



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' COMMISSION**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
for the year 2015



# ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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## Chairperson Message

Despite the financial challenges in 2015, the Indigenous Peoples' Commission remain committed to ensuring a better life for our indigenous brothers and sisters.

We continued to be valued stakeholders on numerous national initiatives and we ensured that in our representation, protection of the rights of our people and looking for more opportunities for their empowerment was a primary consideration.

In 2015, IPC continued to build on previous successes by ongoing engagements and public awareness with Indigenous peoples' communities.

I wish to thank my fellow Commissioners for their valuable input in areas of concern over the past year and I look forward to your continued collaboration and support for the IPC and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples'.

Thanks, and gratitude to the Government, and all stakeholders especially the residents of Indigenous Communities for your guidance and cooperation.

The IPC values all of your contributions.

Sincerely,



.....

Ms. Doreen Jacobis  
Chairperson  
IPC

## **Executive Summary 2015**

The year 2015 was a financially constraint year for the Indigenous Peoples' Commission as there were constant delays in securing monies in a timely manner to undertake planned activities. This significantly hindered the implementation of the Work Plan.

However, the IPC again benefitted from the generous donation of Commissioner Damian Fernandes; combined with the limited funds received from Government, the IPC was able to participate in several hinterland annual activities.

Additionally, the IPC conducted outreach visits and engagements to Jawalla-Region 7; Lethem – Region 9; Moruca and Baramita-Region 1.

In addition to noting the issues and concerns faced by the residents for addressing by the appropriate Ministries/Agencies, several brochures were distributed to sensitize persons of the existence and mandate of the Commission

The Commission also continued to participate actively in national initiatives such as the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT VPA) and the Amerindian Development Fund.

A meeting was also held with the newly elected president of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. David Granger in August 2015.

More details of these engagements are elaborated in the body of the report.

## **1. MAJOR ACTIVITIES 2015**

### **1.1 Participation in Hinterland Annual Activities**

The main objective in participating at these events was to meet a wider range of Indigenous residents and sensitize these persons about the existence and mandate of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission. This approach was very successful since a large number of persons especially from the far-flung Communities who did not have prior knowledge of the IPC, would visit and participate in the activities that are held.

#### **1.1.1 Visit to Jawalla Region 7**

One such event at Jawalla saw participation from all of the Indigenous communities in that area.

Two hundred information brochures were distributed on behalf of the IPC, to the representative of nine villages assembled to participate in an Annual Sport Week of activities.

#### **1.1.2 Out Reach at Lethem Region 9**

On November 26-30 2015, the Commission participated in the Rupununi Business Expo organized by the Rupununi Chambers of Commerce. Persons were again sensitized on the existence and mandate of the Commission.

Commissioners Haliema Khan, Patricia Singh, Matilda Williams, Marco De Souza, Malcolm Rodrigues and Neil Bacchus, Chief Executive Officer set up a booth where residents visited and shared concerns which were documented by IPC and will be used to guide policy recommendations to meet the demands and needs of indigenous peoples. Also, six hundred information brochures and one hundred copies of the Amerindian Act 2006 were shared with those visiting the booth to take to their respective communities and villages and to share with the residents living there.

Additionally, presentations were made at the business forum and at the St. Ignatius Secondary School where there was also a similar distribution of the brochures and copies of the Amerindian Act. Commissioner Malcolm Rodrigues also assisted in distributing brochures and copies of the Amerindian Act to the local church members, and to children and teachers that were departing Lethem after competing in Inter- district sports competition.

A visit was also made to the St. Ignatius Secondary School. Commissioners, students and teachers had a discussion on various issues of interest and concern to Indigenous Persons.

One observation that was highlighted afterward to the relevant authorities was that the trucks transporting persons including school children back to their respective communities after the events, were overcrowded and it was definitely unsafe.

### 1.1.3 Out Reach at Moruca Region 1

At Moruca's Culture Day activity, Commissioners Doreen Jacobis- Chairperson, Haliema Khan, Marco De Souza and Neil Bacchus, Chief Executive Officer, set up a booth where residents visited and shared their concerns. These were documented by IPC and forwarded to the relevant Ministries/Agencies for necessary interventions. Six hundred information brochures were shared with those visiting the booth to read and also take to their respective communities and villages and distribute amongst the residents living there.



IPC Booth

### 1.2 Meeting with the President

His Excellency President Granger took time out from his busy schedule to meet with Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer at his office on August 28, 2015. At the meeting, the President outlined his vision for Indigenous Communities. He also expressed that this vision would only be realized through collaboration with and support of entities such as the IPC.

The Commission used the opportunity to congratulate President Granger on his election as Guyana's Executive President and pledged its support in working with the government to ensure the continuous promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. (**Appendix 1**)

## **1.3 Outreaches**

### **1.3.1 Baramita**

On December 14-17 2015, Commissioners Yvonne Pearson- Vice Chairperson, Patricia Singh and Haliema Khan hosted a Capacity Building Workshop targeting Toshao, Councilors and Stakeholders of Baramita. The objective of the Workshop was to ensure that the Village Council is better equipped to manage the affairs of their village. The topics discussed were:

- Governance (Amerindian Act 2006)
- Administration

**Appendix 2** provides additional details.

### **1.3.2 Capacity Building Workshop Dogg Point - Region 7**

Commissioner Haliema Khan facilitated a Capacity Building Workshop on Governance and Administration on December 8 2018, with the Toshaos and Councillors

**Appendix 3** give more details of this activity.

## **1.4 Participation on different Committees and activities**

### **1.4.1 Amerindian Development Fund**

During 2015, the Commission's representative, Mr. Neil Bacchus attended meetings as required.

### **1.4.2 National Technical Working Group (NTWG) of the Guyana-EU Forest Law, Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (EU FLEGT VPA)**

After the General and Regional Elections in May 2015, Commissioner David James began working with the Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs, and became its representative on the NTWG. Commissioner Yvonne Pearson- Vice Chairperson was subsequently elected as the Commission's representative on the NTWG.

## **1.5 Complaints**

During 2015 the Commission was copied in 3 correspondences which dealt with issues from boundary demarcation, mining on Amerindian Lands without the requisite permission, and a request to stop the further issuance of mining blocks in Amerindian lands.

The IPC continued to follow-up with the relevant Ministries/Agencies to provide feed-back to the complainants; however, there was little positive movement on these matters.



IPC will however, keep following up on these complaints, as well as others received in previous years which are still to be fully resolved.

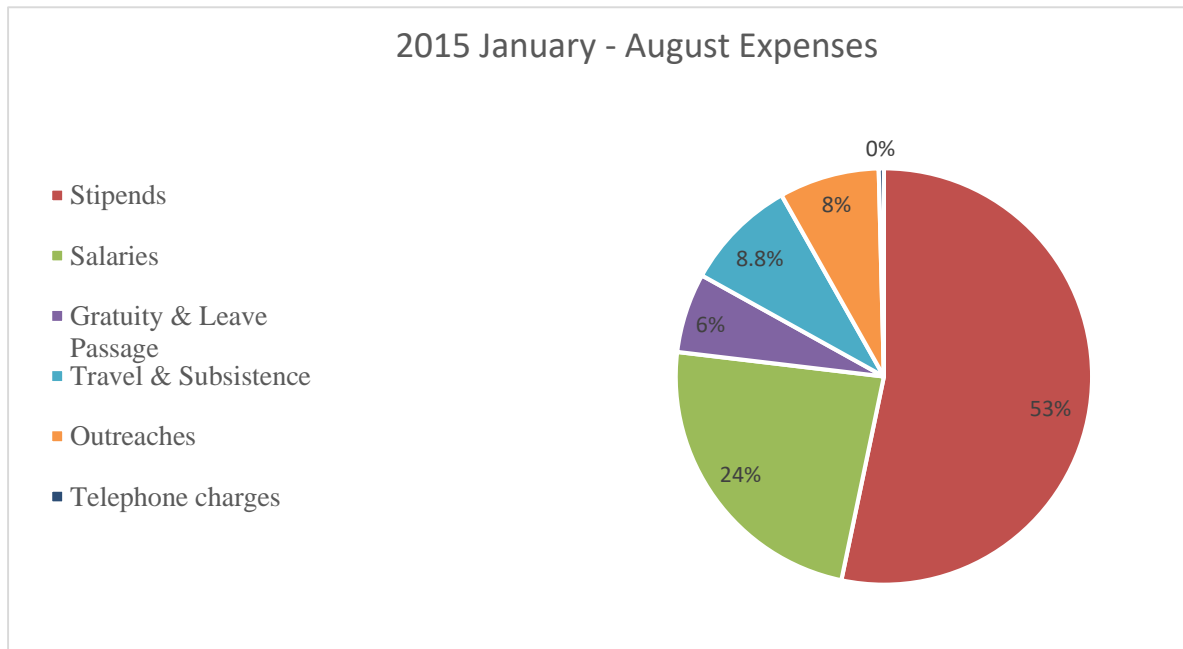
## 2. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The IPC as a constitutional agency had followed the accounting procedures as stipulated in the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act and therefore has a reliable financial management system. All of the Commission’s financial transactions are subject to external audit as determined by the Government.

There were two budgets in the year 2015; the first budget covered from the period January to August, while the second budget was for the period September to December. All financial transactions were administered by the Ministry of Finance but they were allocated by the finance department within the Rights Commission secretariat. This is presented below:

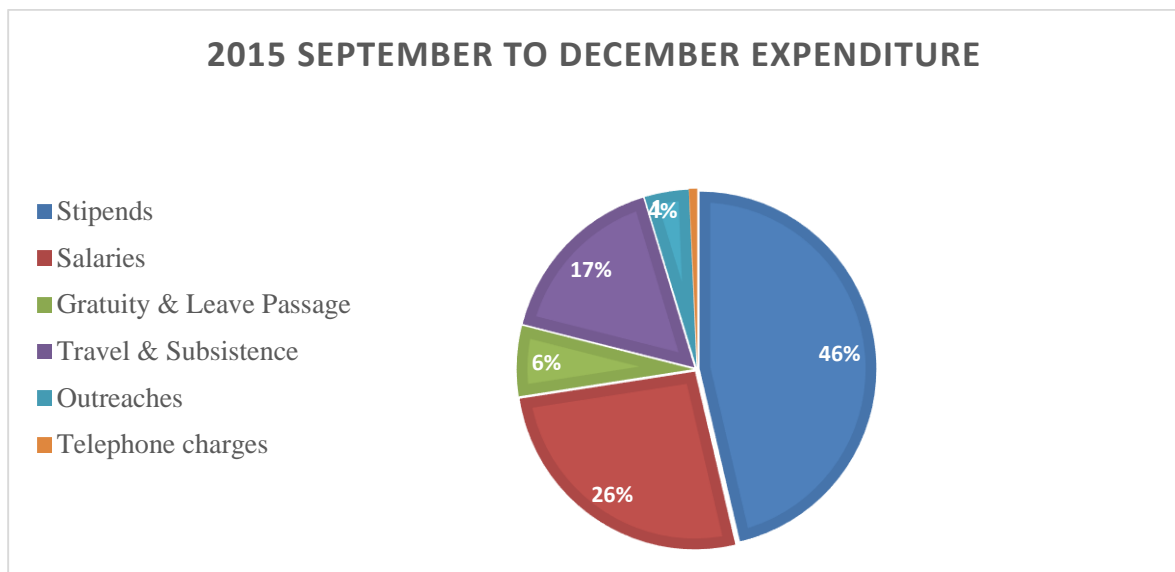
*January to August 2015*

| <b>RECEIVED</b>              | <b>AMOUNT<br/>\$</b> | <b>EXPENSES</b>   | <b>AMOUNTS<br/>\$</b>   |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Ministry of Finance<br>(MOF) | 13,311,000           | Stipends<br>Salaries<br>Gratuity & Leave Passage<br>Travel & Subsistence<br>Outreaches<br>Utilities | 5,573,496<br>2,469,224<br>646,692<br>915,534<br>814,067<br>41,792 |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 13,311,000           |   | <b>10,460,805</b>   |



September to December 2015

| RECEIVED                     | AMOUNT<br>\$     | EXPENSES  | AMOUNTS<br>\$   |
|------------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| Ministry of Finance<br>(MOF) | 6,696,000        | Stipends<br>Salaries<br>Gratuity & Leave Passage<br>Travel & Subsistence<br>Outreaches<br>Utilities | 2,995,752<br>1,696,045<br>411,757<br>1,060,711<br>259,311<br>42,272 |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>6,696,000</b> |   | <b>6,465,848</b>  |



In addition to monies received from the Ministry of Finance, Commissioner Damian Fernandes donated his monthly stipends to the Commission in the sum totalling \$611,472. The money was used to participate in three hinterland events in the sum totalling \$499,905, as outlined in the table below. The IPC expresses sincere thanks to him for his continued support over the years.

| Description of Activity      | Amount<br>\$  |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Cash on hand b/f             | 38,091        |
| Stipend Received             | 611,472       |
| Outreach to Moruca           | (204,194)     |
| Outreach to Jawalla/Kamarang | (117,278)     |
| Outreach to Lethem           | (317,000)     |
| <b>Balance on hand</b>       | <b>11,086</b> |

### 3. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR 2016

| Description of Activities  | Intended Output/Outcomes  |
|--|---|
| Two community visits to follow up specific issues  | Root cause of concerns/issues ascertained for better resolution and policy guidance   |
| Participate in media interviews; outreach engagements  | Public Awareness  |
| Participation in national events such as World Indigenous Peoples' Day and Amerindian heritage month | Public Awareness  |
| Training in Amerindian Act (2006) and Capacity Building at Matarkai and at Baramita                  | To strengthen Indigenous communities to know and understand their rights and benefits<br>To be able to better manage their respective communities |

### 4. Challenges and Recommendations

#### 4.1 Challenges

The major challenge the Commission faced for the major part of the year was again financial; this time monies were only received on a monthly basis for the major part of the year. Obviously, this lack of predictability has a negative impact on the achievement of work plan activities. The morale of Commissioners and Secretariat staff was also affected.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

- i. There needs to be the acceleration re the granting of land titles/extension titles to the respective Communities after following the process as stipulated in the Amerindian Act.
- ii. The delivery of all necessary services to hinterland communities must be improved. Depressed communities in remote area must be given priority in this respect. Services include access to proper education, health, water and sanitation, utilities, security.
- iii. The Government of Guyana should continue to provide education for Indigenous People by extending some of the current Primary School buildings as Secondary School instead of Primary Tops. Vocational training in carpentry, art and craft etc. must be a priority. This will result in Indigenous children being educated at a higher level.
- iv. Consultation/engagements with Indigenous Peoples' must be done properly e.g. information must be shared prior to well publicized meetings; the actual engagement process must take into consideration the varying literacy levels, language barriers, use of audio-visual aids and role play etc.

- v. Indigenous Peoples legitimate resources must be protected from illegal and disruptive influences. The relevant authorities must ensure that all perpetrators are dealt with speedily and in such a manner to prevent re-occurrences.

## 5. APPENDICES

### *Appendix 1*

#### **Meeting between the His Excellency President David Granger and the Indigenous Peoples' Commission on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2015 at 09:30hrs at the Ministry of Presidency**

##### **Present were:**

1. His Excellency President David Granger
2. Vice President & Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs Sydney Allicock, M.P.
3. William Cox – Special Assistant to the President
4. Chairperson Doreen Jacobis
5. Commissioner Patricia Singh
6. Commissioner David James
7. Commissioner James Singh
8. Commissioner Malcolm Rodrigues
9. Neil Bacchus – Chief Executive Officer

#### **Remarks and introduction of IPC and representatives from the Ministry of Presidency by President Granger and Chairperson Ms. Jacobis.**

The President welcomed everyone and introduced the other team members. The Chairperson then expressed her appreciation in thanking His Excellency to meet with Commission and congratulate him on his election as the new president of Guyana. All other Commissioners and staff briefly introduced themselves and also congratulated the President on his accession to the office of the Presidency. The Chairperson then gave a brief background on the establishment of the Commission, its mandate, and some of its accomplishment and challenges faced in fulfilling this mandate. The Chairperson observed that through hard work and the support she had received from her fellow Commissioners and staff have enable the Commission to function efficiently and effectively in working toward achieving its broad objective of promoting and protecting the indigenous people of Guyana.

#### **Issues, Concerns and Comments**

The Chairperson in taken the lead of behalf of the Commission highlighted the following concerns:

- The issues affecting the village of Baramita.
- While the Commission has its strategic plan and work program, the lack of the required financial resources is hindering the Commission in executing its work program.
- The tenure of the Commissioners came to end last year. The question was asked what the current status of the Commission is.

The President in a formal response highlighted the following concerns:

- That only six of the nine Amerindian tribes in Guyana have their language preserved in written form.
- That the hinterland is very beautiful but there are lots challenges of the people living there.
- In some schools, children are not wearing any shoes to attend school.
- Children living along creeks and rivers have to paddle long hours from home to school vice versa.
- Pensioners living in Aishalton have to travel to Lethem and spend large sum of money to collect their pensions.
- For poor children, the choices are limited in accessing basic educational services.

**Outcomes:**

The President then proceeded to outline his vision and expectations in developing hinterland communities. He emphasized on the importance of collaboration between the Commission and the government in working together to aid in this development.

For the concerns he highlighted, the President informed the Commission that his administration is working to address them. He indicated that the proposed 10-point document is worth considering and that when these points are implemented then it would impact positively on the development of indigenous communities. He also noted that everyone should be involved and express his pleasure in the recent donations of three boats without him requesting it.

The President remarked that there was a communication gap in hinterland communities. He said that access to education would address this issue.

The President noted also that the proposed activities to be undertaken by Amerindians in their villages should be solution oriented such like those programs in Region 9 (Cashew Nut Enterprise)

The President also discussed that he hopes to see a vibrant agricultural industry developed in the hinterland. He hopes that with miners and hospitals buying these agricultural produces would see better agricultural techniques being employed by the farmers. He hoped that with such a vibrant industry being established; this could lead to improving the economy of hinterland communities.

The President then informed the Commission that next year, Guyana will be celebrating its 50th year having gained its independence from Great Britain. As part of preparing for the celebrations next year, he called on the Commission to adopt a green agenda, to advocate for proper solid waste disposal and for the planting of trees on October 3, 2015.

The President also said that now is the time for healing, resolving conflicts, sharing ideas, becoming confident, freedom of expression and participation.

He then gave his blessings for the Commissioners to continue their work with the Indigenous Peoples' Commission.

### **Any Other Business**

The President was presented with a copy of the Commission's strategic plan 2012-2016 and copies of the annual reports for 2011 and 2012.

Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs Sydney Allicock, M.P. expressed his willingness to formally meet with the Commission to discuss on collaborative works between the ministry and the Commission.



## *Appendix 2*

### **Report on visit to Baramita on 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

#### **Aim/Objective**

Capacity Building

#### **Target Group**

- Toshao and Councilors
- Interested Residents

#### **Vision:**

- To ensure that the current Toshao and Councilors make decisions from an informed and knowledgeable position
- Assisting in developing the community gradually

#### **Commissioners:**

Yvonne Pearson (Deputy Chairperson)  
Patricia Singh  
Haliema Khan

#### **Topics:**

The Amerindian Act: No. 6 of 2006  
Part III  
Governance: Section 13 & 14  
Part V  
Section 48

#### **Administration:**

Role and Responsibilities of personnel  
Functions of the persons making up the council  
*How to:*  
Writing of receipts and keeping account of financial and/ or transactions  
Writing of minutes  
Chair a meeting  
Dealing with correspondence



**Health:**

Healthy Living

Effects of Cervical Cancer

**General:**

- Great attendance
- Started off with slow participation from the target group. However, as participants got involved with the subject matter and feel comfortable (as they were encouraged to do) participation was increased to approximately 95%. It was observed that only one person was very shy in speaking. However, when asked a direct question/opinion, a reply was given.
- Feedback from participants was positive. Need more information on the topics covered
- During the visit representative from PANAM visited to discuss suicide. It was observed that the whole thing was done within two hours. Everyone said it was okay. What is very interesting: The next day while Commissioners Singh was dealing with her topic many persons claimed confusion and admitted that they have not really learnt anything. Commissioner Singh took some valuable time to do some explanations.
- Participants requested another visit by the Commissioner

**Recommendation:**

- That there are follow-ups visits with more days to assist Toshao and councilors to return and to continue learning in the thematic areas introduced.
- Topics are dealt with thoroughly without “running through it” and avoidance of usage of many “big words”

Submitted by:

Commissioner B. Haliema Khan

## *Appendix 3*

**Indigenous Peoples' Commission**  
**Report: Leadership skills at Dogg Point, Region 7**  
**on 08 December, 2015**

**Aim:**

1. To build capacity in the area of governance and administration
2. To allow effective leadership
3. To enhance community development

**Target Group:**

Toshao, Councillors and other stakeholders

**Topic**

- Functions and Responsibilities: Toshao and Councilors
  - Responsibilities and Duties of Toshao
  - Chairing of a meeting
  - Responsibilities and Duties of Secretary
  - Preparation of Agenda and Minutes of a meeting
  - Responsibilities and Duties of Treasurer
  - Preparation of vouchers and receipts
  - Responsibilities and Duties of Committee members
  - Behavior during a meeting
- Revival of Indigenous Culture

**General:**

- Toshao and six Councilors attended the workshop
- There were 4 other persons from the community
- The issue of land demarcation and extension of the village was brought up I suggested that they make contact with the subject Ministry since I am not in a position to deal with this matter.
- Story telling in the Community would be revived soon

- Lamented on the situation with the youth: none or little job offers, drugs and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy
- Request was made for me to visit the community often in capacity as the counselor to deal with domestic violence matters
- Photographs attached

**Recommendation:**

1. The Commission should continue with capacity building of Toshaos and Councilors. Even though most persons elected into positions and are literate; their management skills are lacking in some areas. This in turn creates conflict and frustration,

Prepared and Submitted by:

Commissioner B. Haliema Khan

## 6. COMMISSIONERS



**Doreen Jacobis**  
**Chairperson**



**Yvonne Pearson**  
**Vice-Chairperson**



**Marco De Souza**



**Damian Fernandes**



**Gerry Gouveia A.A**



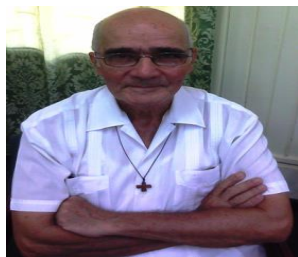
**David James**



**James Singh**



**Matilda Saigo**



**Malcolm Rodrigues**



**Patricia Singh**



**Bebbi Haliema Khan (WGEC)**



**Marissa Massiah (RCC)**