THE VOICE OF THE TAINO PEOPLE

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"Celebrating 10 Years of Community Service and Commitment"

Taino People Affiliated With International Indian Treaty Council

UCTP TAINO NEWS - The United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) has been formally accepted as affiliates of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) by consensus of the IITC Board of Directors. The Taino affiliation will be reconfirmed by the indigenous assembly gathered at the upcoming IITC Treaty Conference which will be held from 4-7 April 2008 in Guatemala. The theme of the 2008 IITC Treaty Conference will be "Implementing the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Free Prior Informed Consent". ❖

Taino Warrior II By Millie Mukara Torres – Speeg

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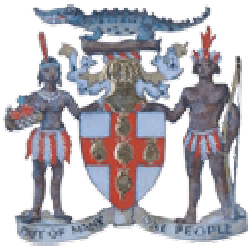
Successful CARIB Art Exhibition Closes in NY

UCTP TAINO NEWS - The first annual *Celebrate Carib Art* exhibition closed on December 29 after its successful premier showing. Sponsored by CARIB (Caribbean Association for Resource, Information & Building), the exhibition was held at the World Culture Open Gallery (19 W. 26th St.) in New York City from December 16-29, 2007. According to the exhibition organizers, the show was an opportunity to "celebrate artwork inspired by the vitality, beauty and diversity of the Caribbean region."

Among the Caribbean artists from "near and far, of many languages, and interpretations" who showcased an impressive display of multi-media artworks in the exhibition was Taíno elder, **Mildred Mukara Torres-Speeg**. An award winning, internationally recognized master portrait artist, Torres-Speeg's contribution to the exhibition included "Guabancex: Taíno Spirit of the Hurricane" and "**Taíno Warrior II**". These unique works as well as other pieces from her collection can be viewed at http://www.worldsbestart.com/ . ❖

Jamaica and the Taino



Did You Know: The Jamaican national motto is 'Out of Many One People', based on the population's multi-racial roots. If you would like to learn more than visit the UCTP's **Did You Know Files** at **http://taino-facts.blogspot.com/** ❖

Columbus Blamed for Spreading Syphilis

UCTP Taino News - A recent genetic study is being touted as evidence to support the theory that Christopher Columbus brought syphilis to Europe from the New World.

According to a report by Reuters, U.S. researchers said "a genetic analysis of the syphilis family tree reveals that its closest relative was a South American cousin that causes yaws, an infection caused by a sub-species of the same bacteria." Kristin Harper, an evolutionary biologist at Emory University in Atlanta states that "syphilis or a progenitor came from the New World to the Old World and this happened pretty recently in human history."

Harper believes the new genetic data supports what has come to be known as the "Columbian theory," which links the first recorded European syphilis epidemic in 1495 to the return of Columbus and his crew.

Sampling strains of bacteria, which included two strains of "yaws" from Guyana, the study concluded that while yaws is an ancient infection, venereal syphilis came about fairly recently. Harper suspects a nonvenereal subspecies of the tropical disease quickly evolved into venereal syphilis that could survive in the cooler, European climate. She admits that it is not clear how this process took place.

Harper also admits that while the study indicates that "the ancestor of syphilis came from the New World," what exactly it was like the scientist still don't know.

Don't Blame the Venereal Disease on Native People

"With regard to this data, our concern is that its sensational aspects will be misinterpreted to refuel attempts to link the venereal disease to the Taino People since we were the first to meet Columbus and his crew." stated Roberto Borrero, a representative of the United Confederation of Taino People. "This would be unfortunate especially as this new study only claims that a progenitor of the disease came from the so-called New World."

Borrero explained that "a few of our ancestral stories do mention a particular skin condition called *karakarakol*, which according to what we know today describes yaws."

Yaws is an infectious disease that occurs mainly in tropical regions. Caused by the bacterium Treponema pertenue, the disease features characteristic bumps on the skin of the face, hands, feet, and genital area. Over a period of time, the bones as well as the joints are affected as well. Most cases of yaws occur in children under 15 years of age and it is spread by direct contact with skin lesions or cuts. Treponema pertenue is described as a subspecies of the organism responsible for syphilis.

"European colonizers mention karakarakol or 'bubas' in their reports along with the indigenous treatment of the affliction being medicine derived from the *Guaiakan* tree" Borrero continued. "According to these early reports the Europeans seemed to be quite familiar with this type of disease as they refer to it as the French disease."

Some scientists are have already voiced disagreement with the new findings indicating Harper's conclusions relied too heavily on genetic changes from the Guyana samples.

"The debate about the origins of syphilis has continued for nearly 500 years," noted Borrero who added "In a climate that glorifies Columbus and attempts to justify the genocide of indigenous peoples by denigrating the lifestyle of our ancestors as savage and immoral, one important aspect of this research is that it suggests the disease may not have been transmitted through sex until it adapted to the environment in Europe." ❖

CARIFESTA 2008 to be held in GUYANA

UCTP TAINO NEWS - **CARIFESTA** stands for the Caribbean Festival of Arts and this year the region's roving, multidisciplinary, mega arts festival will return to its birthplace - **Guyana** - from **August 22 to 31 2008**. CARIFESTA attracts a wide range of creative artists from various Caribbean and Latin American countries and was the culmination of a concept that began in 1970 when participants at an Artists and Writers Convention in Guyana complained about the absence of an outlet to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Region. Since its inaugural launch in 1972, previous CARIFESTA have taken place in Guyana, Jamaica, Cuba, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname. The Indigenous Peoples of the region have historically participated within the festival and in 2006, CARIFESTA coincided with an historic meeting of the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP) in Trinidad. During this meeting the COIP Secretariat was officially "handed over" from Guyana to Trinidad and a Declaration of Unity was entered into between the **Santa Rosa Carib Community** and **the United Confederation of Taino People**.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

21 APRIL – 2 MAY 2008

Get info at **www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/**

CACIBAJAGUA TAINO CULTURAL PRESENTATION

CEMI UNDERGROUND, 1799 LEXINGTON AVE., NY, NY

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2008, 3PM

For more info contact uctp_ny@yahoo.com

CARIFESTA X 2008

GUYANA, SOUTH AMERICA

AUGUST 22 – 31, 2008

For more info visit www.**carifesta**.net/

UN Expert Meeting on Indigenous Languages

United Nations (UCTP Taíno News) - An Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages was held from 8-10 January 2008 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Organized by the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** (UNPFII), the meeting was held in accordance with a UN Economic and Social Council decision, which authorized a three-day international expert group meeting on indigenous languages and requested that the results of the meeting be reported to the Permanent Forum at its seventh session.

The meeting was attended by indigenous language experts, UNPFII members as well as interested Member States, UN Agencies, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, and Non-Governmental Organizations. Some of the issues discussed included the importance of linguistic diversity, the connection between language rights and all other fundamental rights, a concern for the lack of urgency while a majority of all indigenous languages are threatened with extinction and proposals for the revitalization, promotion and protection of indigenous languages.

Represented at the meeting, the **United Confederation of Taíno People** was one of several organizations submitting interventions, which form part of the final report now available at the PFII website.

Are you a registered and enrolled member of the Taino Tribal nation? Get more information about the UCTP Taino Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registration Project at www.uctp.org

UCTP Public Notice: The Seventh Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 21 April to 2 May 2008. The special theme will be "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges."

The United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) is facilitating administrative services and activities for delegates planning to participate within the Indigenous Peoples Caucus of the Greater Caribbean (IPCGC) at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2008. Please inform the UCTP of your planned attendance and desire to participate as part of the Caucus, which is open to representatives of indigenous Caribbean Organizations and communities.

Consistent with the UNPFII procedures, the IPCGC follows an organizational structure similar to the Association of Caribbean States whereas the "Greater Caribbean" is defined here as an area of cooperation in recognition of common ancestral heritages and common geographic spaces shared by the Indigenous Peoples of the region.

Please send correspondence to the United Confederation of Taino People's Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination at uctp_ny@yahoo.com

On behalf of the UCTP, we say bo'matum (thank you) in advance for your attention and consideration.

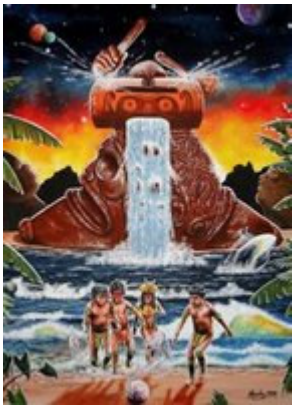
Issued on 21 November 2007,
UCTP Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination,
Roberto Mukaro Borrero, President and Chairman

Source: http://indigenouscaribbeancaucus.blogspot.com/

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Voice of the Taino People News Journal is designed to be and functions as a different entity than our online news services located at www.uctp.org. There are stories and features included in the print edition that are not included online. Likewise, there are features online that are not included in the print editions. The United Confederation of Taino People strives to provide many media options that will serve the different needs of our diverse community. We hope that our readers find utility in several of our products, and we appreciate your continued support.

Taino Artists Get New Site

New York, NY (UCTP Taino News) – **Aguilar Marrero** and **Reina Miranda**, an artistic team known as "**Taino Spirit**" now have a new website at http://www.tainospirit.com/. The site is another one of many recent accomplishments for the duo who have been dedicating much of their work to their shared Taino heritage. Taino Spirit's next "live" exhibition will take on Saturday, February 16th at "Cemi Underground" as part of the East Harlem bookstore's focus on Taino culture featuring members of the **Cacibajagua Taino Cultural Society**. Cemi Underground is located at 1799 Lexington Ave at 112th Street in Manhattan and the Taino program begins at 3:00pm. ❖



Taino Water Drum Song by Aguilar Marrero. One of the many exquisite works available at the new Taino Spirit website at http://www.tainospirit.com/

EDITOR'S NOTE: FOR MORE INFO ON THIS OR OTHER UCTP PUBLICATIONS, CONTACT THE VOICE OF THE TAINO PEOPLE AT LA_VOZ_TAINO@YAHOO.COM

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