CREOLE VALUES WORKSHOP

**Workshop proposed by the Creole Language and Culture Research Institute**

**28th February 2020, University of Seychelles**

**1.0 Concept**

1.1 The Creole Language and Culture Research Institute proposed a workshop under the theme, ‘Creole Values – Living Together’, with the aim of bringing together people from different age groups and professions, from different segments of our population, to discuss this theme.

The reason behind the organization of this workshop is the fact that many Seychellois today, are no longer quite sure of what constitutes our creole values. Most young people are not being taught our creole values, in spite of the fact that we are a nation of mixed races with a history of slavery, difference and the domination of one group by another, which has managed to become one nation, irrespective of race and religion. We believe in the equality of all individuals, in the equality of the sexes, and in the equality of all professions. However, we often live these qualities, without thinking about them. The danger is that, if we keep on not being aware of our values, aren’t we at risk of losing them?

**1.2 What are the creole values that we are at risk of losing?**

1. The value of living together in peace and harmony, through dialogue and compromise.
2. Solidarity
3. *Lanmourprop* (self-respect)
4. *Savwarviv* (social etiquette)
5. Respect for the elders and for each other / politeness
6. Creole hospitality
7. Tolerance towards different religious practices and beliefs
8. Working together and helping each other out through the practice of ‘*festen*’ (social gatherings)
9. Appreciation of our folklore and culture
10. Spirituality
11. Living in nature / respect for the earth
12. Valorization of our ancestors

**1.3 On the other hand, what values, which are inculcated within our culture, that we should endeavor to lose?**

1. Individualism
2. Complexes of inferiority / superiority / (racial and social)

**2.0 Methodology: Focus group**

2.1 In accordance with the concept of the workshop, the organizers decided that in order to have relevant and balanced viewpoints on the subject, it was necessary to solicit the opinions of different groups of people:

2.1.1 Elderly people, in the first place, since they traditionally take ownership of the question of values

2.1.2 It was important to consider what this group’s notion of traditional creole values are.

2.1.3 Thirdly, it was important that they should share these values with the younger generation.

2.1.4 It was also considered important for the younger generation to put forward their own notions of creole values and interact with the older generation on this subject.

2.1.5 It was important that the notion of ‘creole values’ be considered globally and hollistically.

2.1.6 It was also important that educators and academics should bring in their scientific contributions to this discussions, and consider how to expand on this research/notion.

**2.2** The first step was to develop the concept paper and send it to potential participants, who were asked to start thinking about the notion of creole values as set out in the paper.

2.3 The organization of the workshop: Participants comprised of the following:

* Post-secondar students
* Educators
* Elderlies
* Professionals

2.4 Group composition: Each group was comprised of representatives of (i) elderlies, (ii) students, (iii) professionals, (iv) educators.

2.4.1 Before the grouping took place, there was a plenary session to discuss the definition of values, and the Seychellois’ notion of creole values.

2.4.2 Next, each group were given two values that were discussed in the plenary session, for analysis in the group, as per the following questions: (i) *What does this value mean (e.g. lanmourprop)?* (ii) *Make a list of all the elements included in this value*.

2.4.3 In the second plenary session, the groups reported on the results of their discussions and their findings, followed by a general discussion of these.

2.4.4 The third plenary session revolved around the question of how to diffuse these values.

2.4.5 Finally, a number of recommendations were proposed, the main one being to form a group of volunteers for the diffusion of Seychellois creole values (activities such as this workshop, debates, etc… are possible means of diffusion).

2.4.6 In the write up of the report, especially with regards to the findings and discussion of the issues at hand, we decided to keep the original wordings of the participants so as to be faithful to what they understood and expressed.

1. **The workshop program**
2. Presentation by P. Choppy: *Individualism as an impact of slavery* (Annex 1).
3. Presentation by B. Shamlaye: *What are considered ‘good’ creole values?* (Annex 2)
4. Pleanary session: *What are our values and how can we diffuse them?*

**4.0 Research findings (as per value analyzed)**

4.1 RESPECT FOR ELDERS AND THOSE AROUND US / POLITENESS

* Elderlies have an elevated status in the creole family, and demand a lot of respect. However, they also have to respect others. Some elderlies believe that because of their age, they are not obliged to respect others: “Don’t mind me, I’m dying, I’m getting old. Mind your own business!”
* Elderlies tend to read advice as accusations.
* Youths also tend to want to test how far they can go, even if they know they are doing something wrong. They have lost the practice of politeness and they have no inhibitions about swearing in public and in the presence of older people.
* Respect should work in conjunction with the ability to apologise when one is in the wrong.
* Pride and disdain should be discarded as it will work against you.
* Respect and politeness should start in the home.

4.2 LANMOURPROP (Self Respect)

* When you have esteem for your own self.
* You are esteemed by other people.
* When you show respect for yourself and are respected by others.
* When you do not denigrate yourself through undesirable behavior.
* When someone does not have *lanmourprop* we say that a pig has eaten his/her self-respect.

4.3 VALORIZATION OF OUR ANCESTORS

* Respect for our origins
* Honouring our traditions
* Practise good social etiquette and ethics

Elements of these values:

* Knowledge of our ancestors (their way of life and values – in theory and practice)

4.4 CREOLE HOSPITALITY

* To be always prepared to receive and help others (neighbours/relatives…)
* To come together in times of trouble and hardship

Elements:

* To be polite and accommodating
* To have a heart for helping others
* To have the spirit of sharing
* To show good character
* To have or to inspire confidence
* To accept strangers/foreigners
* To have human warmth

4.5 LIVING IN NATURE / RESPECT FOR THE EARTH

* To be conscious that one is sharing an environment with other human beings and animals.
* To rebuild, replant, give back…
* To adapt to the environment
* Respect traditional medicine, food, herbal concoctions… for the benefits that they have
* To respect restrictions (e.g. birds’ eggs and lobster seasons, the consumption of turtle meat…)
* Education
* To re-establish the equilibrium

4.6 TOLERANCE TOWARDS DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

* The Seychellois already has a mixed culture / culture of mixing.
* It is important to recognize the choices, rights and freedoms of each person
* It is important not to humiliate others / to restrict what is not legal
* The observation of religious holidays / traditions: e.g. public holidays on Sundays
* To make concessions / accommodate (different practices)
* To be in line with existing laws
  1. SAVWARVIV (Social Etiquette and Ethics)
* The existence of good and bad values
* To instill social etiquette and ethics in the youths ( e.g. are adults not transmitting these values?
* Are politics and religion affecting social etiquette and ethics?
* To know the difference between right and wrong
* Is remonstrance a good element of social etiquette and ethics? What are its benefits?
* When can we consider that we have passed through this transition? If not, what will happen to the youth in future?
  1. APPRECIATION OF OUR FOLKLORE AND CULTURE
* Traditional Sunday meals
* Traditional games
* Folklore currently in practice
* Strong presences that are still in existence
* Manner of dress
* What have traditional recreations been replaced with?
* Communication
* The values inherent in our folklore which are not being taught
* Music
* Do traditional folklore still exist?

4.9 SPIRITUALITY

* What does it mean? Equivalent to religion.
* Some people do not belief in a religion, but rather just in God.
* In this day and age, there are too many enjoyments and young people do not prioritize religion / spirituaity.

The elements:

Faith in God / his power

Going to church

Reilgion in the school curriculum

Knowing prayers and how to pray

Praying

Respect for and observation of the 10 Commandments

To have a fear of God / Knowing right and wrong

4.10 WORKING TOGETHER AND HELPING EACH OTHER OUT THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF ‘*FESTEN*’ (social gatherings)

* Doing voluntary work when there is an occasion in the community / neighborhood (e.g. helping out for a wedding by helping to build the wedding tent and decorating, making the cake…)
* Funerals (traditional) – gifting coffee, tea, milk, candles etc… to the deceased’s family. Playing cards or telling stories at the wake.
* House-building: helping to weave the house sections / helping to make or mend traditional mattresses (coir or kapok) and making provision of food and beverage for the helpers, in return for their help.

The elements:

Making your presence count

Helping one another

Putting reinforcements (from physical reinforcements such as supporting pillars beneath a house) to make something stronger. Can apply to community or institutional work.

Intimacy amongst neighbours (being familiar with one another and at ease)

(Modernity has greatly affected this trait).

4.11 SOLIDARITY

* Helping each other in the community
* Showing solidarity in all situations / misfortunes; e.g. Making a special effort to be there for people when there is a death in the family / community
* Sharing
* Patriotism (when you are all for your country)
* Working together towards the same ojbectives: e.g. for women’s rights, the right to vote, workers’ rights…
* Believing in the same things

4.12 THE VALUE OF LIVING TOGETHER IN PEACE AND HARMONY, THROUGH DIALOGUE AND COMPROMISE

* Living together; in a single home / as couples or a family; as a community; in the workplace; as a nation

**elements**

* In order to have peace and respect, it is important to have compromise because people are different individually (different ideas, religions, social milieu...
* Thus, there must be good communication, consensus and understanding.
* This value is linked to solidarity.
* Another value that is linked to this one is tolerance or acceptance (the difference between what you accept and what you tolerate – to accept is to reach out to another)

**5.0 Plenary Session**

**5.1 How do we diffuse these values?**

* We must live/practice them
* Transmission: not only through our actions at home but also through other means, e.g. social media.
* Inclusive transmission
* Research, documentation, accessibility
* Cultural education
* Put in place the necessary structures to facilitate the practice of these values – e.g. cultural education
* Inculcating an appreciation of our culture and values in our people
* Most important, we must live it!

5.2 **Who will diffuse these values? Who are ‘we’?**

* What do the policies say? (The Constitution, The Education Policy, The Cultural Policy…)

5.3 **What is the role of our mother tongue?**

* We should attach a primordial value to our mother tongue because it is the vehicle of our culture.
* An inventory of our values and the means of transmitting them must be made.

5.4 **What can we do?**

* Individually – living these values every day and inculcating them in our children and our connections/entourage.
* As groups – organizing sharing and training sessions, depending on the contacts and expertise of the group members. This can be done at district, school or workplace level.

**6.0 Conclusion**

6.1 Presentation by Mr. Marc Lints – Universal Creole Values (Annex 3)

**7.0 Recommendations**

* Mobilization of artists, cultural activists, youths, etc… to help one another;
* To go into the communities / districts, to sensitize people;
* More research in the domain of creole culture (UniSey, Culture Department, The Creole Institute…);
* Better access to research documents and information on creole culture;
* The inclusion of the creole language and culture in tertiary education curriculums.