From closed museum spaces to inclusive cultural meeting points: connecting indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic

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CHAPTER 6. Community attitudes and access to Indigenous heritage collections

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the surveys administered and interviews conducted with members of various communities, and notes from participant observation activities that were carried out to explore how communities are able to access Indigenous heritage collections. It also discusses how the collections are being managed, and how technology can play a role in providing greater access to and protection of the collections. The collected data were analyzed to answer the research questions regarding access to collections. The results serve as the foundation for the discussion in the next chapter.

The data addressed the study's general objective of learning how Indigenous heritage collections in both public and private custody can be made better accessible to communities. Secondly, the inquiry aided in identifying the different communities that can access these collections. Lastly, it helped identify what attitudes communities have toward Indigenous heritage collections.

6.2 Access and attitudes toward Indigenous heritage collections

The research questions regarding access to and attitudes toward Indigenous heritage collections were posed through a combination of surveys and interviews administered in different parts of the Dominican Republic. Participant observation was made possible during different activities held in connection with the Nexus 1492 project in the northwest of the country. The results of the surveys and interviews, as well as the participant observations, revealed basic but necessary ways in which communities connect with Indigenous heritage collections and contribute to their care and protection.

6.2.1 The survey

This qualitative study relied on the survey of convenience groups—groups of people willing to freely answer questions—located at hand in geographic areas where there are collections of Indigenous heritage or Indigenous archaeological sites accessible to the public.

The study targeted the participation of people from: the education community (teachers and university professors, university students, and high school students); the heritage community (managers and administrators); the governmental community (current and former public officials), as well as local community members living near archaeological

sites and museums. The effort yielded 515 volunteers who responded to survey questions in five provinces in the Dominican Republic.

The 24-question survey took an average of 15 minutes for participants to fill out. It contained four types of questions that addressed the following:

a) basic demographic information and tendencies in visiting Indigenous heritage collections;

b) interest in, meaning, and the value assigned to Indigenous heritage collections;

c) possible uses of Indigenous heritage collections and the information generated from them; and

d) the use of communication technology by those responding the survey.

6.2.1.1 Basic demographics of respondents

The respondents' demographics were surveyed at the end of the questionnaire but are introduced at the beginning of this section to provide a general picture of their background and an overview of the people who participated in the survey.

Age range n=515		**Count**
Question 22-A	18 to 25	285
	26 to 35	101
	36 to 45	45
	46 to 55	22
	More than 55	19

Table 2. Age range of survey respondents.

60.38% of respondents were between 18 and 25 years of age, 21.40% were between 26 and 35 years of age, 9.53% were between 36 and 45 years old, 4.66% were between 46 and 55 years of age, and 4.03% were over 55 years old.

Gender

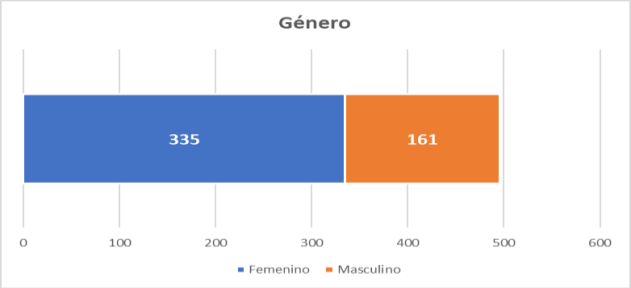


Figure 19. Gender of survey respondents. Image by author, 2018.

67.54% of respondents were female, and 32.46% male. The higher percentage of females is probably due to a greater willingness to take time to respond the survey.

Occupation

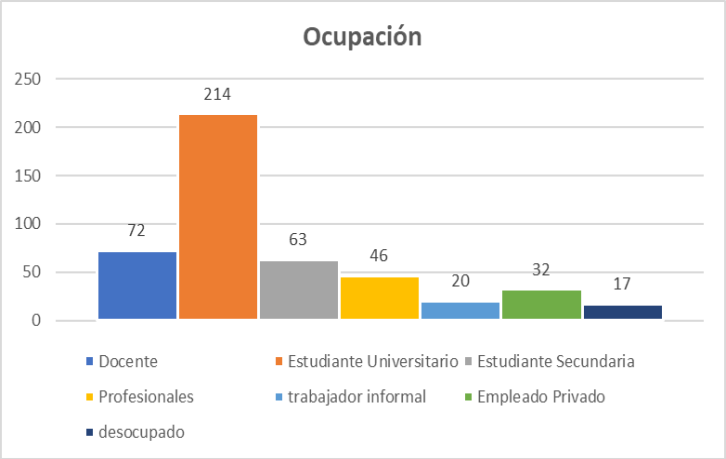


Figure 20. Occupation of survey respondents. Image by author, 2018.

Respondents' occupations were categorized as follows:

Teachers, 15.52%

University students, 46.12%

High school students, 13.58%

Professionals, 9.91%

Informal workers, 4.31%

Private employees, 6.90%

Unemployed, 3.66%

No response, 8.70%

Among the northwest and central areas of the country, the respondents in Santiago were between 26 and 35 years of age, professionals, or private employees, and 80% were female. For Puerto Plata, 40% of respondents were high school students, 17% were teachers, 12% were professionals, 21% were informal workers, 25% were private employees, and 7% were unemployed. All survey respondents in these areas were people approached out of convenience because they were near a museum or archaeological site.

The respondents in Santiago consisted of museum personnel, hence the high percentage listed as professionals or private employees. The largest percentage of survey respondents in the province of Puerto Plata were students and teachers. The rest of the Puerto Plata respondents were from the local community surrounding La Isabela Historical and Archaeological Park.

In the eastern region, 76% of respondents in La Altagracia were 18- to 25-year-old female students. In Valverde Province, 88% of respondents were from the education sector, i.e., students and teachers; 70% were female. In La Romana, 56% of respondents were art students, 20% were schoolteachers, and 14% were private employees.

In La Altagracia Province, all respondents were university students from the Universidad Iberoamericana, specifically the Punta Cana campus for tourism and hotel administration studies. Similarly, the majority of respondents in La Romana were art students at the university level, namely from the Chavón School of Design. The respondents from Valverde were mostly local high school students.

In Santo Domingo, 70% of respondents were female, 24% were professionals, and 66% were university students.

6.2.1.2 Provinces with Indigenous heritage collections and the types of communities that participated in the survey

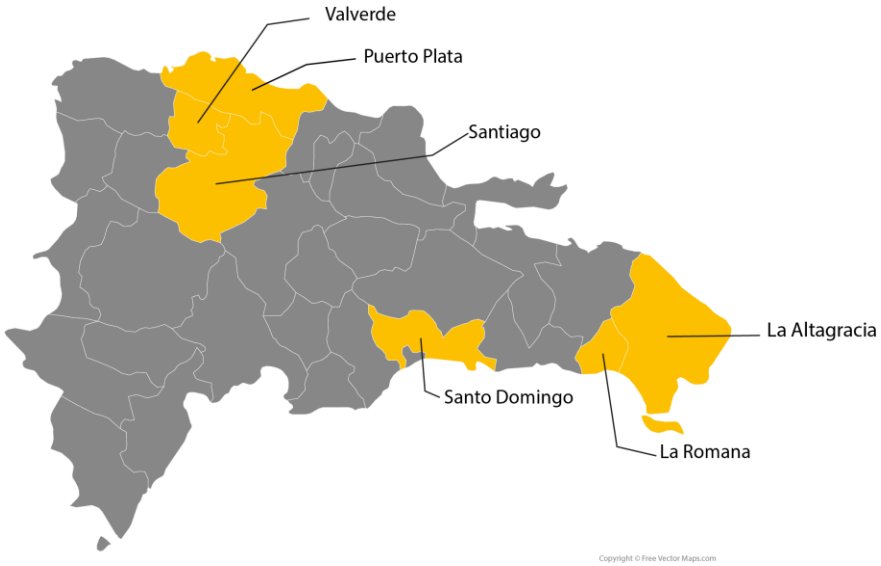


Figure 21. Map that shows the provinces where the survey was administered. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020.

La Romana Province. Number of surveys obtained: 163. The survey was administered in this province because it has one archaeology museum with an Indigenous heritage collection open to the public.

- 28 schoolteachers pursuing a certificate in art and folklore, sponsored by the La Romana campus of the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, completed the survey.
- 90 art students from the Altos de Chavón School of Design completed the survey.
- 45 surveys were completed by regular citizens around the central area of La Romana city.

La Altagracia Province. Number of surveys obtained: 69. The survey was administered in this province because there were known archaeological sites along the province's coast and rivers, and because of its proximity to the archaeological museum in La Romana.

- 69 hotel and tourism administration students from the Punta Cana campus of the Universidad Iberoamericana completed the survey.

Santo Domingo, National District. Number of surveys obtained: 130. The survey was administered in the country's capital city because it has three well-known institutions with Indigenous heritage collections open to the public.

- 77 surveys were administered to anthropology students and faculty from the Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo.
- 53 regular citizens from the city center completed the survey.

Puerto Plata Province. Number of surveys obtained: 47. The survey was administered in this province because it has two Indigenous heritage collections open to the public.

- 16 surveys were completed by regular citizens in the town of La Isabela.
- 31 surveys were completed by high school students and teachers in the town of Guananíco.

Valverde Province. Number of surveys obtained: 101. The survey was administered in this province because it was the area of interest of the Nexus 1492 Project, and because it has one Indigenous heritage collection open to the public.

- 10 surveys were completed by schoolteachers at the El Molino elementary school in Loma de Guayacanes.
- 45 surveys were administered in the Cruce de Guayacanes by elementary school teachers, high school students, and regular citizens.
- 46 students and high school teachers completed the survey in Laguna Salada.

Santiago Province. Number of surveys obtained: 5. The survey was administered in this province because it has one private Indigenous heritage collection open to the public. It was completed by 5 staff members of the museum that houses the collection.

6.2.1.3 Visiting habits, values assigned, and access to Indigenous heritage collections by responding communities

The data collected from the completion of surveys concerned how Indigenous heritage collections are accessed, how they are valued, and what connections can be made

with communities. All 515 surveys were used, even in cases where the respondents did not complete all questions. The purpose of using surveys with empty questions was to record as many answers as possible for as many questions as possible, even if this meant only a partial answer in some sections. It was anticipated that not all respondents would complete all questions due to the length of the questionnaire.

Visiting habits

The respondents' habits of visiting Indigenous heritage collections were measured by asking whether they visited museums with such collections, which ones they visited, and what they did during the visit. For those who indicated they did not visit such museums, they were asked to identify why. Overall, the participants reported having visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections through school.

The survey's first question aimed to determine whether or not respondents visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections.

Of the 515 people surveyed, 66.21% reported having visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections.

In Santo Domingo, the capital and National District, 81.61% of respondents indicated having visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections, followed by La Romana Province, with 69.14%; Puerto Plata Province, with 68.09%; Valverde Province, with 50.51%; and La Altagracia Province, with 49.28% of respondents having visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections.

Respondents over 55 years of age had the highest positive response rate to having visited such museums, at 89%. The group of 18–25-year-olds had the highest negative response rate; 42% of respondents in this age group indicated not having visited these museums.

Museums visited

The respondents that indicated having visited a museum with an Indigenous heritage collection were asked to select from a list to indicate which museum they had visited.

What museums have you visited? n=515		Count
1-B	Museo del Hombre Dominicano	78
	Centro León	23
	García Arévalo o Sala de Arte Prehispánico	0
	Chavón	86
	La Isabela o El Castillo	15
	Guananico o Cesar Estrella	5
	Otro	42
	More than one museum	29

Table 3 Museums visited by survey respondents.

28.06% of people who responded to the question indicated having visited the Museum of the Dominican Man in the National District; 8.27% had visited the Centro Eduardo León Jimenes in Santiago Province; 30.94%, the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology in La Romana; 5.40%, La Isabela Museum in Puerto Plata Province; and 1.80%, Cesar Estrella Taíno Museum, also in Puerto Plata. 15% of respondents indicated having visited other museums.

In Santo Domingo, the most visited museum among respondents was the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, with 59.77% having visited; 12.64% of Santo Domingo's respondents had visited the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology, and 4.60% the Centro León. Further, 16.09% had visited more than one museum; 6.90% had visited other museums. Twenty-nine survey participants reported having visited more than one museum.

In La Romana, 71.43% of respondents reported having visited the Altos de Chavón Museum; 6.12% had visited the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 7.14% the Centro León. Further, 8.16% had visited other museums, and 7.14% had visited more than one museum.

In Valverde, 22.86% had visited the Museo del Hombre Dominicano; 20%, the Centro León; 5.71%, the Altos de Chavón Museum; 5.71%, the Cesar Estrella Taíno Museum; 2.86%, La Isabela; and 2.86%, reported visiting more than one museum. 40% of respondents indicated having visited museums not listed in the survey.

In Santiago, all 5 respondents reported having visited more than one museum, including the Centro León.

In La Altagracia, 32.14% of respondents reported having visited the Museo del Hombre Dominicano; 14.29%, the Centro León; 7.14%, the Altos de Chavón Museum.

Further, 7.14% had visited more than one museum, and 39.29% had visited museums not listed in the survey.

Of the respondents aged 55 and above, 25% had visited the museum at La Isabela in Puerto Plata, and 33% had visited more than one museum.

Among 46-55-year-olds, 44% had visited either the Museo del Hombre or the museum at Altos de Chavón.

Activities during visits

Respondents who reported having visited a museum with an Indigenous heritage collection were also asked to indicate, from a list, what they had done during their visit; this was meant to obtain an idea of how the respondents spent their time on museum visits. They were allowed to select more than one answer if they had done more than one activity.

In selecting from the list of activities, 22.64% of respondents reported having gone to the museum as part of a mandatory school visit; 7.06% went to the museum on their own. Further, 23.84% had taken a guided tour, while 6.66% had preferred an audio tour. Other activities undertaken while visiting the museums included having participated in a workshop (7.06% of respondents); 9.99% attended a lecture; 10.39% went to the museum to meet with friends; 2.40% purchased books; 6.79% went to the store; and 3.20% indicated that they had done activities that were not listed.

Per province, the activities that respondents undertook during museum visits included the following:

	Santo Domingo	La Romana	La Altagracia	Puerto Plata	Valverde	Santiago
Mandatory visit	31.75%	25.82%	26.97%	6.10%	12.33%	16.67%
Self-guided tour	5.69%	9.39%	15.73%	0%	1.37%	41.67%
Guided tour	22.75%	21.60%	28.09%	26.83%	25.34%	16.67%
Workshop	4.74%	6.10%	2.25%	13.41%	10.27%	16.67%
Audio tour	5.69%	7.04%	6.75%	2.44%	9.59%	8.33%
Lecture/ Conference/ Seminar	8.06%	12.21%	4.49%	8.54%	14.38%	0%
Met with friends	10.43%	7.04%	5.62%	19.51%	13.70%	0%
Purchased books	2.37%	0.47%	1.12%	3.66%	5.48%	0%
Visited the store	4.74%	3.29%	7.87%	19.51%	7.53%	0%
Other	3.79%	7.04%	1.12%	0%	0%	0%

Table 4. Activities performed by survey respondents during their visits to museums.

The responses show that mandatory school visits and guided tours are the main activities that survey respondents in most provinces engage in when attending a museum, except for respondents in Santiago. For this province, most respondents indicated doing a self-guided tour at the museums they visited.

The northern provinces show higher participation in museum workshops than the eastern provinces. The Centro León in Santiago has a richer calendar of events on offer.

Reasons for not visiting

Respondents who reported not having visited museums were asked to indicate their reasons by selecting from a list. This question was included to help determine potential barriers to visitation.

For the 173 individuals who indicated they had not visited a museum, distance (24.33%) and time (25.33%) were the factors they cited. Not having a companion for the visit was the reason for 16.67% of respondents; 19.67% answered that transportation was a difficulty; and 1.33% indicated having an unspecific reason not to go, while 7.67% claimed reasons not listed in the survey. Another 5% of participants indicated not having any interest in attending museums.

Per province, the reasons for not visiting museums remained constant for most respondents, the most cited factors being time and distance.

Important aspects

What aspects of IHC do you consider important? n=515		**Count**
2-A	How old objects are	432
	Aesthetics	317
	How objects were made	381
	Material	342
	Familiar use	58
	Find no relation	10
	Have no interest	20

Table 5. Aspects of Indigenous heritage collections that survey respondents consider important. Respondents were able to select more than one option.

Respondents were asked to select which aspects of Indigenous heritage collections they considered important; this allowed me to begin understanding their attitudes toward these collections, regardless of whether or not they had visited a museum.

Of the survey respondents, 27.69% cited the antiquity of Indigenous heritage objects in museums as an important aspect; 20.32% also indicated the objects' aesthetics to be important. Another 24.42% cited the importance of knowing how the objects were made;

21.92% indicated that the material of the objects was important, and 3.72% considered the objects important because they were familiar with their uses in their everyday lives.

Further, 0.64% indicated having no relation to the objects, and 1.28% had no interest in such collections.

In all provinces where the survey was administered, the top four answers for most respondents were how old the objects were, their aesthetics, how the objects were made, and the materials with which the objects were made.

Benefits

To further understand the respondents' attitudes, they were asked to indicate, on a Likert scale, the degree of benefit they considered Indigenous heritage collections to have for the community.

In response, 61.46% of respondents considered Indigenous heritage collections to be very beneficial to the community, 28.60% considered them beneficial, and 4.87% considered them somewhat beneficial.

Another 4.67% of participants indicated that the benefit was neutral, and 0.41% considered Indigenous heritage collections to be of no benefit to the community.

Most of the respondents per province considered Indigenous heritage collections to be beneficial or very beneficial to the community.

Personal interest in the collections

What interests you personally about IHC? n=515		**Count**
4-A	Everything	50
	Use	19
	Fabrication	55
	History	152
	Indigenous beliefs	6
	Way of life	40
	To understand our society	29
	Beauty of the objects	24
	For it to be exhibited in its place of origin	2
	Other	27
	Nothing	16

Table 6. Aspects of Indigenous heritage collections that personally interest survey respondents.

When asked to list what interested them personally about the collections, 11.90% indicated that everything was of interest to them; 4.52% were interested in their use; 13.10% were interested in how the objects were made; and 36.19% were interested in the history that can be learned from the collection.

Further, 1.43% indicated an interest in Indigenous heritage collections as a way to learn about Indigenous beliefs; 9.52% were interested in learning about the Indigenous way of life through the objects. Another 6.90% cited the collections as important to understanding contemporary Dominican society; 5.71% were interested in the beauty of the objects; and 0.48%% expressed an interest in having Indigenous heritage collections exhibited in the objects' place of origin.

Another 6.43% selected other reasons for their interest in Indigenous heritage collections, while 3.81% indicated that nothing interested them personally about the collections.

Value of knowledge

In another Likert-scale question, respondents were asked to indicate how important they considered knowledge of Indigenous heritage collections for the economy, the creation of policy, and understanding Dominican society.

How important do you consider knowledge about the Indigenous heritage to be for:		
The economy n=515		
		Count
5-A	Very important	210
	Important	150
	Somewhat important	80
	Neutral	53
	Not important	14
The creation of cultural policy n=515		
5-B	Very important	239
	Important	176
	Somewhat important	59
	Neutral	31
	Not important	3
Understanding Dominican society n=515		
5-C	Very important	316
	Important	117
	Somewhat important	50
	Neutral	19
	Not important	2

Table 7. How important survey respondents consider knowledge about Indigenous heritage to be for the economy, the creation of cultural policy, and for understanding Dominican society.

a. For the economy, 41.42% considered it to be very important, 29.59% important, 15.78% somewhat important, and 10.45% neutral; 2.76% considered it unimportant.
b. For the creation of policy, 47.05% considered it to be very important, 34.65% important, 11.61% somewhat important, and 6.10% neutral; 0.59% considered it unimportant.

c. For understanding Dominican society, 62.70% considered it to be very important, 23.21% important, 9.92% somewhat important, and 3.77% neutral; 0.40% considered it unimportant.

Most of the respondents per province considered Indigenous heritage collections to be important or very important for the economy, for the creation of public cultural policy, and to understand Dominican society. This question was included specifically to help determine whether a prioritization of the topics could be recognized.

Importance of open visitation

Of the survey respondents, 71.43% considered it very important to have Indigenous heritage collections open for visitation. Another 18.45% considered it important; 5.95% somewhat important; 3.97% neutral; and 0.20% considered it unimportant.

Per province, most of the respondents considered it very important to have Indigenous heritage collections open for visitation.

Better understanding

Do you feel that having visited an IHC helped you to better understand who you are? n=515		**Count**
7-A	Yes	237
	Maybe	88
	No	121
How?		
7-B	Knowledge	136
	Improved learning	4
	Value collections more	6
	Better interpretation	1

Table 8. What survey respondents say about a visit to Indigenous heritage collections helping them understand who they are.

Of the survey respondents, 53% felt that visiting an Indigenous heritage collection helped them understand who they are, which was a slightly lower percentage than those who considered the collections important to understanding Dominican society.

Another 19.73% felt that it possibly helped them to better understand who they are, and 27.13% felt it did not help them.

For those that felt it did help, 92.52% listed knowledge as the main benefit of having visited an Indigenous heritage collection; 2.72% indicated that it helped them learn more; 4.08% indicated having learned to better value Indigenous heritage; and 0.68% indicated having obtained a better interpretation of who they are.

In most provinces, over half of the respondents felt that visiting an Indigenous heritage collection helped them to better understand who they are, except in La Romana and La Altagracia, where opinions were equally divided as to whether it contributed to this regard. The majority of respondents in the provinces of La Romana and La Altagracia were university students.

Volunteering

Of the survey respondents, 40.48% were interested in volunteering to create community-oriented activities; 28.06% were possibly interested, and 31.46% were not interested in volunteering.

For those interested in helping to create activities, 27.27% would be instructors, 12.12% would be guides, 10.10% would give workshops, and 7.07% would help with the organization of activities. Another 26.26% would make general contributions, while 11.11% listed other ways to volunteer; 5.05% said they would volunteer but have no time, while 1.01% indicated having no interest despite initially indicating that they wanted to volunteer.

There were more people interested in volunteering to create activities for the community in Puerto Plata, Valverde, and Santiago—over 53% of respondents—while in Santo Domingo, La Romana, and La Altagracia, there were more people who were either not interested in volunteering or not sure if they would volunteer. Volunteers would be required to donate their time for the implementation of cultural and educational activities.

Level of access

Of the survey respondents, 87.73% of survey participants would like to have access to more Indigenous heritage collections.

As for why 80.40% believe it would give them more knowledge on the topic of Indigenous heritage, 0.75% believe it would improve how the topic is taught; 0.75% think it can help increase their understanding of the cultural heritage of the nation, and 11.06% listed other reasons.

A further 12.27% of respondents indicated not wanting to have more access to Indigenous heritage collections; 7.04% indicated they have no interest in the topic.

In each province where the survey was administered, respondents indicated wanting to have access to more Indigenous heritage collections, with over 62% of people believing it would lead to acquiring more knowledge.

Ways of connecting with heritage

What would make you better connect with ICH that are under the custody of museums? n=515		**Count**
10-A	Understand how objects are cared for	291
	Understand the origin of objects	406
	Examine the materials with my hands	239
	Understand Dominican history in-depth	333
	Use the collection as inspiration	210
	Research about Indigenous history and our culture today	316
	Participate in workshops related to the Indigenous heritage	131
	Contribute with my thoughts and comments about exhibitions or plans	50
	Learn about public policy and heritage management	60
	Have the right to use the images of the objects	48
	Learn more about the Indigenous heritage of the Americas	140

Table 9. What survey respondents say would make them better connect with Indigenous heritage collections museums under the custody of museums.

Of the survey respondents, 13.08% indicated that learning how to care for Indigenous heritage collections would make them feel more connected with their heritage. Learning about their origins would make 18.26% of participants feel more connected; 10.75% would want to be able to examine the objects to feel more connected; 14.97% wanted to understand Indigenous heritage collections better; and 9.44% would want to understand the objects' use better. Further, 14.21% believed that having access to more research would help them; 5.89% would want to participate in workshops related to Indigenous heritage collections; 2.25% would like to contribute with thoughts and comments about exhibitions; 2.70% would like to learn about public policy and cultural management; 2.16% would like the right to use images

of objects; and 6.29% would like to learn more about the Indigenous heritage of Latin America to feel more connected with collections in the custody of museums.

Per province, what would make respondents feel more connected with Indigenous heritage collections were the following:

The value of activities

a. Arts and crafts: 62.65% of respondents thought having activities related to arts and crafts at museums would be of high value; 29.72% thought it would be of sufficient value; 4.62% thought of it as having some value; 2.81% felt neutral about it; and 0.20% thought there would be no value in having arts and crafts activities at museums.
b. Cultural events with explanations: 53.65% of respondents thought having cultural events with explanations about Indigenous heritage at museums would be of high value; 34.00% thought it would be of sufficient value; 8.45% thought of it as having some value; 4.02% felt neutral about it; and 0.20% thought there would be no value in having cultural events with explanations about Indigenous heritage at museums.
c. Dance and theater: 50.81% of respondents thought having activities related to dance and theater at museums would be of high value; 30.04% thought it would be of sufficient value; 13.10% thought of it as having some value; 5.24% felt neutral about it; and 0.81% thought there would be no value in having dance and theater activities at museums.
d. Material accessible through the internet: 55.26% of respondents thought that museums making material about Indigenous heritage accessible through the internet would be of high value; 26.11% thought it would be of sufficient value; 10.73% thought of it as having some value; 7.09% felt neutral about it; and 0.81% thought there would be no value in museums making material about Indigenous heritage accessible through the internet.

Respondents in all provinces ranked it as high value or sufficient value to have activities related to arts and crafts, cultural events with explanations, dance and theater, and material accessible through the internet. Over 60% of respondents in Puerto Plata, Valverde, and Santiago considered most of these activities as having high value.

Needs and services

Which of the following services that a museum with Indigenous heritage collections can offer, in your opinion, are most important to serve the needs of the community? n=515		
Information material about objects through:		
12-A	Text labels or images	229
	Books	345
	Flyer	188
	Catalogues	287
	Magazines	286
Cultural programs for:		
12-B	Adults	407
	Children	401
	Seniors	162
	Women	112
	Outside of the museum	214
Workshops on:		
12-C	Care of heritage objects	366
	Education and archaeology	340
	Community participation	229
	Art, history, and archaeology	341

Table 10. Most important services museums with Indigenous heritage collections can offer to meet the needs of the community.

a. Informational material about objects: 17.15% of respondents considered labels and images to be an important source of information about objects; 25.84%, books; 14.08%, brochures; 21.50%, catalogs; and 21.42%, magazines.
b. Target audiences of cultural programs: 31.40% of respondents considered it important to offer cultural programs for adults; 30.94%, for children; 12.50%, for elderly adults; 8.64%, for women. Further, 16.51% of respondents considered it important to have programs outside the museum.
c. Workshop themes: 28.68% of respondents considered heritage conservation an important workshop theme; 26.65%, education and archaeology; 17.95%, community participation; and 26.72%, art, history, and archaeology.

Most of the respondents per province considered it important that museums offer the services listed, reflecting similar percentages.

Challenges to accessibility

Of the survey respondents, 31.31% think the main challenge for museums in making their Indigenous heritage collections more accessible is related to finances; 28.63% think it is personnel issues; 21.94% think the challenge is making people understand the value of the collections; 10.50% think it is related to exhibition design; and 7.62% think it is a challenge to show people how the collections can be used.

Per province, there was a similar distribution of answers as to what respondents considered the main challenges in making Indigenous heritage collections more accessible.

Interest in activities

a. Visiting an archaeological site: 55.02% of respondents were very interested; 28.31% were interested; 10.24% were somewhat interested; 5.02% felt neutral about it; and 1.41% were not interested in visiting an archaeological site.
b. Learning how the objects from the collections were made: 51.10% of respondents were very interested; 33.87% were interested; 10.02% were somewhat interested; 3.41% felt neutral about it; and 1.60% were not interested in learning how the objects from the collections were made.
c. Learning about Indigenous rituals, ways of life, and foodways: 44.22% of respondents were very interested; 35.09% were interested; 9.53% were somewhat interested; 6.49% felt neutral about it; and 4.67% were not interested in learning about Indigenous rituals, ways of life, and foodways.
d. Experiencing how archaeological research is conducted: 42.91% of respondents were very interested; 33.00% were interested; 11.34% were somewhat interested; 7.89% felt neutral about it; and 4.86% were not interested in experiencing how archaeological research is conducted.
e. Helping to design an exhibition to bring more people to the museum: 37.12% of respondents were very interested; 32.66% were interested; 13.59% were somewhat interested; 8.11% felt neutral about it; and 8.52% were not interested in helping to design an exhibition to bring more people to the museum.
f. Developing crafts inspired by Indigenous designs: 38.45% of respondents were very interested; 39.97% were interested; 14.31% were somewhat interested; 7.36% felt neutral about it; and 4.91% were not interested in developing crafts inspired by Indigenous designs.

Respondents in all provinces indicated being interested or very interested in the listed activities. Visiting an archaeological site was the top activity of interest, with respondents from Santiago and Puerto Plata being the most interested in this activity.

Dissemination of information

What is the best way for you to receive information about cultural activities? n=515		**Count**
15-A	Telephone	163
	Email	248
	Printed flyer	179
	Social media	365
	Newspaper	68
	Radio	103
	TV	210
	Through friends	79
	Other	16

Table 11. Survey respondents' preferred way to obtain information about cultural activities.

Respondents indicated that the best way for them to obtain information on museum activities is as follows: phone, 11.39%; email, 17.33%; printed flyers, 12.51%; social networks, 25.51%; newspaper, 4.75%; radio, 7.20%; TV, 14.68%; through friends, 5.52%; and other ways, 1.12%.

Per province, similar percentages of respondents gave answers concerning the best ways for them to obtain information about cultural activities.

Use of computers

Do you use a computer?		
16-A	Yes	464
	No	37
Where?		
16-B	Office	141
	Home	445
	Internet café	71

Table 12. Survey respondents' use of computers.

Of the survey respondents, 92.61% indicated they use a computer. Specifically, 67.73% use one at home; 21.46% use one at work; and 10.81% use computers at an internet café.

The same pattern of use was observed for most respondents in the different provinces, except in Puerto Plata, where only 72.73% used computers; however, the distribution of where they used computers was similar to that of the overall survey.

Internet access

Do you have internet access? n=515		
17-A	Yes	489
	No	16
How?		
17-B	Computer at home	419
	Computer at the office	149
	Computer at an Internet café	89
	Computer at a friend's house	139
	Unlimited Access through my mobile phone	337
	Only Access to Facebook through my mobile phone	74

Table 13. Survey respondents' access to internet**.**

Of the survey respondents, 96.83% indicated having access to the internet. Specifically, 34.71% have access from a home computer; 27.92% have access through unlimited mobile internet; 12.34% through their office; 11.52% go to a friend's house; 7.37% go to an internet café to connect; and 6.13% have internet through their mobile phone with exclusive Facebook access.

Per province, most of the survey participants reflected similar percentages: most accessed the internet through a home computer, followed closely by mobile phones with unlimited internet access, except for respondents in Santiago and Puerto Plata, where unlimited access through mobile phone was the primary way for respondents to connect.

Information in digital form

What type of information do you think is important to have available in digital format? n=515		**Count**
18-A	Scientific research about the objects	375
	Inventory of collections	228
	Photographs of objects with descriptions	383
	Map with Indigenous cultural resources per region	312

Table 14. Important information to have available in digital format according to respondents.

Of the survey respondents, 29.51% considered it important to have digital images of the collection objects; 28.89%, scientific research on collection objects in digital form; 24.04%, a digital map of cultural resources; and 17.57%, collection inventories in digital format.

Per province, similar percentages were reflected in the respondents' answers on the types of information they found important to have in digital form.

Free access to digital resources

How important do you think it is to have information on Indigenous collections in digital format available free of charge? n=515		**Count**
19-A	Very important	303
	Important	131
	Somewhat important	29
	Neutral	28
	Not important	1

Table 15. How important survey respondents think it is to have digital information about Indigenous heritage collections available free of charge.

Of the survey respondents, 61.59% found it very important to have digital information about Indigenous heritage collections available for free; 26.63% found it important; 5.89% found it somewhat important; 5.69% felt neutral about it; and 0.20% did not find it important to have this kind of information digitally available for free.

Survey respondents in all provinces answered that it was important or very important to have digital information about Indigenous heritage collections available for free.

Convenience of digital resources

Digital books were considered the most convenient digital resource by 29.66% of respondents; 28.05% considered databases the most convenient; 25.75%, digital magazines; and 16.55%, CDs.

Similar percentages hold for respondents in the individual provinces.

Other experiences and opinions on how to connect

This question was open-ended. Respondents had an opportunity to freely write what else they thought would help them connect with Indigenous heritage collections. Their answers were analyzed and those that chose to write their opinion and had similar answers were placed in categories that expressed the similarity of responses.

What other experiences or opinions do respondents have regarding how the community can connect with CPI? n=515		**Count**
21-A	Have information available via a digital blog or web	22
	Better education	60
	Have the collections in more accessible places	11
	Promote collections in different communities	35
	Better support to institutions	7
	Allow visits to archaeological sites	14
	Other	25

Table 16. Other experiences and opinions survey respondents have regarding how the community can connect with Indigenous heritage collections.

Of the survey respondents, 34.38% felt that education efforts regarding the care of Indigenous heritage collections needed to improve; 20.11% reported that information on these types of collections needed to be better promoted in different communities; and 12.64% believed that information about the collections should be made available on websites or blogs. Further, 8.05% think visiting archaeological sites can help communities connect with Indigenous heritage collections; 6.32% believe Indigenous heritage collections should be displayed in more accessible places or the original places where they were found; 4.02% believe the government should better support the care of collections; and 14.37% have other opinions.

Similar percentages are found among respondents in the individual provinces, except in Puerto Plata. In this province, respondents found visits to archaeological sites similar in importance to having collections displayed in more accessible places so that the community may better connect with Indigenous heritage collections.

6.2.1.4 Analysis of survey results

The survey results showed that most of the respondents were from the education community, largely female, and had previously visited a museum with an Indigenous heritage

collection. The respondents that had visited museums with Indigenous heritage collections did so, as expected, on a mandatory school visit or guided tour. Time and distance were the main prohibitive factors for those that had not visited such a museum.

Respondents from La Altagracia Province had higher rates of visits to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano in Santo Domingo and Santiago Province. These rates were higher despite La Romana's archaeological museum being closer—only 30 minutes away from the Punta Cana campus. This could be due to the fact that most of the students who responded to the survey were from a university whose headquarters is in Santo Domingo, despite having a campus in Punta Cana. The variation in responses between provinces reflects a higher rate of mandatory school visits for the National District, as the Museo del Hombre Dominicano is located in a section of the capital with significant transportation access. The higher rates of mandatory visits further show that the respondents' main channel of access to Indigenous heritage collections is through the formal school system. This trend shows that such visits tend to focus on the well-known collections that have coordinated visit protocols in place to accommodate large school groups.

The value of understanding Indigenous heritage collections was reflected in how respondents rated the importance of how old the objects were, how they were made, what materials they were made of, and the aesthetics of the objects. As the respondents indicated, what interested most of them on a personal level was the history that could be learned through the collection. The collections were primarily considered to be very beneficial to the community and very important to understanding Dominican society, while about half of the respondents indicated feeling that the visit helped them to better understand who they are. Most of the respondents also considered it very important to have the collections open for visitation. Surprisingly, less than half of the respondents were interested in volunteering to create activities for the community, and the majority of those who considered volunteering were more interested in helping with educational activities.

The survey results show that many of the respondents consider Indigenous heritage collections "beneficial" or "very beneficial" to the community, and knowing about an object's history, age, aesthetics, and production are important and interesting details to learn about. The majority also considered the knowledge that Indigenous heritage collections offer for understanding Dominican society to be "important" or "very important." This idea is also reflected in the survey opinions that it is "important" or "very important" to have the

collections open to the public. Nevertheless, in some provinces, the number of people who responded to “feeling that a visit to an Indigenous heritage collection helped them to better understand who they are” was lower than for the survey respondents at large.

The difference in the responses between provinces is probably due to participants not reflecting on their answers in depth and acknowledging that a personal understanding is different from a societal standpoint. Although respondents highly estimated the importance of Indigenous heritage collections, this consideration does not necessarily translate to a high willingness to volunteer to create activities for the community, as less than half of the respondents indicated having an interest in volunteering. About half of those who responded positively to opportunities for volunteering chose education-related activities or general contributions. This reflects the percentage of respondents who came from the education sector, mainly teachers. For the provinces where more respondents indicated having no interest in volunteering or were not sure if they would volunteer, age may have been a determining factor in this lack of interest, as the survey respondents from those provinces were younger.

Although the activities that survey respondents indicated wanting to see in museums were ranked as having “high value” or “sufficient value”—arts and crafts, cultural events with explanations, dance and theater, and material available through the internet—arts and crafts were valued the highest, followed by material accessible through the internet. The higher value assigned to arts and crafts could reflect the more hands-on involvement these activities require. The lower-ranked values could reflect the scarcity of information on the subject available through the internet. The importance of freely available digital information also reflects the need for more accessible resources.

Survey respondents confirmed that they believe that society benefits from learning about the objects’ age, materials, how they were produced, and from learning about how beautiful they are considered. Santo Domingo and the province of Valverde are the places where the highest percentages of respondents were interested in the history that can be learned through Indigenous heritage collections. Nevertheless, this interest in history had lower selection rates than the selected responses of wanting to learn how objects were made and about the aesthetic value of the objects when asked what interested them personally. This could be due to the attempt to identify personal preferences and because there were more answer choices to indicate personal preferences.

Most of the people who completed the survey indicated that they were “interested” or “very interested” in participating in activities to learn how the objects from the collections were made. Community members from the area where the Nexus 1492 project did excavations had an interest in learning how the objects found were made. Similarly, positive responses were elicited when the respondents were asked to indicate how beneficial they considered Indigenous collections to be for the community. These positive responses extended to the knowledge generated by the collections and its benefits to the economy, the creation of policy, and understanding Dominican society. Compared to most provinces, more respondents in Santiago answered that “what personally interested” them was “understanding our society through objects.” This could be attributed to the fact that all respondents in Santiago were professionals, with higher visitation rates to different museums. Another explanation for the differences in personal interest could be the length of the survey and the variation of some questions that measured similar variables in order to compare responses to similar questions.

Many of the items left blank came from surveys whose respondents fell into the 18-to-24-year-old demographic, most having indicated they were students. Respondents from La Altagracia Province complained that the survey was too long; they were all university students in the younger demographic category.

Although the majority of survey respondents considered it “very important” to have Indigenous heritage collections open for visitation, less than half expressed an interest in volunteering to create activities for members of the educational, heritage and local communities. A possible explanation for this could be attributed to a lack of awareness about what volunteer opportunities could entail beyond what was specified, namely developing educational activities, or helping with general activities.

Nearly all respondents indicated wanting to have access to more collections because most of them believed it would give them more knowledge about Indigenous heritage. The top knowledge-related activities that would make the respondents feel more connected with the collections were learning about the objects’ origins; understanding the collections better; having access to more research and learning how to care for the objects. Most respondents highly valued the idea of museums organizing activities related to arts and crafts, sponsoring cultural events with explanations about Indigenous heritage, and having materials accessible through the internet. In addition, respondents stated that the most important service museums

could offer was providing informational material about their objects through books and magazines, cultural programs for adults and children, and workshops on heritage conservation, education, and archaeology. The majority also expressed being very interested in visiting an archaeological site and learning how objects from the collections were made. Furthermore, respondents indicated that to connect Indigenous heritage collections with communities, improvements in education about the care of the collections need to be done. Information about the collections has to be better promoted among different communities.

Respondents thought that the main challenges museums faced in making Indigenous heritage collections more accessible were finances, followed by personnel issues, and making people understand the value of the collections. The responses also reflected a preference for social networks, TV, email, and printed flyers as the best ways to obtain information about cultural activities. Almost all respondents indicated having access to a computer and to the internet through their home computer or via their mobile. Considering this level of digital access, a similar percentage of respondents per province answered that the most important information to have in digital form was photographs of the collections, scientific research, and a digital map of cultural resources. The respondents also considered the most convenient digital resources to be digital books, databases, and digital magazines. Most of the respondents considered it important or very important to have this information available for free.

Because most of the respondents were surveyed on-site at La Romana, where the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum is located, this institution recorded the most visits to its Indigenous heritage collection, followed closely by the collection at the Museo del Hombre Dominicano. The Museo del Hombre Dominicano was the museum expected to have the highest visitation rate since the national curriculum includes a mandatory visit to this museum in its lessons on the island's early history.

Respondents were expected to report a higher visitation rate to Indigenous heritage collections in their province of residence compared to those of other provinces. This trend is not reflected in the answers of participants from Valverde Province, where the reported rate of visits to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano in Santo Domingo is slightly higher than it is for Centro León in Santiago, which is closer to Valverde than to Santo Domingo. This could also be attributed to school directors and teachers following the national curriculum's suggestion of a yearly school visit to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, not being deterred

by time and distance in organizing school excursions. In La Altagracia Province, responses were submitted by students enrolled at a campus of an upper-income university originally based in Santo Domingo, which could account for the significantly higher rate of visits to the Museo del Hombre in Santo Domingo and the Centro León in Santiago.

After mandatory and guided tours, the main activities that visitors participated in at museums were lectures, conferences, seminars, and workshops. Surprisingly, meeting with friends was part of the top four activities at museums. This was unexpected, as it signals independent visiting tendencies for learning (mandatory school visits that were not part of a school tour) and socializing (meeting with friends at the museum), despite the significantly lower visit rates compared to mandatory visits.

Through open-ended responses, survey participants echoed expressed opinions in interviews that improvements in education and care efforts are needed for people to be able to connect with Indigenous heritage collections. The frequency in similar answers to the open-ended questions that were asked to identify additional elements that can contribute to connecting community and collections could be attributed to the influence of the reiteration of information throughout the survey questions and options for responses. Furthermore, the common response or opinion that there is a need to advertise information about Indigenous heritage collections in different communities was another significant association in survey and interview responses. Participants in both the survey and the interviews consider it important to improve education about Indigenous history to better understand how collections were formed. Based on their responses, those surveyed and interviewed also think that it is necessary for museums to advertise information about the collections in their communities.

Overall, the opportunity to survey members of different communities afforded a macro-level look at how communities access Indigenous heritage collections. The responses revealed that survey participants from different provinces consider Indigenous heritage collections important to understanding Dominican history and society. Community access to collections is considered beneficial, as most respondents equate more access with greater learning opportunities. Responses indicate that education-related activities have been and continue to be perceived as the main channels for connecting communities with Indigenous heritage collections. These responses reflect the need to identify ways to remedy the public's lack of information about accessing the collections. Services that respondents indicated as being important to address were books and catalogs, cultural programs for adults and

children, and workshops on conservation and archaeology. These services correlated to the respondents' answers of being "interested" or "very interested," mostly in accessing information about the collections through visits to archaeological sites, learning how the objects were made, learning about Indigenous lifeways, and developing crafts inspired by Indigenous designs.

The narratives affirming the extinction of Indigenous Caribbean cultures were established in the 1970s and continue to remain present in most museums with Indigenous heritage collections. It can be said that this educational narrative is also perceived as static by both survey respondents and those interviewed. Survey respondents identified having a greater understanding of the origins and the overall nature of the collections, having access to more research, and learning how to take care of such collections as the main possibilities for forging better connections with the collections.

6.3 Public and private concerns regarding the management of Indigenous heritage collections

This section presents the results of interviews conducted with public officials and managers in the heritage sector, as well as with private collectors in the Dominican Republic, in order to learn about their opinions regarding heritage legislation, the management of Indigenous heritage collections, and their preservation. A semi-structured interview was designed to obtain information from the community of heritage managers who have been involved in public functions, museum directors, cultural managers, and collectors, as proposed in the methodology chapter. A total of 22 individuals were interviewed. Most participants gave face-to-face interviews; those who sent written responses via email did so because it was difficult to schedule a meeting time or did not show an inclination to meet in person.

For the sake of anonymity, unique numbers were assigned to participants. The numbers 1 through 16 were assigned to public officials and heritage managers; 17 through 21 to private collectors.

6.3.1 The interviews

There were four interview questions with slight variations based on the group of participants being interviewed (see Appendix B for the detailed script with interview questions for each group). The groups were composed of public officials, heritage managers,

private collectors with collections open to the public, and private collectors with collections that are not open to the public. This section presents the interview results based on the type of questions asked to each group of participants. There were questions asked specifically to public officials and heritage managers in order to learn about their backgrounds. Questions about past collecting activities and plans for their collections were directed only at private collectors. All participants were asked about their opinions regarding legislation issues, access to collections, motivations for visiting collections, and governmental support to make collections more accessible. The relevant responses of participants are presented in italics and in parenthesis where emphasis in responses were indicated by participants.

Background and interest of public officials and heritage managers

Most of the participants interviewed have professional backgrounds and university degrees in both heritage and non-heritage-related fields.

Government officials who have held a heritage-related position have done so for the most part by political assignment. The professional backgrounds of government officials include anthropology, architecture, law, chemistry, history, archaeology, art, diplomacy, and sociology.

The backgrounds of the private and nonprofit sector interviewees with Indigenous heritage collections under their care range from well-known businessmen to chairpersons of boards that oversee museums. Their professions range from education to art to business.

All of the interviewed participants expressed having an early interest in cultural or Indigenous heritage issues, either since they were children, through family experiences, or because of early professional or academic projects related to history or cultural heritage. The statements of public officials and heritage managers about their interest in heritage sector work reflected emotional links to early family or personal or academic experiences.

Only one interview participant acknowledged having entered the field of heritage without prior training or the knowledge to manage heritage or heritage-related activities in a museum:

> Participant 10: *It was an appointment by the director on duty, who wanted me to be by his side for the different projects that he had, but for me to … become a staff member, the main obstacle was that I came without knowledge, in that sense … I had never had*

museum experience, and they put me in a department that, for me, is the central nerve of the collection, for ME, for MY way of being [verbal emphasis by the participant]. *I learned from the site itself—that is, I got in and I learned from the collection; I studied it.*

Although this participant had indicated he[4] had an interest in heritage because he grew up in a family that valued cultural and artistic expression, he recognized that he was assigned to the cultural post because he knew a director. He recognized he was not skilled in heritage management, and that he only became interested after understanding the dangers to which some museum collections were exposed out of negligence. The recognition of political nepotism was minimized by recognizing the value of the collections and his efforts to protect them by learning how to manage them.

Implementation and monitoring of heritage legislation

The interview answers revealed that government officials have a basic knowledge of the legislation that influences heritage management, but more closely involved they were in managing Indigenous heritage, the greater their knowledge of the legislation's shortcomings.

Participant 1*: … Here, the laws exist, and it considers everything, only that nobody enforces it … and nobody is forced to enforce it, even less so if the people who financially support the culture sector are collectors.*

There were some cases where Indigenous heritage managers and public officials indicated that they understood there were no laws to protect heritage, or that the rules were not clear enough to be adequately followed. All the interviewees who have held government positions and recognized that their country has heritage legislation in place believe that the legislation is not being followed, that it is either inconsistent or contradictory, applied with favoritism, or obsolete. Many also indicated that Congress does not have the political will to implement it. Some people believed that the laws to repatriate objects that have been taken out of the country do not work and have not been implemented.

Other interview participants expressed that they do not believe protecting Indigenous heritage is a priority for the Ministry of Culture. Some participants considered the ministry to

[4] The masculine pronoun has been used throughout all the interview excerpts regardless of gender since all the interview answers are anonymous.

be very centralized in favor of the State and expressed that the Ministry lacks confidence in the private sector.

> Participant 12: *The existing legislation is inadequate for the current reality of heritage, dating from 1968. It does not recognize private heritage and does not protect collections.*

> Participant 13: *In my opinion, there is an excessive centralization and reservation on the part of the State and the government agencies responsible for implementing legislation for the handling, custody, management, and protection of heritage. Not only from the public vision and administration, but this jealousy is in its stealthy relationship with the private sector that, instead of threading together policies of brotherhood, the public sector sees it as an opponent.*

Considering their knowledge of heritage laws, the heads of nonprofit heritage institutions that care for archaeological collections stated that they do not know enough about the legislation to have an opinion. Still, they expressed the view that the laws and regulations appear to be inadequate and incomplete.

Concerning opinions on how the implementation of legislation and regulations are monitored, all interviewees stated, in one way or another, that there is chaos in dealing with heritage management issues, or that monitoring is virtually nonexistent. There were instances where they stated the legislation was complete, then contradicted themselves when giving opinions on monitoring:

> Participant 22: *I understand that the Dominican Republic has good legislation on the protection of cultural property, in addition to the international treaties that prohibit trafficking in archaeological objects to which our country is a signatory. What happens is that the laws are not applied…*

Most participants also stated that the government agencies responsible for monitoring the implementation of laws and regulations do not have staff with the capacity to carry out monitoring at the national level, even in places with archaeological sites or collections that have reported a conservation problem. Interview participants who claimed to know that there is monitoring of heritage legislation also indicated that public heritage officials that have the capability to do it are swamped and cannot cover the entire national territory. The indifference of government agencies was also frequently mentioned as a problem in

monitoring the implementation of laws and regulations. Several respondents indicated that there are very few completed inventories that can be monitored as a standard measure to indicate how the collections have expanded or been reduced:

> Participant 1: *It's just that none of that has been done! … What monitoring has been done here? The collections fly out of the public museums, and we don't know … I believe that the first thing is that the inventories that exist, if they exist, are obsolete; they are state secrets, and they are not renewed … Culture doesn't interest anyone … is always easier than if the sea is calm … In this case, if we are all regulated, it is easier to know where things are.*

> Participant 4*: The Ministry of Culture does not have the qualified personnel … There has been a lack of political will to appoint people who have been already prepared.*

All but one of the private collectors interviewed was aware of the legislation, which they considered to be for the care of the objects. Still, all those who offered their opinion on monitoring indicated there was none for the conservation of the collections. Most collectors complained that the State did not assist them in their conservation efforts.

The opinions of public officials, heritage managers, and private collectors reveal that poor implementation of the country's heritage legislation and lack of monitoring hinders community access to archaeological collections. The responses signal a lack of comprehensive understanding of how heritage laws and regulations are implemented, and the specific mechanisms to monitor their implementation regarding Indigenous heritage collections.

All the respondents concurred that there is inconsistency in legislative implementation, with most believing that there was no "political will" to enforce the laws or to monitor that people have access to Indigenous heritage collections under private care:

> Participant 15: *In the Dominican Republic, with its lack of dependable institutional policies, there has been inconsistency in this legislation. For years, collectors were able to amass private collections with little regulation. During the past two decades, the opposite has taken place, making it difficult for certain museums to participate in international exhibitions due to complex bureaucracy.*

Participant 19: *What monitoring? … Here nothing is monitored! The state is apathetic and does not tend to protect culture in general … Its "contributions" are based on populist glimpses through high profile activities…like the 'long nights of museums' … but little institutional protection of heritage […] Payrolls at the Ministry of Culture [reflect] pure political clientelism … [There is] nepotism out in the open and without consequences … positions with high salaries while the forgotten comrades of the party's base survive with hunger wages, sometimes received with a one- or two-month delay.*

Private collectors and non-governmental heritage managers also agreed in their criticism of governmental entities and representatives not having the "political will" to aid in preserving collections. The Museo del Hombre and other public Indigenous heritage collections were mentioned as examples of how collections under public care show significant signs of deterioration.

Government officials with current posts also expressed a suspicion that there is looting of Indigenous heritage items from archaeological sites since, to their knowledge, there is no monitoring. An interviewee from the Ministry of Culture of a southwestern province expressed significant concerns over forgeries in his area that are sold as original archaeological items. He expressed that this is also the case for looted objects that make it out of the country. In his opinion, the lack of governmental effort to preserve the Indigenous ceremonial plaza near his local community contributes to the lack of care from those that live surrounding the archaeological site. His concerns seemed to suggest that the more community contact public officials have had, the less favorably they assessed the legislation in terms of implementation and monitoring.

Public officials at higher management levels did not seem to have specific knowledge of Indigenous heritage legislation. However, most expressed the understanding that the legislation aids in preventing the illicit trafficking of archaeological objects. They believed that fewer objects leave the country because there is legislation against it. Regarding such monitoring issues, most respondents agreed that monitoring is only done when there is a political will to do it.

For officials whose work relates to cultural matters within the Ministry of Education, one acknowledged having no specific knowledge of legislation related to Indigenous heritage but indicated that he understood the Ministry of Culture has no will make decisions. He also

stated there is no qualified personnel to undertake the monitoring and that there was a lack of interest in implementing any legislation. Another individual interviewed in connection with cultural heritage mainly associated legislation issues with the state's capability to request the repatriation of objects and remove them from local private hands. He believed that not enough effort is made to protect the objects but justified it by reasoning that the State has other priorities because the country is so poor. This perspective coincided with the opinions of fellow officials from the Ministry of Culture. For public officials who had held heritage-related posts in the past, opinions on Indigenous heritage legislation were no more favorable. These individuals' most pressing concerns include outdated laws, protection gaps not addressed by the current legislation, lack of practical implementation guidelines, and centralization.

One former public Indigenous heritage manager, in her very brief written answers, stated that no legislation was implemented, and that monitoring was not done. Almost every former public official expressed complaints about the lack of inventories, the outdated information about the collections, and the lack of supervision over collections in private hands. Almost all former public officials identified deficiency in skills needed to oversee governmental heritage institutions as a significant contributor to the inadequate or nonexistent monitoring efforts. They also cited the state's disinterest, indifference, or lack of will to act as hindrances to implementing legislation. This is congruent with experiences undertaking the review of collections documentation for creating the collection inventories. There were only outdated inventories or none at all. There is no public agency staff assigned to check on heritage collections or review what legal documentation is in place. Only a few outdated inventories were found in the Center for the Inventory of Cultural Goods, which is supposed to act as a repository of heritage inventories.

One top heritage manager in the nonprofit sector that was interviewed criticized heritage legislation on Indigenous heritage collections as inconsistent, lacking institutionalization, and currently plagued with bureaucracy. However, he considered himself not fully informed on monitoring issues. The other high-level heritage manager, on the contrary, thought that there were laws, regulations, and norms in place but felt there was no clarity about the consequences for violations such as illicit trafficking, looting, or forgery. She described the legislation's monitoring process as being "incomplete, [and] needing adequate updates to inspire new practices" (Participant 16). Heritage managers seemed to have weaker opinions about implementing and monitoring the legislation compared to how

the regulations affect private collections, presumably due to a basic understanding of how this impacts collection management.

As for collectors with collections open to the public, the range of opinions regarding legislative issues varies. One collector in an urban setting considered the legislation to be beneficial in protecting cultural goods, as he considered it important that the country was a signatory of international agreements that forbid illicit traffic. He heads a foundation that oversees his collection, which has been documented fairly well ever since he started collecting. He also indicated having started collecting because of the indiscriminate looting of sites and saw the "*need to form an archaeological collection to preserve part of this prehistoric legacy and prevent it from leaving the country, as its traces would be lost forever*." He further indicated that regarding monitoring, the "*Laws were not applied and that there was not enough protection for archaeological sites or caves with Indigenous rock art.*" He also recognized that building collections these days is a risky business since there is a high level of forgeries mixed in with actual archaeological objects for sale.

For collectors who do not open their collections to the public, their opinions reflect a general awareness of the legislation. One of the first collectors interviewed indicated that he "no longer ha[d] anything of importance to show" because he had sold most of what he owned and was no longer collecting due to a lack of funds. Finally, he no longer received visits from sellers. His understanding regarding legislation is that the essence of the law was good, as it declared these objects the property of the state—not of individuals—as a way to protect them. He admitted to not knowing about monitoring Indigenous heritage collections or how the state regulates the public collections. Further, he did not know "*the extent to which this was monitored for private collectors*." When analyzing the repetition of certain sentiments, either in a single interview or by different interviewees, a pattern of complaint and strong judgment against poor legislative implementation and monitoring was identified. Among the answers it was also recognized strong criticisms against the lack of managerial systems and poor educational quality in programs that should support how Indigenous heritage collections are used to teach the early history of the country.

For the one collector who had opened his paternal house to visitors (free of charge for students), he indicated being familiar with the legislation through the compendium of laws authored by a relative who worked in government. He stated that his main reason for collecting was to stop objects from leaving the country. He further explained that he was the

one who had reached out to the Ministry of Culture, only to be told they did not have the resources to support him. He claimed that the Ministry of Culture only visited to review whether the house was equipped with everything he needed to open for tourists: a guide to the display cases, the inventory, and functional bathrooms. With his collection open to the public, the last collector, who has turned most of his home's living spaces into exhibition rooms for students and local visitors, admitted to not knowing about legislative implementation or monitoring. He did clarify that representatives from the Ministry of Culture had visited after local community members applied for funds from the national contest for cultural projects on his behalf for the creation of a local museum. The public officials had visited him to inform him that the project was selected and that they had gone to identify the land to be donated by the municipality and would then proceed to work on the design plan.

The last of the private collectors who agreed to respond to the interview questions thought the legislation should include provisions to support the creation of regional museums that are self-sustainable. To them, the creation of law 340, the heritage sponsorship law, which passed in October of 2019 (Ministerio de Cultura 2019), could be significantly favorable to aiding the heritage sector. He believes sponsorship incentives would motivate private investment in cultural projects in tourism-oriented zones, as he considers Indigenous heritage a vital attraction. His opinion regarding legislative monitoring was quite unfavorable, as he emphatically pointed out that he collects in order to prevent the objects from being looted from the country.

Private collecting

All collectors of Indigenous heritage material indicated that they started collecting or were interested in collecting archaeological artifacts from an early age, most often linking their collecting desires to an emotional experience related to their family's value of history or related to educational experiences while learning about Indigenous history in school. Two participants infused their explanation with strong emotion:

> Participant 17: *I was interested in the topic from a young age … and from a history class that was taught to us … so whenever I heard there was a place with sherds, I would go. It always called my attention … They are really our true ancestors.*

> Participant 21: *… That's something that I kind of have in my blood … It's like I tell you, it's like a fever, a passion …*

Several collectors expressed that a significant reason for collecting was to prevent objects from leaving the country; they did this either by finding the objects or by buying them. Of the six collectors interviewed, five indicated that they would continue to buy objects each time they are brought in to avoid losing them. One of them acknowledged the purchases at first, admitting that he had spent a fortune amassing his collection and that it was an uncontrollable passion; nevertheless, he later indicated that he no longer buys objects and that he is focused on using his money to open his museum:

> Participant 19: *I collect pieces for a very special motive …* ***I don't want even one piece to leave the country*** [bold emphasis originally added by the participant in the written response] *… Unfortunately, I am almost alone in this project … Important pieces continue to leave, astonishing pieces continue to show up, with inestimable didactic value, and pieces continue to be extracted in the exterior and sold at laughable prices to then be resold at exorbitant prices.*

> Participant 21: *I wish there were people, many people like me, because collectors like … hey, hey, hey, collectors like me prevent objects from leaving, oh, if I tell you about the piece … hey, that I, because I don't have money, I couldn't buy it and out of the country they go…*

In general, collectors associated their early collecting interest with early educational experiences that encouraged them to think of the objects as valuable relics of the country's cultural heritage that need protection to avoid people taking them out of the country. Nevertheless, the collectors' self-perception as heritage saviors in the face of governmental indifference to illicit trafficking contrasts with public officials' responses that link private collecting with an undue sense of ownership and hoarding that the government cannot control.

Although most collectors did not openly acknowledge that they continue to purchase archaeological material, two of them indicated that they no longer collect due to the higher costs of purchasing objects, as well as their deteriorating health, which impedes them from going out to the field to look for objects. These two collectors recognized that sometimes their urge to collect felt like an illness, and they were unable to stop their hoarding.

All the collectors expressed having had a desire to have a museum ever since they started collecting adults in order to open their collections so that people could enjoy them.

Participant 18: *Every collector's dream is to have a museum … but there is no interest from the private sector.*

Participant 19: *It has always been my interest that the pieces remain in national territory, and that my collection can be seen by the world … if people come here to see it.*

One collector, inspired by his visit to the capital's museums and by having friends who encouraged him to open his collection to the public, transformed his family's home into a space people can visit freely. Another collector showed his collection to visitors who occasionally asked to see it, and often gave talks at schools about the history of the province, bringing his collection along so that students could interact with the objects.

Of the two collectors who openly acknowledged they were actively buying objects; one has been involved in different negotiations to try to open a museum that would house his collection. He indicated he had not been successful due to a lack of interest on the part of businesspeople. The other collector hoped to one day find support for opening a museum in his local community. He has a house full of objects, but he said he is tired of letting anyone he does not know to see his collection because, as he indicated, he is afraid government officials will take it away.

One collector expressed his desperation at not having any private interest in his collection. Another collector hoped to get permission from the Ministry of Culture to finally open the house he turned into a museum, mainly for tourists, as he believed Dominicans are not interested in culture. Negotiations are underway for another collector to move his collection to a new space where the public can continue to visit, but he is expecting support from the government and the private sector.

Two collectors explicitly indicated that they do not trust government officials, especially since the state allowed the main public museum to deteriorate to an extreme level. Others expressed their hopes that the government would honor its political promises of granting permits and building local community museums.

Some private collectors believed that the government should improve tax exemption legislation that promotes sponsorship of heritage activities. These collectors consider the private sector would provide better economic support for the creation of more museums and for sponsoring academic research in archaeology. In their opinion, more economic support

from the private sector would make bureaucracy less burdensome for cultural organizations that depend on government support.

> Participant 22: *The state has a very significant social burden, both in infrastructure and in concerns related to public health and education, so it is unthinkable that it alone can fulfill all the requirements that cultural heritage demands. Hence the important role played by private initiatives and their support for both artistic and cultural activities under sponsorship schemes […] We trust that the new laws promoting private tax incentives will encourage the granting of sponsorships to those entities dedicated to the protection and preservation of the nation's historical, monumental, and artistic heritage.*

At one end of the spectrum, there are the public officials that expect more rigid governmental control over Indigenous heritage in private hands. At the other end, there are the collectors expecting significant public support to subsidize the care of Indigenous heritage collections because they consider that the government lack capacity to care for its public collections properly.

Government help in accessing collections

Government officials and heritage managers considered the Ministry of Education a significant player facilitating access to Indigenous heritage collections. Most public officials thought that the ministry should make revisions in the curriculum to improve how Indigenous history is taught and to reinforce the importance of museum collections. Participants also opined that the ministry should publish books on the subject, offer more money to students so that they can have better museum visits, and design projects for teachers to continue working on in school after class visits to museums with Indigenous heritage collections.

While some officials and heritage managers believed that the government needs to invest in more cultural programming for both students and communities, they also believed that the state needs to help improve buildings and displays that house public collections and step-up public preservation efforts in museums.

Most participants believed that archaeology experts should lead government institutions with heritage collections and that specialized staff should take care of inventories and support the private sector when necessary. Some felt that museums need to extend their

opening hours, open their warehouses to the public, and promote touristic amenities beyond the sun and beaches.

One government official emphatically stated that the government needs to appropriate collections in private care, as they belong to the state by law. Most individuals that were in public posts or had held government positions either expressed concern for archaeological collections in private hands or felt the government needed to exert more supervision over private collections:

> Participant 1: *The first thing is putting the house in order […] so, if we begin building profiles for the positions and filling them with people—not because of whom they know, not because of political favors, not out of convenience, not out of sympathy with other people, but really because they know what to do there, what is there, its importance and value—then we have already partly won, because a person with criteria is not supposed to improvise. They should start with a minimum program for what to do at the institution, and that should be the managing institution so that it has a satellite in all the other provinces, and can then somewhat ease the disorder of managing the archaeological sites, the looting […] Any tourist here can take anything, and nobody does anything … People in rural communities warn us that they are destroying a site, and nobody can do anything; there is no coordination with the town halls that have a culture department, there is no coordination with other institutions, with cultural centers […] It's like everyone is an island, but nobody can do anything because their hands are tied. But the biggest barrier they have is the mental barrier… They are not motivated to doing anything, and if they do, they do not let the others do anything, and if other people do anything, it then becomes a problem.*

The interview with Participant 1, which lasted for over an hour, reflected concerns related to the governmental protection of the collection and emphatically criticized the government's lack of action in terms of supervision and hiring qualified personnel. This participant equates the meaning of access to that of protection and sees the government as the entity charged with ensuring the collections' protection. The complaints about governmental inaction in protecting Indigenous heritage collections and sites, as well as political favoritism in assigning people to heritage posts, were echoed in other interviews. Other participants expressed a need for the government to help with access to Indigenous heritage collections by

providing more resources to the education and scientific sectors so that people can better understand the value of the collections.

Some interview participants also see the need for the government to lead in facilitating strategies for how Indigenous heritage collections are exhibited, where they are exhibited, and how to encourage visiting them:

> Participant 3: *More exhibitions, in airports, multilingual, in the colonial zone … Go to the radio and TV, bring tourists to museums in tour buses, implement programs in cities of different provinces […] The private sector wants to help. But it depends on who is at the Ministry of Culture's helm.*

Formal education seems to be considered the main area of governmental intervention in improving access to the cultural information that these collections have to offer. Many of the interview responses regarding the types of help the government could provide fall under financial support to museums for improved programming and exhibitions and facilitating cooperative research projects. Nevertheless, curricular improvement in the formal education sector was the most common response to how the government can help improve access to Indigenous heritage collections:

> Participant 4: … *In the case of the Ministry of Education, it should design—that is, now that we are in the process of revising the curriculum, [*it should*] include content or strengthen content that is already there, in such a way that children can go out and get to know, see, look at and, perhaps, develop strategies and follow lesson plans that link them more to their heritage […] The Ministry can also help educate on how to assess the care and preservation of our heritage and also distribute that information from the school to communities, especially now that large governmental investments in education are being made.*

While most interview participants believed that the government needs to lead in educational efforts to improve access, some public officials considered the appropriation of Indigenous collections from private hands the main strategy for improving access to collections due to their cultural value:

> Participant 5*: There must be more books to disseminate the heritage we have, a heritage that is practically submerged and which, I insist, is in the wrong hands, in the wrong collections, in collections that ... are shown privately, but whose owners do*

not even allow many of these pieces to be photographed—for fear of persecution, for fear that they will be taken away, these things that in reality do not belong to them, but which they treasure for what they are, a true treasure of the history of the origins of the Dominicans …

The urging of appropriation by most public officials reflected their opinions on legislation going unenforced due to lack of political determination more than their concerns over shortcomings in qualified personnel, funding, and political favoritism as expressed by heritage managers and collectors. Simultaneously, public officials outside the capital city also believed that the legislation needs to be better enforced in order to decentralize the access to resources, build greater capacity for developing activities, and having trained personnel in provinces rather than concentrating them all in the capital city. Some of the public officials' answers justified the lack of governmental action in protecting Indigenous heritage collections as a result of prioritizing the use of resources for basic services such as health, food, housing, and security.

Access and motivation for visiting

All interviewees believed that public and private museums have always been accessible through traditional guided tours, mostly for school groups. The majority also believe that their engagement with the collections has been a very passive, unreflective type of access. Some point out that most visitors access Indigenous heritage through institutions in the capital. A visit to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano is a regular, and often compulsory, school excursion. Over time, however, school visits have generally decreased. Some interviewees also indicated other, less frequent ways people have accessed the collections, including through conferences and publications.

Participant 5: … *[*people have had access to Indigenous collections*] basically through books and the visits they have made to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano.*

Interview participants expressed that the most common ways people have accessed Indigenous heritage collections are through museums open to the public for visits and the passive contemplation of objects in display cases. All interviewees mentioned visitation directly or indirectly as the main point of access to collections. Other forms of access the respondents listed were through publications, research, temporary exhibitions, activities related to exhibition contents, and conferences. These offerings, however, are seldom found

in museums. One particular collector emphasized having facilitated access to his collection through school visits ever since he began collecting. He also saw the sponsorship of events and publications as a form of facilitating access and creating collaborations with similar institutions or other collectors. All respondents agreed that access to collections through the means they listed was more dynamic in the past. Specifically, the deterioration of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano seemed to symbolize the state's apathy toward cultural heritage issues, as several respondents expressed.

Of the 21 people interviewed, only one referred to public collections that have been closed due to deterioration. This person only casually commented how unfortunate it was that part of the human remains excavated was missing. No one mentioned the closure of the Dr. Aristides Estrada collection, housed in the province of Azua's municipal library. There was no mention at all of the collection that has been under the care of the Universidad Central del Este's anthropology museum, which has been closed to the public since at least 1998, after Hurricane Georges. These museums have been closed for so long that they are not considered part of the publicly accessible collections that were once open to the public. The closed collections, even as the objects are still encased in vitrines or stored within these institutions, they are no longer part of the collective memory that once considered them part of the freely accessible heritage resources the nation owned. Therefore, no one seems to question how to access them or even inquire about the objects' conservation state.

Nearly all respondents complained that the educational and pedagogical content of visits to museum collections was deficient. They complained that guided tours did not offer any type of engagement and that historical content was presented in a linear manner and with little interactivity. Some respondents pointed out that the presentations were too old to connect with a younger audience.

> *Participant 15: Collections that are in public museums have always been accessible to the public … through visits. The issue is the physical state of those museums and the lack of modernization in the displays. There are few museums that make an effort to develop exciting programming that attracts a young audience to visit … Private collections are often hard to view, as they are located in places where visits are by special appointment.*

All private collectors expressed that collections need to be better promoted or advertised better and that educational efforts should focus on public schools:

Participant 19: *I understand that it should be considered that the state, at some point, should legislate to promote more private sponsorship in what refers to the collections of private archaeological objects that would allow organizations and companies to deduct taxes if they build private regional museums that take care of objects, or if the companies make monetary contributions for the development of educational programs in schools, colleges, and universities that help teach about the care of national heritage*

Participant 21: *... Dominicans are not interested in culture or museums ... what it needs is education, education, education* (oral emphasis by interviewee).

Government officials and heritage managers believed that better explanations in exhibits and educational programs could help people become more motivated to better understand the importance of collections and assist in their conservation. Other public officials believed that more publications and videos are needed so that schools can have better tools to learn. It was also pointed out that exhibitions should be better designed to make them more attractive and understandable, and to have more dynamic activities with learning experiences at their center.

Participant 15: *Making information about the collections accessible to the viewer both in design and content is very important. Visitors are rarely scholars ... The collections need to be presented in such a way that viewers are absorbed in the story of these pieces. Collections must be brought to life. Direct and simple language that enables the viewer to understand what he is seeing is key, along with modern, fresh graphics. Informative material that provides cultural context that the visitor can refer to as he visits the museum is helpful, as is informative content that bridges the past and present. Making the past relevant to the present has to be a priority.*

Participant 16: Any initiative that seeks to promote this type of cultural property must be accompanied by a program of activities that inspires people to live each experience as unique and filled with learning.

6.3.2 Analysis of interview findings

Most public officials and heritage managers who participated in the interviews come from heritage and non-heritage-related professional backgrounds. They all expressed having become interested in the field either through early childhood experiences or early academic

exposure to history or cultural topics. According to the public officials and heritage managers consulted, the focus should be on improving access to Indigenous heritage collections through the formal education system. Public officials also believed that the government needs to assume a more assertive role in enabling people to access private collections.

As with public officials and heritage managers, the private collectors that were interviewed indicated having begun collecting Indigenous heritage objects based on an early interest in the topic through educational or family experiences. Most of them also expressed an interest in exhibiting their collections to friends or through the foundation of a museum. About half of the collectors expressed a desire to have more private support to make their collections more accessible to communities. At the same time, the majority believed that the government needed to increase its support for the heritage sector. In many instances, politically based help was considered neither desirable nor achievable.

Regarding the implementation of heritage legislation and monitoring adherence to it, most participants acknowledged having some knowledge of such legislation, but most believed that no governmental monitoring occurs. In terms of access, all participants believed that Indigenous heritage collections have always been accessible to the public through the museums that openly display them, though further acknowledging that both public and private collections could improve in this respect. Participants listed improved exhibitions, enhanced educational offerings, and more efficient communication in promoting their educational materials to communities as the main ways that could motivate people to learn more about the collections. In one way or another, everyone interviewed believed that the formal school system would be the best vehicle for increasing access and interest.

As expected, government officials expressed a strong desire to have the State expropriate archaeological collections. The public officials considered that such collections should not be in private hands, as stipulated by law, but recognized that nothing had been done about it. Nevertheless, they all agreed that actions must be taken to improve the State's capacity to legislate better before making any appropriations. Public officials also manifested that there is a need for the State to set a better example in the care of Indigenous heritage collections by providing more support to heritage institutions, as well as improving the way this part of Dominican history is taught in school. They consider that it can be done through the formal educational system spearheaded by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, only a few of these public officials advocated for legislative proposals that would allow

sponsorships based on tax exemptions. The stronger support of public officials for more governmental control over private collections and the private collectors advocating for better economic measures that would permit them to improve their care for the collections under their custody shows differences in what each group of respondents considers critical weaknesses or gaps in the legislation.

Although Dominican museums with Indigenous heritage collections are subject to legislative regulation, there is a scarce implementation of the regulations, according to most interview respondents. Despite the legislation drafted to protect the country's Indigenous heritage and the institutions and agencies established for the care of cultural material, even the public museums seem incapable of implementing their regulations in a consistent manner, much less supervising what private museums, or private collectors report. A significant example of this is the Museo del Hombre Dominicano. Under the legislative mandate, the Museo del Hombre is the public institution assigned to supervise all archaeological work throughout the country and the collections under private care. This particular institution, however, is susceptible to the country's political climate. Its upper management tends to be politically appointed and thus depends on which political party is in power. The museum's capacity for monitoring archaeological research likewise tends to change with the political agenda or the individual capacity of the person directing the institution. Besides, the museum does not have an independent budget, and budget approvals are subject to the Ministry of Culture's centralization and political priorities.

All interview participants conveyed a sense of despair in their answers. When asked about their opinions regarding the implementation of the legislation, public sector heritage officials with current posts in heritage institutions expressed that there were no optimal conditions for implementing the legislation. For those that hesitantly pointed out the lacking conditions for implementation, they considered it was due to politicians and lawmakers lacking the will to implement the legislation. Interview participants also believed that poor security, which allowed for the collections' looting and illicit trafficking outside the country, was a significant problem and had seldom been publicly addressed. Another interview participant, an Indigenous heritage collection manager, thought of the legislation as outdated and that too Eurocentric in its protection focus. He qualified the heritage legislation, as it applied to the protection of Indigenous heritage collections, to be out of touch with the Dominican context and unrealistic in its application. Furthermore, another interviewee, also closely related to Indigenous heritage management, indicated that the legislation was often

ignored and that chaos, insecurity, and political clientelism were rampant, while privileges were granted to rich people and politicians who were also well-known Indigenous heritage collectors. The common thread in these answers was the lack of faith in the implementation of the legislation, whether it was due to the evident political favors that benefited private collectors or due to the lack of governmental support for private heritage initiatives to care for collections.

In general, interviews with heritage-related public officials, heritage managers, and private collectors provided an opportunity to explore issues of access to Indigenous heritage collections at a micro-level. Only a minority of the participants interviewed had detailed knowledge of the heritage legislation enacted to protect Indigenous heritage collections. At the same time, everyone consulted agreed that there was no effective State monitoring over the collections. As expected, public officials expressed the need for more State supervision over collections in private custody. In contrast, heritage managers and private collectors believed that there was a need for the State to provide more support for and facilitate collaboration in the care of private collections.

Concerns regarding the care of Indigenous heritage collections

This study found several patterns in interview participants' concerns about the heritage sector. As the answers were analyzed, certain keywords associated with these areas of concern emerged from the data. The information was organized into five main categories based on the following keywords and phrases: protection of heritage, education, heritage personnel, valorization of heritage, and political decision-making processes. The categories were not deemed exclusive, as certain keywords represented different types of concerns, whether expressed by public officials, heritage managers, or private collectors. Moreover, some answers were deemed to be relatable to one or more of the categories of concerns that emerged from the data.

The content of the interview transcripts and the written responses were examined line by line. Several public officials and private collectors gave lengthy interviews, and even when they rambled, this open-ended approach to the information helped to identify key ideas that contributed to the development of the analytical categories. As expected, the data revealed strong emotions and attitudes in the opinions expressed. Most of the participants expressed strong negative opinions about the preservation status of Indigenous heritage collections and archaeological sites. These opinions were generally associated with negative

sentiments about the government's job of protecting both collections and sites. Another theme that emerged amid the frequent harsh criticism was the quality of Indigenous history education at school.

Hence, the two main categories of information obtained from the responses relate to the protection of Indigenous heritage objects under public and private care and the need to improve education about the country's Indigenous history. The additional categories that emerged from the data are related to keywords that reflected concerns regarding personnel, heritage values assigned to collections, and political will.

This section presents the main themes reflected in the participant interview responses:

- **Protection.** Protection is the overall theme encompassing concerns related to the security of heritage collections and legislation. Words and phrases related to protection concerns include: poor or lacking inventories, illicit trafficking, care, conservation, prevention, need for up-to-date legislation, distrust of the state toward the private sector, theft, disappearance, helplessness, disorder, lack of control, deterioration, inadequacy, decay, sadness, lack of implementation, lack of follow-up, outdated exhibitions, looting, forgeries, and opacity of legislation.
- **Education.** Education was a broad theme that emerged as participants discussed the major problems of heritage management throughout the different interview questions. Words related to educational concerns are: learning, family experiences, programs, teaching, collaborations, schools, curricular support, learning, heritage education, lesson plans, theater, films, uninspiring and outdated displays, knowledge generation, promotion, research, publications, didactic materials, Ministry of Education, educational programs, research, and teacher training.
- **Personnel.** Personnel concerns were a theme found in most of the responses about implementing laws and regulations and monitoring adherence to them. Words related to this theme include: lack of capacity, lack of personnel, not enough people, null monitoring, no practical training, and lack of management.
- **Value.** The theme of value emerged from interviewees' statements on the emotional, cultural, or economic value of the collections. Words related to value were: importance, inspiration, indifference, economy, identity, knowledge, modernization, bringing to life, lack of interest, other priorities, unknown collections, transparency, fun, distance, and economic development.

- **Political will.** Political will first emerged as a concern under the theme of protection, but it was specifically cited as a primary concern in numerous responses. These were placed into a separate theme. Words found in statements that refer to political will include: lack of action, clientelism, patronizing, apathy, nepotism, lack of political will, lack of determination, inaction, lack of drive, political interest, inaction, centralization, bureaucracy, state disinterest, lack of strength, insufficient efforts, the privilege of the rich and politicians, overlap in the ministries' functions, waste, international collaborations, and lack of legislative application.

These themes reflect the major concerns that the public officials, heritage managers, and private collectors expressed regarding the preservation and protection of Indigenous heritage collections. In order for museums to establish connections with communities to aid in the preservation and protection of collections, these concerns need to be addressed.

6.4 Participant observation

Loma de Guayacanes and El Carril are the two main areas of archaeological excavation in the Nexus 1492 project. To that end, the researcher was able to act as a participant-observer in their respective communities. The observation allowed me to witness how these local communities expressed their connection with the Indigenous heritage objects being excavated in their territory. Through other activities, participant observation also permitted the researcher to see how the local community members connected with Indigenous heritage collections in the area. Observations also allowed for the identification of patterns on how the connections between heritage and the local community have been developed throughout the project. This last section presents the findings from a total of 15 activities observed.

6.4.1 Community interaction with Indigenous heritage objects

Since the late nineteenth century, the landscapes of the northern part of the country have been studied archaeologically by early international researchers (De Booy 1917; Shomburgk 1854; Fewkes 1891; Krieger 1929), and in greater depth by local researchers later on (Boyrie Moya 1960; Veloz Maggiolo 1972; Guerrero and Veloz Maggiolo 1988). The study of the area helped establish the classificatory method since used to describe Indigenous material culture in the Caribbean region based on styles (Rouse 1939; Guerrero and Veloz Maggiolo 1988).

Loma de Guayacanes and El Carril are territorial zones of the Laguna Salada municipality in Valverde Province, in the northwestern Dominican Republic (Figure 22). The zone is near La Isabela, the first European town in the Americas, and the Paso de Los Hidalgos, associated with the Ruta de Colon (see Hofman et al. 2018). This initial conquest trail, linked to the early European invasion, led from Puerto Plata Province to La Vega Valley in the Central or Cibao area (Figure 23).

Figure 22. Google Earth map of the Laguna Salada municipality, Valverde Province, 2021 Google Earth Maps: https://earth.google.com/web/@19.6986551,-71.0544802,305.26970285a,22313.03262771d,35y,4.11742172h,54.91950758t,0r

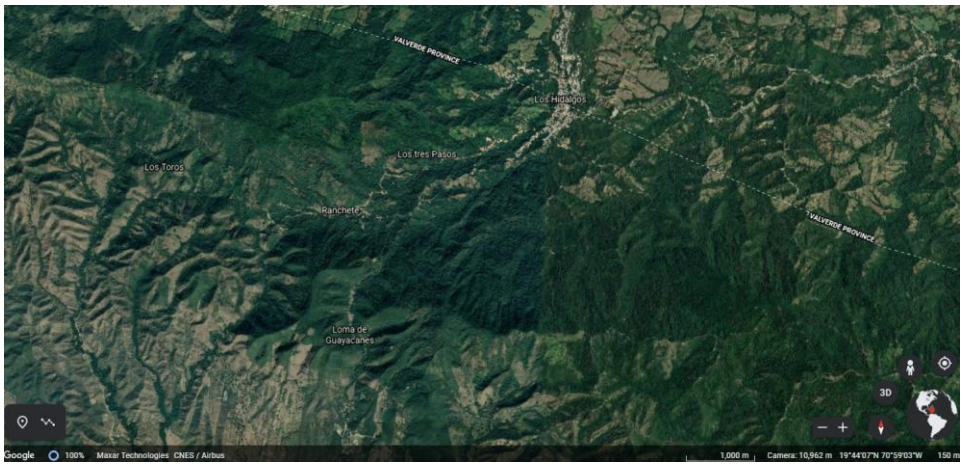


Figure 23. Google Earth map that highlights the Paso de los Hidalgos conquest trail, Laguna Salada municipality, Valverde Province, 2021. Google Earth Maps: https://earth.google.com/web/search/Paso+de+Los+Hidalgos,+Dominican+Republic/@19.72371543,71.04323388,306.5

The inhabitants of the municipality of Laguna Salada are familiar with the modern history of the area as being an active location during the Restoration War (the war fought

against the island's annexation by Spain in 1863), as well as being the site of resistance battles against the United States' 1916 invasion (Ayuntamiento Laguna Salada, n.d., Historia). Nevertheless, people mainly seemed unfamiliar with the history of the Indigenous population who lived in the area before the European conquest (based on informal conversations with local community leaders).

Based on the country's 2010 census data, the municipality of Laguna Salada is about 186,000 square kilometers; there are 23,962 inhabitants in all four municipal districts together, 10,425 in the central municipal district alone (Ayuntamiento Laguna Salada, n.d. Demografía). The economy is based primarily on agriculture, and though internet connectivity is listed only at about 4%, approximately 75% of the population uses mobile telephones (Ayuntamiento Laguna Salada, n.d. Demografía).

The City Council website is the primary source of information on the history and demographic composition of the municipality and also lists cultural and touristic information for its inhabitants and any interested citizens. On this site, information regarding the local community's cultural life focuses on the traditional religious festivities of the areas and their Carnival celebrations (Ayuntamiento Laguna Salada, n.d. Cultura). In terms of education, the municipality had about 7,000 matriculated students at the primary and secondary levels in 30 schools for the 2008/2009 school year (Ayuntamiento Laguna Salada, n.d. Demografía).

Since 2013, Nexus 1492 researchers, local partners, and local community members have worked together to develop exhibition materials on the project's results. Scientific and cultural materials have been adapted to various local community spaces to make information about the archaeological research in these areas openly available in nontraditional formats.

6.4.2 *Local community meetings and local community members*

The collaboration with the local community in the Valverde Province has been an organic development. These collaborations ranged from consultation sessions organized by and with local leaders and government officials, team members participating in the local community's social and cultural life, the coproduction of educational resources with local schoolteachers, and the training and support of young community members (Con Agular et al. 2018; Hofman et al. forthcoming). In the latter context, a local community member who began working as part of the excavation team on the site of El Flaco in 2014 became fully involved in acting as a liaison between project activities and the education sector. He later received support to start his secondary education at a local university with a specialization in

social studies. It was important for the project to have local contacts, active and present year-round, to whom the community could turn for questions or requests. He became an active collaborator in the organization of local community activities.

Meetings at archaeological sites, intended to discuss progress in the work on-site, also took place as components of the interaction between the population living near the archaeological sites and the project's team members. These meetings have generally been accompanied by informal, open displays of objects found on-site to show how the information is initially processed with each find. At the end of summer 2013's fieldwork, the first major local community gathering was organized (Figure 24) in collaboration with leaders from Cruce de Guayacanes and Loma de Guayacanes, the municipality, and the administrative unit section surrounding the archaeological site in Loma de Guyacanes, El Flaco. For this meeting, the project's principal investigator, local researchers, and cultural representatives, community leaders, neighborhood associations, and politicians gathered to discuss the main objectives of the project, ask questions, make recommendations for more local involvement, and view the first video documentation, produced by project researchers using drone cameras. The presentations were particularly attractive to the local community members. Some expressed that it was not their first time seeing this type of technology, but their first time seeing an aerial view, from a drone, of the place where many of them were born.

Figure 24. First meeting with local community members from El Molino, Cruce de Guayacanes, Valverde Province. 2013 Photo courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2013.

After the presentation, the participants informally expressed that they understood what an excavation is and how the results are used in archaeological research, thanks to the audiovisual presentations and summary descriptions using everyday language about the scientific techniques being used to study the site. Afterward, yearly meetings were organized to provide annual updates on the fieldwork and lab advancements. As the archaeological work ended at the site of Loma de El Flaco and excavation work began in the nearby community of El Carril, community meetings were also organized on the new site, and open community days were well attended, sometimes even by entire families. At these events, people had the opportunity to examine some of the objects that were excavated, handle some of the tools used in the excavation work, ask questions, and share stories they had heard from elder family members about what was regularly found at the site.

During these field days, the local members who visited also had the opportunity to talk to local workers hired as part of the excavation teams. As the work progressed, these local workers built their capacity to explain to their fellow community members how excavations took place and even discuss the similarities and differences between the recorded El Flaco and El Carril sites. In informal conversations, the local team members expressed pride in doing archaeological excavation work and having learned the processes well enough to explain them to other community members who were curious. They also expressed that the work and knowledge gained from it contributed to earning them more respect among their social peers.

Both visits from different cultural and academic institutions around the country and visits from national researchers were organized to share the progress of the project on-site. The first institutional visit was organized in 2013 by Centro León, the region's largest cultural exhibition center. The site visit was part of the first traveling exhibition organized to publicize the aims of Nexus 1492 and the previous work done in the eastern region of the country. Throughout the project, additional institutional visits were paid to representatives from the Ministry of Culture, universities, and organized local community groups in different parts of the country.

Neighborhood visits were part of the regular activities organized to maintain consistent communication with the smaller communities in the project's geographic area. Research team members took turns making weekly visits during the resting day for the excavation. The frequency of regular gatherings held at the homes of community members

who opened their doors to the project researchers increased each year as the researchers became a familiar presence in the community on their semiannual visits. The gatherings came with mini reports to the hosts on the progress of the excavation, while food and anecdotes about their ancestors became a new means for sharing local histories with the researchers.

Casa Cultural - Cultural House

At the time the project ended in 2019, the local community of el Cruce de Guayacanes was interested in having a permanent cultural space to use as an information center on the deep history of the area as well as to allow local artisans to show and sell their products. There have been numerous conversations about where this can be done and what kind of structure would be a most suitable area to build a traditional *bohío* (an Indigenous round housing structure that is still found mostly in rural areas of the Dominican Republic) as a community center where the local inhabitants and visitors could stop by to learn about the region's history. They have also conceived the space as an opportunity to sell local crafts and locally grown vegetables and herbs.

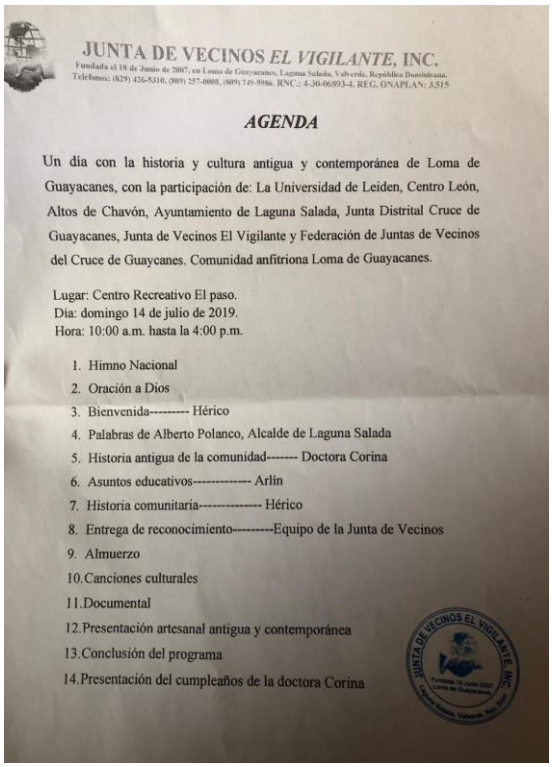
The local community sees the center (which will likely be called the Casa Cultural de Loma de Guyancanes) as a benefit not only for those who stop in to learn about the local history of their community but also for the many Dominicans passing daily from Cibao Valley to the coast. The *Casa Cultural* will be located on what is today known as the Ruta de Colón, the supposed route that Columbus took to traverse the northwest mountain range on his way to the valley of gold in 1494. Recently, a plot of land apparently owned by the municipality has been identified, and the center's design is currently underway. Community leaders have consulted with their local authorities about permits, finances, and conditions for building, and discussions among residents have gone so far as exploring what kind of management and maintenance strategies could be implemented at the institution.

Día de la Comunidad - Annual Community Day

The center's plans were discussed with the larger public during the last summer fieldwork of the project, in July of 2019, as part of the annual activities held in coordination with local community members and Nexus 1492 project team members.

During this final edition of the annual event, which came to be known as the *Día de la comunidad* (Community Day), members of the Junta de Vecinos El Vigilante, the community's largest neighborhood association, took charge of the coordination for the entire

local community. Community representatives organized a formal event with speakers and cultural presentations that reflected the fusion of the area's cultural and historical expressions (Figure 25).



JUNTA DE VECINOS *EL VIGILANTE*, INC.
Fundada el 18 de Junio de 2007, en Loma de Guayacanes, Laguna Salada, Valverde, República Dominicana.
Telefonos: (829) 426-5310, (809) 257-0003, (809) 749-9986. RNC.: 4-30-06893-4. REG. ONAPLAN: 3,515

AGENDA

Un dia con la historia y cultura antigua y contemporánea de Loma de Guayacanes, con la participación de: La Universidad de Leiden, Centro León, Altos de Chavón, Ayuntamiento de Laguna Salada, Junta Distrital Cruce de Guayacanes, Junta de Vecinos El Vigilante y Federación de Juntas de Vecinos del Cruce de Guaycanes. Comunidad anfitriona Loma de Guayacanes.

Lugar: Centro Recreativo El paso.
Dia: domingo 14 de julio de 2019.
Hora: 10:00 a.m. hasta la 4:00 p.m.

1. Himno Nacional
2. Oración a Dios
3. Bienvenida--------- Hérico
4. Palabras de Alberto Polanco, Alcalde de Laguna Salada
5. Historia antigua de la comunidad------- Doctora Corina
6. Asuntos educativos---------- Arlin
7. Historia comunitaria---------- Hérico
8. Entrega de reconocimiento---------Equipo de la Junta de Vecinos
9. Almuerzo
10. Canciones culturales
11. Documental
12. Presentación artesanal antigua y contemporánea
13. Conclusión del programa
14. Presentación del cumpleaños de la doctora Corina

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Figure 25 Official agenda of the event prepared by members of the local neighborhood association Junta de Vecinos El Vigilante. Photo by author, 2019. (Personal translation of the content of community agenda for the Community Day written by the board members of the Neighborhood Association El Vigilante).

AGENDA
A day with the history and the ancient and contemporary culture of Loma de Guayacanes, with the participation of: Leiden University, Centro Leon, Altos de Chavon, Laguna Salada City Hall, Cruce de Guayacanes District Board, Neighborhood Association El Vigilante, and the Cruce de Guayacanes Federation of Neighborhood Associations. Loma de Guayacanes as community host.

Place: Recreational Center El Paso.
Date: Sunday 14th of July of 2019
Time: 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

1. National Anthem
2. Prayer to God
3. Welcome by Hérico
4. Words by Alberto Polanco, Mayor of Laguna Salada
5. Ancient history of the community by Dr. Corinne
6. Educational issues by Arlene
7. Community history by Hérico
8. Recognition diplomas by Neighborhood Association members

9. Lunch
10. Cultural songs
11. Documentary
12. Presentation of ancient and contemporary crafts
13. Program conclusion
14. Presentation of birthday celebration for Dr. Corinne

In an all-day event, local historians and political figures related local stories connecting Indigenous heritage with narratives of courage, defense of the land, and hopes for progress.

Participant observation allowed for the appreciation of the contextually rich settings in which the researcher could see residents incorporating their knowledge of Indigenous heritage objects from local excavation sites into their community life (Figure 26).

Figure 26. Mayor of the Laguna Salada municipality narrating the local history of the area. Photo by author, 2019.

Throughout the five years of research, it was observed how different local community members incorporated information about the Indigenous past into their modern and religious traditions. The researcher was also able to observe how the co-production of educational initiatives took shape. For example, the annual Community Day presentations included a mix of blessings of the event; poetry highlighting a local Indigenous female chief, Anacaona (Figure 27); the singing of *salves*, Dominican Christian chants (which are also used to summon rain during the dry season); and mini lectures on contemporary history (Figure 28).

Figure 27. Local poet reciting a famous Dominican poem about Indigenous chief Anacaona as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. Photo by author, 2019.

Figure 28. Singers of the traditional chants Salves as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. (Photo by author, 2019).

The day closed with the presentation of the Nexus 1492 documentary *El returmbar del Caribe Indígena* produced by Pablo Lozano from the Instituto Tecnológico-INTEC (Figure 29). The researcher observed how the presentation of the documentary was a special moment for many of the attendees, as they had an opportunity to see themselves on a big screen. Community members who recognized themselves spoke amongst themselves and the

family members and friends who also attended the day-long celebration about how good it felt to be featured in the film and felt valued because their opinion and stories were featured for many to see. The local people that were interviewed were eager to hear how different audiences reacted when team members shared their details of other presentations of the documentary in different provinces and in Santo Domingo where it was presented at one of the locations of the largest movie theater company in the country.

Figure 29. Community members enjoying the official presentation in El Cruce de Guayacanes of the El retumbar del Caribe Indígena documentary. Photo by author, 2019.

Finally, an exhibition of a selection of objects excavated at the El Flaco and El Carril sites, alongside the display of crafts made by local community members, traditional medicinal drinks, and locally grown vegetables, concluded this rich opportunity for communities to connect with Indigenous heritage on their own terms (Figure 30). Although the Nexus 1492 project's team members were available to answer questions about the objects in the exhibition tables and vitrines, conversations around the tables encompassed community members telling stories of when they were children and used to find objects similar to the ones excavated. For some, touching the objects triggered memories of specific finds and how the elders in their families used to tell them tales of spiritual connections to the land that were sometimes associated with the objects they had found.

Figure 30. Community members sharing childhood memories related to the types of objects found in the El Flaco and El Carril excavation sites that were exhibited as part of the cultural presentations for the Community Day. Photo by author, 2019.

Local community members worked with local and international researchers to learn about the past through the land and the objects excavated from it in both formal and informal settings. Community meetings, which have been the main platforms for residents to discuss local issues or make decisions, became the most effective means to coordinate activities that the community expressed wanting to have. The observations became a means of gathering practical information on how the community had inclusive discussions and reached a consensus on how to integrate the knowledge acquired from their interaction with the cultural material found at the research sites. The community meetings proved to be the best scenario for local members to decide what they wanted to do with the knowledge gained from their participation in the project and how they wanted to display it. The communities at El Cruce de Guayacanes and Laguna Salada designed their own connections with their local Indigenous heritage. They connected to the collection of Indigenous heritage objects obtained as a result of rigorous scientific research and chose to access them through songs, dances, prayers, oral narratives, and locally based architecture.

Summary

Chapter 6 contained the results of the analysis of documents and participant observation, as well as the results of interviews and surveys administered in different provinces in the Dominican Republic. The results correspond to the research questions and demonstrate consistency with the methodology proposed. A total of 515 surveys were administered through a purposively selected group of participants from the education, museum, tourism, and arts communities. The survey respondents also included local community members encountered near museums and archaeological sites to identify their attitudes toward access to Indigenous heritage collections and what they think could improve this access. Further, 22 individuals were interviewed to understand their opinions on how Indigenous heritage collections are managed to ascertain how to protect them better and how to improve access to the collections. There were 15 activities within the geographic scope of Nexus 1492's northwest excavation areas observed to determine how community members were creating connections with the Indigenous heritage objects found at the sites. The activities in which the most interaction between community members and the excavated materials were observed were pinpointed as examples of how communities can connect with their locality's Indigenous heritage. The next chapters discuss the main findings of the study.

The discussion of these findings is presented in the next chapter, followed by the chapter with the conclusion of the study and recommendations.