

The Kalinago Language Words and Expression

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Language is the primary means of perpetuating culture.

Its presence is a living representation of a people's way of life. The disappearance or destruction of a language usually signals the replacement of one cultural system by another.

The most devastating impact on the Kalinago culture by the invasion of the European was on the Kalinago language. Within four decades of Columbus' landing, the entire Caribbean had been renamed. The flow of European immigrants, along with forced labour imposed on the indigenous people, helped diffuse the language and culture.

Until the 1920s, few Kalinago could speak or remember the language, while much emphasis was placed on learning the white man's strange behaviour. The Kalinago language was rapidly replaced by a French Kwéyol and, to a lesser extent, English.

Today, most Kalinago say they can't speak a word in their native language. But many Kalinago names and words are in common use today.

Many villages in Waitukubuli have retained their Kalinago names:

- Barakua
- Bataca
- Calibishie
- Layou
- Coulibistrie
- Toucarie etc.

Additionally, Kalinago words are used for plants, fruit, animals, and everyday objects.

Traditional kitchen utensils

- Couis – Calabash
- Cou-Cou – Type of calabash
- Kaim Bouk
- Pikan – Small stick used to take out from the Canari.

Fresh water and salt water fish

- Coulirou
- Cacador
- Humma
- Book
- Lipi
- Chato
- Laursh
- Té Ta

Trees and Plants

Acajou
Balata
Cachibou
Manioc
Simarouba
Mapou
Cacao
Karata

Buildings

Ajoupa
Mwena
Karbet

Fruits

Cachiman
Papaya

Animal

Agouti
Manicou
Anoli
Mabouya



Birds

Fou-Fou
Gli-gli
Si Si Zeb
Si Si Rou

Kalinago Word List

My Body - Na Nocobou
Head - Ichie
Nose - Icherie
Ear - Aricae
Hair - Itibouri
Face - Isubu/Icibou
Teeth - Ari
Breast - Touri
Penis - Huera
Eye - Acou



Expression

Mabpwika - Greeting
Ni Lamaha Tina - I am hungry
Ita Bia - How are you
Aitina Kalinago - I am Kalinago
Irufu Tina - I am Good
Ka Yamatetina - I have a basket
Itali? - What is the matter
Tiamatu Teiha - She is pretty