The palmetto berries, which are roughly the size of marbles and are black when ripe around December, were eaten and regarded as a hearty source of food for the early settlers. They were also fed to hogs to fatten them up. Berries were ground into meal and used to make bread by the *Sea Venture* survivors⁹ and were one of only three edible plants found on the island by the early settlers.¹⁰ The other two plants were the prickly pear, which was eaten 'raw and baked'¹¹ and cedar berries which were used for food, 'berry beer' and 'cedar berry syrup'.¹²

Early settlers also made 'bibby', an alcoholic drink, from the sap of the palmetto tree, often referred to as 'bibby trees'. The presence of this liquor was recorded by Governor Moore from as early as 1612 who stated that he 'has found it good: take a hatchet and cut him, or an augur and bore him, and it yields a very pleasant liquor much like unto your sweet wine'. Many natives learned how to distill it into a strong rum which some complained resulted in antisocial behaviour. It was soon banned by an order issued by the Governor in 1627 that 'no palmetto trees should be cut for procuring of bibby...'.¹³ The piece in the middle of the palmetto trunk known as the 'heart', which resembles cabbage, was boiled or roasted and eaten as a vegetable.

The Banana Tree

The banana tree, also known as the 'Chinese or Canary Island banana' is a common plant grown in Bermuda. The plant grows with 'large, paddle-shaped leaves and an interesting flower from which the bunch of bananas emerges'.¹⁴ The Latin name for the banana is *musa paradisiacal* or *musa cavendishii*¹⁵ and has been a staple of Bermuda's edible landscape since its introduction on the ship *Edwin* with other West Indian fruits.

According to the text *Bermuda's Oldest Inhabitants*, the very first bunch of bananas found in England were grown in Bermuda.¹⁶ Bananas are an essential part of a traditional Bermudian breakfast of codfish and potatoes served on Sunday mornings.

8 Wilkinson p. 16

9 Smith p. 24

10 ibid p. 24

11 ibid p. 10

12 ibid p. 18

13 ibid p. 25

14 The Garden Club of Bermuda p. 176

15 ibid p. 176

16 Smith p. 39

Key Terms

- **endemic:** a plant that has been isolated for so long that it has evolved into a unique species and can be found nowhere else
- **native:** A species with arrived in Bermuda without the aid of humans, but which are found in other areas too
- **invasive plants:** exotic plants that are altering Bermuda's native plant communities by displacing indigenous species, changing ecology and/or hybridizing with indigenous plants

Critical Thinking



- Think about the process of evolution. Research the parent plants of Bermuda's endemic species and compare and contrast the ways it has evolved. What are the ways in which the plants could have arrived in Bermuda?
- The Bermuda government has enacted many laws in order to protect natural resources which are deemed valuable. The Bermuda palmetto was one of the protected species. Research laws relating to Bermuda's endemic plants or protected species that would have imposed limitations on the everyday lives of Bermudians. For example, if the Bermuda palmetto was widely used for thatching roofs during the early settlement period, how would a law restricting its use have affect the islands' citizens? Discuss the pro and cons.
- Why is it important for Bermudians to know and protect Bermuda's endemic species? What is their value and what do they mean for the future generations of Bermudians?

Research Skills



- Think about the many uses of Bermuda's plants. For centuries, plants found on Bermuda's landscape have been used for a variety of purposes such as food, medicine and shipbuilding to name a few. Create a chart that maps Bermuda's native and endemic plants and their various uses on the island. How has Bermuda's natural resources contributed to our economy and society?
- The arrival of humans to Bermuda has meant that the physical landscape has been affected. From the introduction of wild hogs by the Spanish, to the construction of naval bases and the introduction of many invasive plant and animal species. Analyse the impact of humans on Bermuda. In what ways have we changed the physical environment of Bermuda?

Enrichment



- Visit Paget Marsh, Devonshire Marsh and Spittal Pond. Using the Bermuda Plant Finder guide, compare and contrast the availability and varieties of endemic and native plants found at the various nature reserves.

Further Reading



- The Garden Club of Bermuda. *Bermuda: A Gardener's Guide*. Bermuda: Print Link Ltd., 2002.
- Smith, Louisa H. *Bermuda's Oldest Inhabitants: Tales of Plant Life*. England: J. Salmon Ltd, 1950.
- Barry, Angela. *Palmetto Wine*. Bermuda: Bermuda Writers Collective, 1989.
- Bermuda Plant Finder: Indigenous and Invasive Plant Species www.plantfinder.bm/

External Links



<http://www.conservation.bm/>



Chapter 3: In the Studio



Chapter Summary

Ronnie Chameau spends a lot of time in her personal art studio 'The Doll House'. It is a place she has created especially for working on her crafts. Although Marie Gleason inspired her, Ronnie has developed her own methodology for making banana dolls. When she asked Mrs. Gleason how to create a banana doll, she was told to 'teach herself'. Ronnie proceeded to take apart a Gleason doll and carefully put it back together to see how it was made. With this knowledge she went on to create her own unique product.

In this chapter, Ronnie takes us through the steps involved in creating a banana doll. She also discusses how she began creating her Christmas Angel Collection which was sold at the Trimmingham's department store. By deciding the best design and marketing strategy for her product, Ronnie demonstrates that she is a savvy artist and businesswoman.

Did You Know

- In 1986 Ronnie decided to expand on her artistic talents and began creating the banana doll.
- During the 'Year of the Angel' she sold 2,000 of her Christmas Angels locally and internationally.
- The Doll House is in Pembroke Parish.

Chapter Themes

Trade and Slavery – The Birth of Banana Doll Making

Ronnie hypothesizes that making dolls from banana leaves originated in Africa. When people of African descent were sold as slaves to plantations in America and the Caribbean, they carried their culture with them. As a result, certain foods, music and art found within 'New World' black communities are based in African traditions and retentions that survived and manifested throughout the African Diaspora. In the southern states of America, dolls were made using cotton for hair, a nut for the head and tobacco leaves for the dresses. Similar dolls are also found throughout the Caribbean.

Weaving is a tradition that was introduced to Bermuda as a result of creoles using palm leaves to thatch roofs and weave mats, baskets, hats and rope – all of which were commonly made in most Bermuda households by the 1640s.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jarvis p. 32

Amerindian influences were also evident in Bermuda during early settlement with the use of cassava as food and hammocks instead of beds, thought to be a tradition carried from 'Spanish slaves and Caribbean Indians'.¹⁸

How to Create a Ronnie Chameau Banana Doll

Follow along with visual instructions supplied in the film

STEP 1 – Collecting the appropriate materials

Ronnie Chameau is very meticulous when it comes to preparing her materials for the creation of her dolls. There are various factors that she takes into account in determining when and how to collect her plant materials. The time of year, the weather and how she removes the leaves from the tree all affect her final product. Her materials are also meticulously washed and dried.

STEP 2 – Creating the doll's base

Collect a bunch of 'split' leaves which are already shredded or split naturally. Fold bundle of leaves over your thumb. Take string and tie it around the top of the bunch. Cut the bottom of the bunch to give it stability so that it can stand up.

STEP 3 – Making arms

Find a rectangular piece of banana leaf and roll it on an angle to create a tube-like arm. Glue the tube together and attach it to the sides of the doll's base.

STEP 4 – Adding a skirt

Use a dried and naturally decorative banana leaf that is pliable, and wrap the leaf around the doll's base. Once the skirt is in place, twist the skirt slightly 'to give it movement'. Tie the top of the skirt with hemp and use hot glue to tack the 'seam' of the skirt together.

STEP 5 – The head

Make a hole with scissors through the fold on the top of doll's base. The head can be a pecan nut or walnut. Using hot glue, attach a stick at the base of the head. Sheep's wool hair can be added. Then, insert the stick into the hole created in the doll's base. Use glue to secure it in place.

STEP 6 – The blouse

Using a strip of banana leaf, start at the doll's waist and hold the strip in place. Then take the strip over the doll's shoulder to the back of her waist. Holding the strip at the back of the doll's waist, twist the leaf so that it folds over the doll's other shoulder from back to front. Glue the blouse at the front and back then trim the excess leaf. Add a belt around her waist if you prefer.

STEP 6 – Accessories

Use Dutchman's pipe pods with a skewer glued in the centre for a parcel.



¹⁸ Jarvis p. 32

Key Terms

- **business plan:** a detailed plan setting out the objectives of a business, the strategy and tactics planned to achieve them and the expected profits.
- **Marie Gleason:** A Bermudian banana doll-maker.

Critical Thinking



- Black Bermudians have roots in Africa, America, Europe and the Caribbean. Some researchers are now proposing that the first group of Africans in Bermuda were Angolan.¹⁹ The African Diaspora is a topic of interest and study in many nations. In what ways has the African Diaspora affected the development of culture in Bermuda?
- Think about the weather in Bermuda. Bermuda has a humid subtropical climate. What can you think of in your everyday life that the humidity has an affect on? Some say that when the humidity is low, baked goods turn out better and Ronnie is best able to manipulate her banana leaf materials when there is moisture in the air.

Research Skills



- Create your own doll and experiment using different materials to create your doll's base such as old rope or dried sticks. Try adding additional features to your doll, such as a face, legs or accessories. Maybe dolls can be made from old paint cans or sewn together using old pillow cases. Bottle dolls were common in old Bermuda using mineral bottles for the base and rope or palm for hair. Can you create a doll that is unique?
- Create a business plan. Think of an idea for a business and demonstrate what the product will look like, who would be interested in buying your product and where you propose the product will be sold.

Enrichment



- Bring *The Bermuda Folklife Documentary Series* to life by inviting Ronnie Chameau to host a banana doll making workshop. Use this as an opportunity to learn how to make a banana doll from the tradition-bearer herself. Come prepared to ask her questions about her artistry. Alternatively, read transcripts from the Folklife Digital Archive at the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs to learn more!

¹⁹ See Heywood and Thornton's *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*

- Visit an artist's studio. This is usually a private place where artists focus on their craft. Examine the space. What makes it inspirational and comfortable for the artist? Maybe visit Sharon Wilson at her studio on South Shore Road or one of the artists who are housed at the Bermuda Arts Centre in Dockyard.

Further Reading



- Jarvis, Michael J. *In the Eye of All Trade Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010
- Heywood, Linda and John, Thornton. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



Chapter 4: Carter House and St. David's Island



Chapter Summary

Ronnie Chameau is a trustee of the St. David's Island Historical Society, which is the organisation responsible for Carter House.

Carter House has been converted into a museum filled with information, crafts and memorabilia relating to the St. David's Island community. Many of the traditions that are still present in St. David's were passed down from enslaved Native Americans brought to Bermuda in the 17th century. In this chapter, Ronnie discusses her role in maintaining and preserving the St. David's Island community's cultural heritage.

Did You Know ?

- Carter House is believed to be one of the oldest dwellings in Bermuda believed to have been built around 1640 by Christopher Carter, who was one of the three men left in Bermuda in 1610 following the wreck of the *Sea Venture*.
- St. David's Islanders are known for their unique culinary dishes. Seafood is an important staple in the St. David's Islander's diet as they are a community that was historically strongly dependent on the ocean for day to day living.

Chapter Themes

Native Americans and Slavery in Bermuda

Black Bermudians understand that they have a connection to Africa as a result of the displacement of African people during the slave trade. However, many Bermudians have yet to recognise their strong Native American lineage. During the 17th century, Bermuda also became home to Native Americans who were sent to the island in captivity after wars between their tribes and the British in New England.

In 1616, it is believed that the first enslaved Native American was brought to Bermuda from the West Indies as a pearl diver. Bondspeople were auctioned in St. George's Square and sold to owners across the island but especially in St. George's and St. David's. History reveals that like displaced Africans, Native Americans were subjected to the harsh brutalities of slavery.

Origins of Native Americans

Indigenous tribes populated North America, South America and the Caribbean for many centuries before European discovery and settlement. Despite this fact, America was deemed 'unoccupied' as the original inhabitants were considered savage and uncivilised.

The enslaved Native Americans who were sent to Bermuda are believed to have arrived from New England, New York, and the Spanish Americas. The New England Native Americans are believed to have occupied lands now known as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Maine. The dominant tribes from these areas are believed to be the Wampanoag, Nipmuck, Narragansett, Mohegan, Pequot and among others.

The Pequot war is often cited in discussions regarding the origin of Bermudians with Native American ancestry. This conflict involved the Pequot tribe, aided by the Native American Narragansett and Mohegan tribes, against an alliance of southern New England colonies.

Native American prisoners are also believed to come from the King Phillip's War of 1675, which proved to be the deadliest and costliest of the era. King Phillip was the English name for the chief of the Pokanoket tribe, also known as Metacom. After an alleged attack on the European settlers by Metacom's tribe members, key members of the tribe were hanged. This would eventually lead to the outbreak of war between the factions. The result of the war was that Native American prisoners were sent to the Caribbean and Bermuda.

In the Somers Island Company's quest for gains in the tobacco industry, it was decided that skilled tobacco farmers from Spanish America would be sought to "teach the island's struggling planters their methods."²⁰ In August 1616 the ship *Edwin*, which was sent out to source materials and workers in the West Indies, returned to Bermuda with various plants and "one Indian and a negro" believed to be the first in Bermuda. Their expertise in diving suggests that they came from the Spanish Americas where this practice was common.²¹

St. David's Island Reconnection

Ronnie Chameau was born and raised in St. David's and always had an awareness of her Native American ancestry. Genealogical research conducted in 2001 confirmed that Bermuda's Native American heritage was linked with New England.

The St. David's Island community reaffirmed their commitment to understanding their Native American roots by hosting a biannual pow wow in St. David's where the public are invited to learn about Native American culture and traditions.

²⁰ Jarvis p. 26

²¹ ibid p. 26

Key Terms

- **trustee:** a person who holds title to a property or assets for the benefit of another.
- **indigenous people:** population groups with ancestral connections to a place prior to formally recorded history.
- **tobacco trade:** the tobacco trade was a part of a trade linking exports of consumer and manufactured goods from Britain and Europe to the North American and Caribbean colonies who supplied tobacco, sugar and rum in return.
- **Pow wow:** A pow wow is described as 'a gathering of North America's Native people. The word derives from the Narragansett word powwaw, meaning "spiritual leader". A modern pow wow is a specific type of event where both Native American and non-Native American people meet to dance, sing, socialize, and honor American Indian culture.

Critical Thinking



- Although there are records that confirm enslaved Native Americans were dispersed throughout Bermuda, it seems that there was a greater concentration on St. David's Island. Think about the geographical factors that would influence this such as the isolation of the island from the mainland. Research other communities that are preserved as a result of separation from industrialized land such as the Sentinelese people of the Andaman Islands or Lacandon people of the Maya.

Research Skills



- Research the Native American Diaspora. How much information can be found in books on Bermuda about our Native American heritage? Is there data on the internet or books published in other countries? Create a map that demonstrates the movement of Amerindians. How has their presence here impacted Bermuda's community?
- Native American spirituality is closely connected to the land. Research aspects of the Native American spirituality. How have these beliefs influenced their self-perception and identity?
- Research a Native American tribe or a pow wow. Find out aspects about their traditions including their foods, beliefs, building practices, laws of the land, arts and crafts.

Enrichment



- Go on a field trip to Carter House and see the array of crafts, tools, and household implements made by St. David's Islanders. Try to imagine how the items at Carter House were useful to early settlers.

- Visit a St. David Island pow wow or watch a DVD from the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Further Reading



- Bragdon, Kathleen, "Native Americans in Bermuda," *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* Volume 10, 1998.
- Maxwell, Clarence V. H. "Race and Servitude: The Birth of a Social and Political Order in Bermuda, 1616-1669". *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* Volume 11, 1999.
- Tucker, St. Clair. *St. David's Island Bermuda: Its People, History and Culture*. Canada: Hignell Book Printing, 2009.



Chapter 5: Apprentice



Chapter Summary

Cherri DeSilva is Ronnie Chameau's apprentice. After spending time with Ronnie, she developed an interest in the banana doll making and palm weaving craft. The Folklife Apprenticeship Programme sponsored by the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs helped to solidify this relationship and by the end of their term together Cherri was creating her own banana dolls.

Apprenticeships are a way to encourage knowledge transfer between generations. Many cultures adapt apprenticeship schemes in order to pass on important aspects of intangible culture.

Did You Know



- Cherri DeSilva has created her own brand of banana dolls called 'Nana dolls'.
- Bermuda has adopted many successful apprenticeship schemes.

Chapter Themes

Ethics

Cherri speaks of her respect for Ronnie and her craft. She is committed to ensuring that the art is not exploited through mass merchandising. Ronnie Chameau speaks of issues that have arisen in trying to protect her knowledge capital and avoid exploitation.

Apprenticeships in Bermuda

The transfer of knowledge has long occurred in civilizations in order to continue the development of one's nation. Bermuda has had a number of apprenticeship schemes in its history that have assisted Bermudians in developing their own trades and businesses.

The Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Folklife Apprenticeship Programme aims to bridge relationships between tradition bearers and potential apprentices. Each year, persons are selected to partake in the various traditions on offer which have included story-telling, cooking, landscaping, fishing and masonry to name a few.

The Bermuda Dockyard Apprentices and craftsmen were ultimately part of the worldwide system of British dockyards which serviced, equipped and supplied Royal Navy ships. During their apprenticeships Bermudians worked with craftsmen who had trained in British dockyards and who had often also worked in overseas dockyards in the Mediterranean, Asia and Canada. Those still serving their apprenticeships on the close of the Dockyard in 1951 went on to Plymouth, England to complete their training.

Key Terms

- **apprentice:** a person who works for another in order to learn a trade.
- **ethics:** A branch of philosophy that addresses questions about morality—that is, concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime.
- **mentor:** a wise and trusted advisor or guide.
- **intangible cultural heritage:** non-physical aspects of a particular culture often maintained by social customs during a specific period in history.

Critical Thinking



- How important are apprenticeships? What do they mean for Bermuda's culture?
- Think about what Cherri meant when she exclaimed that her and Ronnie's 'spirits are similar'. Do you think it is possible for one to share a spirit with another? Is there anyone in your life that you feel you share similarities with maybe on a spiritual level?

Research Skills



- Organise a group where you can pass on intangible information. For example, perhaps you have learned a Bermudian tradition from your grandparents such as baking or fishing. Determine how you will create an environment where the knowledge exchange will happen. Maybe you can create a guide on how to make cassava pie or do a demonstration for younger children.
- Research civilizations that rely on apprenticeships in order to transfer knowledge. In some countries this is the primary way locals learn the trades needed for the functioning of their society and preservation of their heritage.

Enrichment



- Visit Commissioner's House and learn more about the Dockyard apprenticeship scheme or read interviews in the Folklife Archives at the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Chapter 6: Pass It On



Chapter Summary

Heritage is only relevant when it is cherished and protected. Without the exchange or transfer of knowledge, valuable aspects of cultures can become lost. There are several international bodies in place to preserve a country's culture. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has developed guidelines to assist countries in preserving their cultural heritage, which can be tangible and intangible.

In Bermuda, we currently have legal mechanisms in place to protect some of our built heritage such as fortifications. We also have legislation protecting Bermuda's underwater heritage under the Historic Wrecks Act 2001 which aims to provide blanket protection for all shipwrecks in Bermuda's territorial waters, making it illegal to interfere with or remove anything from a shipwreck or marine heritage site without a license.²²

Our intangible heritage, which includes traditions such as doll making, has yet to be protected by legal instruments. The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions provides nation states with guidelines on how to adopt such laws into their national legislation.

In this chapter, we will explore the importance of protecting cultural heritage in order to ensure that traditions are preserved for future generations.

Did You Know



- As of May 2013, 126 Member States as well as the European Union have ratified the 2005 UNESCO Convention. The United Kingdom is included in the EU.
- Some countries have adapted a 'cultural exception clause' as a means of protecting a country's cultural assets. Before the 2005 Convention this often involved excluding culture from international trade, negotiations and agreements.
- In 2003 Dr. Philippe Max Rouja was hired as the Custodian of Historic Wrecks. The Historic Wrecks Authority was formed to oversee the implementation and management of the new Historic Wrecks Act 2001.

²² <http://www.conservation.bm/shipwreck-legislation-overview/>

Chapter Themes

The Preservation of Intangible Heritage

"The importance of cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next."²³

One of the aims of the UNESCO Convention 2005 is to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. Although Bermuda is a place of inspiration for many, the rights of Bermuda's artists have yet to be developed. There are several countries that have adopted international legislation in order to preserve and encourage the development of their cultural heritage. The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions²⁴ allows for the protection of heritage but this has not been signed by the United Kingdom and as Bermuda is a dependent territory of the UK, we do not have the legislative power to enter into international agreements that the UK is not privy to.

It is up to the people of Bermuda and the Government to help preserve and protect Bermuda's heritage. This will mean ensuring that the arts have a viable place within the local economy and preserving that which makes Bermuda unique.

Key Terms

- **2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions:** a legally-binding international agreement that ensures artists, cultural professionals, practitioners and citizens worldwide can create, produce, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities, including their own
- **cultural exception clause:** a concept introduced in France to treat culture differently than other commercial products.

Critical Thinking



- How has the 2005 Convention impacted the general perceptions regarding culture? Do you think that a country signing the 2005 Convention reflects a shift in attitudes regarding culture?
- Will the 2005 Convention affect attitudes towards culture in Bermuda? Will it mean that the arts are taken more seriously?

²³ What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

²⁴ ibid

Research Skills

- Study the 2005 Convention. Familiarize yourself with its aims and general principles. Why are legal documents such as this important for nations? How has this document affected the development of artists' rights? What would it mean for Bermuda if enacted and incorporated into national legislation?

Enrichment

- The Corporation of Hamilton now permits artists to busk in the city at designated locations. Visit the current markets in Bermuda like City Market, St. George's Market and Rubber Tree Market and see how these spaces benefit artists. Ask the artists themselves how they are affected by such developments.

Further Reading

- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Paris, 20 October 2005
- "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?" United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

External Links

<http://www.conservation.bm/shipwreck-legislation-overview/>



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Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Paris, 20 October 2005

What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation



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Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports
Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

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#58 Court Street, 4th Floor, Hamilton HM 12, Bermuda
Tel: 441.292.1681 • Website: www.communityandculture.bm