

Calypso Project – Phase 1 Summary of Meetings

Monday, 5th of November

Ruth, Eloise, Ramon (ASL/BSL interpreter), and Tracey (BSL/English interpreter) attended a meeting at the Barbados Council for the Disabled (BCD) offices with Maria Holder-Small (President), Roseanna Tudor, Peter and Jan Boos, Bonnie Leonce, Leroy Smith and Emily (notetaker for the BCD). There, the short and long-term impacts of the Calypso project were discussed with the BCD. Peter believes that Calypso is an exciting prospect for Barbados for several reasons – not least because it is a doorway to focus on the abilities of the deaf and disabled communities in Barbados, leading to more opportunities for these communities, and an improved quality of life.

This week's itinerary was also discussed, and Roseanna is attempting to secure last-minute meetings with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Culture this Friday, 9th of November (tbc).

The Audiovisability team and Bonnie were invited for lunch at the Yacht Club with Peter and Jan and their daughter, Lara, where the conversation about the impact of the project continued. Later in the day, Ruth, Eloise, Ramon and Tracey went to Peter and Jan's home in Cattlewash where they met Lara's son, Matthew, enjoyed rum punch in the swimming pool, shared stories and experiences of what it means to be deaf, and even gave an impromptu performance on the flute and violin.



Meeting at the Barbados Council for the Disabled

Tuesday, 6th of November

The Audiovisability team visited the Schoolhouse for Special Needs with Yasmin and the children and staff, followed by a productive business meeting with Chris Harper. Chris has agreed to be part of the Calypso Team and will be a great local resource with many connections in the culture sector. He is an accomplished saxophonist himself. Bonnie and Ruth did a short interview with Ramon for the Calypso Crowdfunding effort which should really help raise funds when it is relaunched.

In the afternoon, the team went to the Barbados Council for the Disabled office to meet with the president of the Barbados Deaf Association and three other members of the deaf community. Here, Ruth explained the aim of the Calypso project and the involvement of local musicians and American deaf singer/songwriter Sean Forbes, who was well-known to the Deaf Bajans at the meeting. We were also able to form more of an idea of the challenges that deaf people in Barbados face on a daily basis.

I have provided a link for a short video from the meeting for you to watch. You will see Ramon, a deaf BSL/ASL interpreter, also facilitating communication in this video. Ruth asked “what do you wish for the future?” Maude (a Deaf Bajan) replied with “Equality – for deaf people to be equal. I know we have a long way to go, but equality *can* happen and we want to be valued equally to everyone else. But we need to work together. The problem is there’s too many divisions and we won’t improve things unless we work together.”

This meeting was extremely valuable to our research here in Barbados as it has pinpointed some of the major issues that the deaf community experience first-hand. The group was extremely interested and enthusiastic to be involved in ‘Calypso’, and despite having very vague knowledge of music in Barbados, would like to join in activities and dance along to it to embrace their culture. We have established ways of keeping in touch via emails and social media.

At the end of the meeting, Dario, another Deaf Bajan, gave us some beautiful gifts, as seen in the attached photos.



Ruth and Bonnie's Crowdfunding Video



Meeting the Deaf Community in Barbados

Wednesday, 7th of November

On Wednesday morning, Ruth, Eloise and Tracey met with Teddy Calderon, a Barbadian music producer, at the Barbados Community College to discuss the logistics of studio recording and sourcing of local musicians for this project. We then met Roger Gittens, head of the music department, who was kind enough to organise a steel pan band performance for us. The three pieces that the band played were in different styles – Calypso, pop, and soca – and were fantastic to listen to and watch. The students showed us the difference between the steel pans and guitar pans and let us have a try ourselves.

In the afternoon the team attended a meeting with Mr John King (Minister of Culture), Peter Boos, Chris Harper, Bonnie Leonce, and Leroy Smith. Mr King was very supportive of the project's aims and has recommended that we find and book a venue as soon as possible in preparation for next September. He believes Petrea Gardens would be an ideal location for an event, and although we do not have time on this trip to visit the location, Chris Harper has kindly offered to go and assess its suitability (e.g. wheelchair access) and to take photos for us. Mr King has given the team his email address and telephone number to keep in contact.

Ruth and Eloise will now begin to firm up the practicalities of the whole project, its budget and timeline plans on Thursday 8th with the help of Chris Harper.



Steel pan students at Barbados Community College



Meeting with Mr John King, Minister of Culture

Thursday, 8th of November

Ruth, Eloise, Ramon and Tracey went to visit the Irving Wilson School – a school with specialist provision for deaf, blind, and autistic children. There are two classes for deaf children (split by ability and age), with the youngest being just 3 and the oldest 21. Ruth and Eloise explained to the students that they are also deaf, and introduced the idea of music and emotion. The students were very excited to see the the flute and violin up-close, and enjoyed feeling the vibrations from the violin by touching it as it was being played.

We also had the opportunity to speak to the principal, Ms Armed Alleyne, about the curriculum that the students follow, and were told that the students follow a standard curriculum until around age 13 ability, before enrolling in a 'life skills' programme of leather-making, information technology, and nail painting. We also discussed the possibility of involving the students in the Calypso project next year, and Ms Alleyne said this is something to discuss with the Minister of Education who we will be meeting today (Friday 9th). Ms Alleyne has also given Ruth her contact details to keep in touch. Pictures are to follow.

In the afternoon, the Audiovisability team headed to Chris Harper's home in Speightstown in the north of the island. There, we discussed the budget and the general logistics of the project. Chris called several of his contacts to source quotes for music production, filming, and venue hire, which has given us a much clearer view of some of the costs involved. We are also now more aware of who to source permissions from regarding the use of drones (for filming) and the creation of public artworks (such as graffiti art or murals).

Ruth and I want to say many thanks to Chris for dedicating his time this week to the Calypso project and for reaching out to his contacts in Barbados to help with this.



Deaf Students at the Irving Wilson School

Friday, 9th of November

The Calypso team, including Peter and Jan Boos and Roseanna Tudor, met with Ms. Kaye Sargeant, Senior Education Officer, and Ms. Janice Gibbs, Special Educational Officer, from the Ministry of Education. At the meeting we explained the aim of the project and the impact that it will have on the deaf and disabled communities on the island of Barbados. Both Ms. Sargeant and Ms. Gibbs are experienced in supporting students with special educational needs and are aware of many of the problems faced by these students every day. They were highly supportive of the project's aims.

The meeting also led on to discussion about access to hearing technology such as hearing aids in Barbados. We were told that there are several problems regarding access to hearing technology: there are very few people who are trained audiologists on the island; technology is expensive and must be privately funded, and continued maintenance of hearing aids (earmoulds, battery supply, replacement parts and repairs) is difficult and expensive.

The meeting was productive and provided an opportunity for the team to learn more about current access problems for the deaf community in Barbados – a useful insight into some of the barriers faced and the steps that must be taken to overcome them.

A last-minute request from Ruth to visit the Frank Collymore Hall in Bridgetown was granted by Roseanna who managed to arrange an appointment to tour the premises just hours before the team were due to leave the country. The venue was suggested by Chris Harper during Thursday's meeting because it can accommodate just under 500 audience members, has a bar, and is fully equipped with the necessary technology for a performance, making it ideal for the proposed Calypso concert. There is also good disability access at the hall – it is in a central location with parking facilities and wheelchair access, there are speakers around the hall for good sound quality access, and a hanging projector screen for visual captions.

Ruth, Eloise, and Roseanna met Ms. Fran Wickham from the Frank Collymore Hall who was kind enough to take them on a brief tour of the venue and discuss potential performance dates. Ms. Wickham informed us that the hall is unavailable during the month of September, but that early October may be possible. She gave us her contact details to continue corresponding about performance dates via email.



Panoramic view of the Frank Collymore Hall in Bridgetown