

## **Recognising human history, helping ourselves**

On May 5, 1494, Christopher Columbus first landed on our shores and claimed the Island for the Kingdom of Spain. It had been the homeland of the Tainos for as much as 700 years. Rather than celebrating that event as ‘Columbus Day’ or ‘Discovery Day’, on May 5 every year, Jamaica chooses to remember and commemorate the hundreds of thousands of people who were here before. In fact, they had been here for two centuries longer than we have.

### **TAINO HERITAGE**

Many Jamaicans assume that we have a 500 year history which *began* with Columbus. This is not so. Through Preservation and Revelation of its remnants, The Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) wishes to recognize a human history that began in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century has passed through 1,300 years and continues forward into the Future.

So, each time that you pick a guava, eat a bammy or relax in a hammock, you may consider your Taino Heritage. You may also wish to muse on the probability that even though Legend suggests that the Taino people were exterminated, a part of their “demise” would have been through assimilation into our rich genetic background. In other words, they not only left us elements of Culture, but also are a part of our Jamaican Ancestry.

Therefore, Taino Day is an opportunity for us to understand ourselves better and hopefully, strengthen ourselves as one people adding to the chain of our long History.

**Patrick Stanigar**

**Chairman, Jamaica National Heritage Trust**