

# UNESCO Youth Visioning funded Project: Interpretation on the Kids Discover Zone Holywell, Jamaica

Final Report



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## **BACKGROUND**

Holywell is one of the several visitor attractions in the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park. It is however, the most comprehensive in visitor facilities. Among these is the newly built ***Kids' Discovery Zone (KDZ)*** sponsored by the Jamaica International Insurance Company (JIIC). The need for a special facility for children had been brought to the fore on several proposals. It was also the focus of *Youth Visioning for Island Living* (a UNESCO project) at the SIDS conference in Mauritius. Our representative from Holywell Youth PATH saw this as a priority focus for the park's development. As an NGO, limited cash and resources had made this concept a difficult one to develop. JIIC was approached and without any hesitation an offer was made to help us build a play centre. The play centre was conceptualized for outdoor learning by the new Environmental Education Officer. All the ideas previous ideas were collaborated and the Kids Discovery Zone became the first children's environmental interpretive play ground in Jamaica.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT**

The KDZ is an interactive play centre designed to facilitate play among children ages 3 to 11 years while educating them about the environment of the Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park. The themes of the National Park are all interpreted in sketches and murals, games and story telling, sights and sounds and in the general architecture of the structure. It is the first environmental interpretation play centre of its kind in Jamaica.

The Play Centre will function as a special interpretive centre for children of all backgrounds including visitors to the island. The centre reflects the modern concept of out-of-classroom interactive learning. All aspects of the Park's Management Plan – Conservation and Enforcement, Education and Eco-tourism have been infused in the concept and development of the KDZ.

The project was sponsored by: Jamaica International Insurance Company (JIIC) – primary donors, UNESCO Youth Visioning and Environmental Foundation of Jamaica.

- Architect: Sharni Bullock
  - Contractor/Builder: Colville Bowman
  - Artists: Michael Elliot (Professional fine artist), Danielle DaCosta (Student: Edna Manley – School of the Visual Arts), Peter-John Gentles (Student – Ardenne High School), Nicholas Shelton (Graphic Artiste Student: Edna Manley – School of the Visual Arts)
  - Members of the community, Youth PATH and the staff of Jamaica International Insurance Company
- (JIIC) and JCDDT worked in partnership in completing the project.

## **Rationale**

- There are limited wholesome public recreational activities available for children especially for those between the ages 2-12.

- Awareness about our environment is important for the next generation especially in keeping with the theme of the Decade of Environmental Education
- Learning through play develops the cognitive and motor skills

### **Physical Structure**

- Main Club House (Tody House): 12'X12' upper and lower deck
- Bridge: 20' from club house to fireman escape
- Obstacle swing bars: runs under bridge and fireman escape
- Tower (Lizard Land): 6'X6' upper level
- Main club house and fireman escape carry bars for climbing
- Lily pads and froggy farm: circular tree stumps

### **Capacity**

- Age range: Children ages 3-11
- Weight: children under 100lbs
- Numbers at any given time:
  - Upper deck of Tody House: Max 15 – ages 4 upwards
  - Lower deck: twenty (20) – ages 3 upwards
  - Bridge: five (5) – age 6 upwards
  - Tower: five (5) – age 6 upwards
  - Swing bars: (5) – age 6 upwards

**(All children MUST be supervised by an adult)**

### **Educational Objectives:**

1. Children will learn through play by:
  - Using the senses – sight, sounds and touch
  - Dramatizing
2. The centre will focus on Jamaican biodiversity – specifically those in the BJMNP eg:
  - Birds
  - Mammals
  - Flora
3. Exploration activities are those built into the structure (and activities will be prepared and arranged for specially booked groups). Those in the structure include:
  - Climbing
  - Digging
  - Jumping
  - Burrowing
4. Interpretation of Structures
  - Tody Club House – Large Tower Structure (cabin-like structure, and steps)
  - Upper Deck – Look out point
  - Obstacle run
  - Lizard Peak and Lizard Land
  - Pole Drop

- Bridge/Board walk
- Frog leap
- Interpretive signs

Areas on plan show zoning according to age categories and interpretive play:

### **Zone 1: Tody Club House**

Main activities such as obstacle run, climbing, pole drop. Features include:

- Playground Plan
- Educational Objectives
- Lookout Point (Upper Level)
- Upper level: Water shed map, biodiversity
- Seating Area (can hold up to 20 children seated on floor)
- Mural of Forest Ecosystems: Climb and slide (game)

### **Zone 2: Coney Mound**

Main activity is digging. Features a sand mound and splash zone

### **Zone 3: Froggy Farm**

Main activity is jumping. Features balance beams, lily pad run and tire swing

### **Zone 4: Millipede Crawl**

Main activities are burrowing and trench dive. Features a tunnel

### **Zone 5: Lizard Climb**

Main activity involves climbing. Features tower and pole

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation is presented in art, music, games and story telling all infused in a mountain setting over looking the city of Kingston.

### **Tody House**

The main feature of this section will be the mural game, *Climb and Slide* on the lower deck. The objective of the game is to reach the peak in a scenic setting along nature trails at throws of a die. In playing children must avoid bad environmental practices in the BJCMNP. For example, landing on a deforested slope will make the player collapse under a land slide putting him/her out of the game; helping a tourist identify endemic specie earns the player an extra throw of the die; planting trees will help the player climb higher up by skipping spaces. This game can facilitate 2 – 10 players at a time.

The columns and roof of the lower floor will display art work of endemic specie of animals in the park. These will be numbered and a legend with the interpretation (names and features) of each will be posted on one of the columns.

The upper deck of Tody house will have paintings of migratory birds and will be called the “*bird landing* – airport for migratory birds”. There will be a map of Jamaica on the centre flooring showing watersheds of Jamaica with highlight of the BJCMNP. The Tody bird will be on three of the triangular panes of the roofing.

The bridge will have paintings of several endemic floras, and on the top of the fire man’s landing will be a drawing of bromeliad.

### **Lily Pad and Frog Leap**

These are stepping and jumping obstacles made from tree stumps cut from trees fallen by “Ivan”. They will be painted with local animals and carry their names. Stories will be told about each animal and plant at requested times in the Tody House.

Bird sounds will be played during special activities. There will also be special bird feeders to attract real birds to the area. Children will be sensitized about their care.

## **CONSTRUCTION PHASE**



Princess Chung of JIIC breaks ground in the mist on April 22, 2005



JIIC staff terraces the slope near the KDZ

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, JIIC and JCDT broke ground in a symbolic gesture to celebrate “Earth Day” and the beginning of construction of the well awaited JIIC sponsored Kids Discovery Zone (KDZ).

Construction on the Framework of the KDZ began May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005. Rainy weather two weeks into the project slowed the estimated time of completion (May 20<sup>th</sup>) and instead was completed on Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>. On May, 28<sup>th</sup> the staff of JIIC held a work day to help with the landscaping of the surrounding area. Members of staff of JCDT and a few community members collaborated on the work day.



The original structural design was altered because of budgetary constraints and what we thought could have passed was deemed a safety issue for children under the age of 8, so further work had to be done of the restraining rails.



The artistic interpretation which is the essence of the design concept was done by a group of volunteers. This too took a very long time because of weather constraints, time limitations from the volunteers and budget. The original paintings had to be done over because they were rushed in the rains for the proposed reopening ceremony of Holywell in June. With damage to the original work and cancellation of the proposed reopening of Holywell, the concept was revised and revision and extension of the art work began in the summer. This was subsequently retarded by lack of funding and severe weather systems. Funding from the UNESCO - *Youth Visioning for Island Living* to finish the interpretation and develop promotional package came through in October 2005 which allowed for the completion of the proposed work.



## DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMME

### Terms of Reference (TOR) for Youth Visioning Contract/Achieving the Objectives

#### 1. Complete the construction of the Tody House playground

- i) The railings for the lower deck were installed at a cost of JA\$19000.00. The original quote was \$15,000.00. However, there was a gap in a section of the structure and we had to correct this that brought the cost up.
- ii) The slide pole for the tower was installed. Tank Weld Constructions Ltd. donated the pole. Funds remaining were used for transporting the pole and material for installation.
- iii) Four pick-up truck loads of sand were transported to Holywell. The area around the general play area is now covered in sand which will act as absorption mitigation and play area of the *Coney Mound* zone.



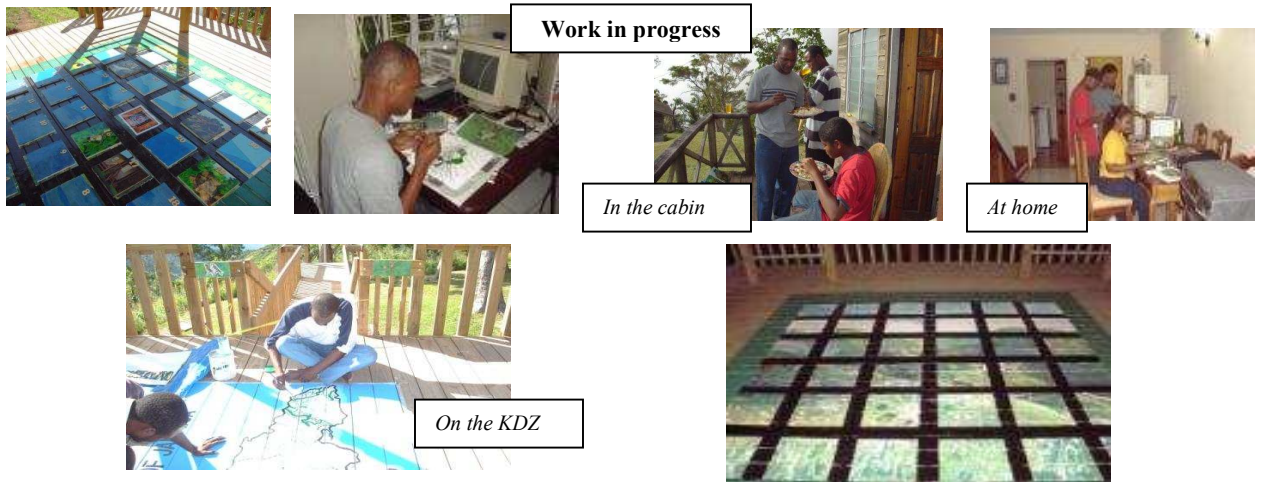
#### 2. Assist with the preparation of environmental interpretive packages for the children visiting the park; preparation of informative signs, and the provision of speakers and music equipment;



The preparation of the interpretive packages was by no doubt the most challenging but most interesting aspect of the project. The funds in preparing the interpretive art work was spent on meals, accommodation (overnight at Holywell) and transporting artists to work site.

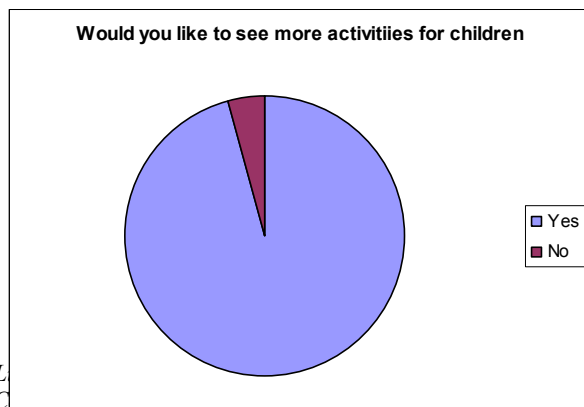
- i) Art work for interpretation completed:
  - A) Some endemic bird murals repainted

- B) Climb and Slide completed: Mural game on floor of Tody House
  - The main theme of interpretation. Thirty six (36) tiles with original art work were developed. Each tile individually painted to create the story of the mural game. The tiles to be fitted on marked mural on the floor of Tody House
- C) Watershed map of Jamaica finished (the most expensive art work) for the “Name di Wata Shed” game
- D) Games developed and printed for use by children visiting park
- ii) Signs developed and posted
- iii) Sound supplied to structure
  - A) CD’s with bird sounds created
  - B) Mike purchased
  - C) Speakers acquired



3. Conduct a survey of 50 visitors (25 adults, 25 children) before and after their visit to record the effectiveness of the playground in teaching about/and creating awareness of the National Park;

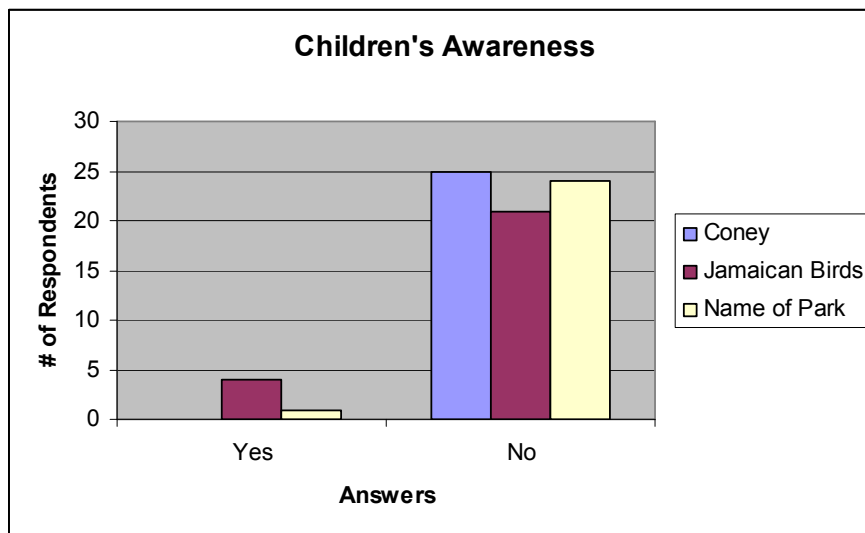
Fifty (50) visitors were given a “Pre-Opening survey questionnaires”. 25 adults were questioned on the need for a facility for children in the Holywell area. The children however were questioned on their awareness of the National Park and their desire for more activities. The reason for the difference in the questionnaire is that the facility is for children both for play and in raising their awareness,



while the adults are more aware because of interpretation that already exists for them. It was more important to see if they would bring their children and support the park’s initiative.



- i) The adults respondents were between the ages of 20-40+
- ii) Almost 90% said they were not satisfied with what was being offered for children
- iii) All (100%) adults in the survey said they would support a an education program for children and would bring their children more often to Holywell (see survey sheets on hard copies)
- iv) The children survey revealed the lack of awareness children had about animals in Jamaica, especial endemic birds. Children living near the park were more aware of some bird species even though they only knew their local names. None of the children participating in the survey had ever seen a Coney and others had not seen any of the animals painted on the KDZ...



some had never even seen a picture. The request for a slide pole was outstanding and so it was this that made us install the slide pole. Many of the children were either too young or just did not find filling out a questionnaire interesting so we asked the group leaders (teachers or church supervisors to help with the filling out as long as they answered the questions.

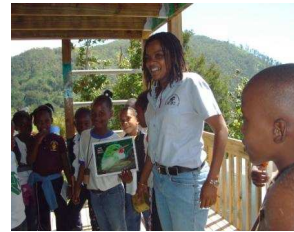
3. *Conduct a survey of all the Youth rangers who assisted in the project to determine (a) ways in which the project can be improved in the future and (b) the benefits that they thought that they received in participating in the project for their future careers;*

Each participant was asked to write a short essay on describing their involvement in the project However it was only from a recorded interveiw that we were able to extrapolate some quotes, as only Peterjohn submitted an essay. In summary they found the experience enriching and for some a door of opportunity was opened for exposure of their talent. Michael Elliot and Peter-John Gentles subsequently represented Youth PATH at the Youth Forum of the UNESCO regional launch of the Decade of Environmental Education for Sustainable Development held in

October in Jamaica. Two other PATH participants have been employed to deliver the programme of the KDZ when booking are in

5. *Publicize the activities through local radio, television and newspapers to increase visitor arrivals, especially families with young children and school groups to Holywell;*
  - i) A brochure was developed and distributed to schools, churches and environmental agencies throughout Kingston and a limited amount to selected schools throughout Jamaica (see copy attached). Brochures are available to all related Park agencies, including the UNESCO Caribbean Regional Offices. Responses so far have been overwhelming and the park has facilitated 3 large groups since January.

*Scenes from KDZ visits*



- ii) An opening ceremony/press launch was held in December 2005, with special guest appearance from the Director of Tourism, Carole Guntley. Despite the presence of several press journalists not much was published in the press. Attached is an article published in the Daily Gleaner's Tourism Supplement in December 2005. JIC produced a full page advertisement in both major newspaper publications with all its projects for the 2005 period. The KDZ was featured as the most outstanding project



*Children play in the mist and rain at the official opening of the KDZ*



6. *Provide photographs and at least 60 minutes video footage of the various games and environmental activities conducted in the playground;*

Photographs are attached on a RW CD and a video footage. Shortage of funds did not allow for the editing of the video which will be done when the second payment is received. (find attached in hard copy)

6. *Submit to UNESCO for approval on or before September 2005 a work plan detailing the specific activities, a time schedule and an estimated budget*

(Already sent... Copies will be appended to the hard copy of the report)

8. *Submit to UNESCO for approval on or before February 2006 a full report in hard copy and electronic format describing the activities listed above, accompanied by photos and the video footage, together with other materials produced under this contract, and accompanied by a certified financial statement indicating the manner in which UNESCO's contribution was spent.*

**PATH Volunteers**  
**Youth in the Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park**  
**Work on the development of Holywell Kids Discovery**



Nicholas and David (partially hidden) working hard in the cool morning sun to finish the art work, while Lucy lays out some more work for them underneath





PATH participants receive training to deliver the packages of the KDZ. Susan (in light green shirt), Exec. Dir. explains the importance of interpretation



Lucy Gentles (forefront, back tured), PATH coordinator for Holywell instructs participants on the



Shawna Ennis of Irish Town, a seasoned PATH participant help landscape the surrounding of the KDZ



Roger Thompson assists with the art work. Another successful PATH participant



From left: Peterjohn, Nicholas and Michael look on at some finished art work

## ARTISTS

The volunteer youth rangers that did the artistic interpretation came from around communities in the park and from the city of Kingston. They came on at different and various time but at all times they were exuberant, creative and we could not have done the project without them. They were each given a certificate of commendation from the Board of Directors as a mark of appreciation of the work done. They each were interviewed to find out what they got from the experience. The quotes are under their photos.



Danielle DaCosta, Chief Artist and first member of KDZ team. A student of Edna Manley Visual Arts College

I loved getting away from the city to come up here. I enjoyed the work immensely. Just wish it didn't rain so much. I sure will be able to use the experience in putting my portfolio together and working towards environmental conservation. The project needs funds though to extend the structure and interpretation.



Michael Elliot, Youth PATH member from Craig Hill. A professional Fine Artist and Graduate of Edna Manley

I realized I had a lot to give back to my community through what I could volunteer to do for the National Park. The training from Youth PATH also helped me to understand the importance of using the KDZ as a tool for interpretation. Much more art work is needed though to make it more meaning full and full of life. Some of this work could also be replicated and used in schools



Peter-John Gentles, referred to as the base man by the painters because he sketched all the art work for painting. He is a grade 10 student of Ardenne High School

While working on the KDZ my artistic and communicative skills improved. The older artists gave me lots of hints on my drawing style. I learnt about the various endemic and migratory species of birds and other animals in the park. The importance of conservation was also enforced and I see where the KDZ will do a good job in ensuring that this is the case with all children visiting the park. Personally I think that this experience can enrich me on my path to scholastic success. I would like to see a company or agency adopt the KDZ so the concept can be expanded

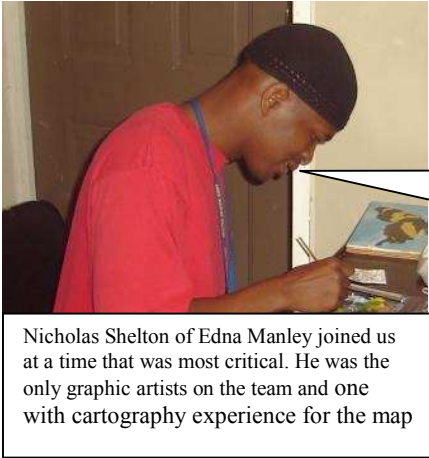
*Marolyn Lucy Gentles*

*Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust: Environmental Education Officer*



Andrew Chow, a student of UTECH did the prep work on the wood for the artists and helped with the sounds

I enjoyed the experience and hope that the structure can expand to accommodate more ideas and more children



Nicholas Shelton of Edna Manley joined us at a time that was most critical. He was the only graphic artists on the team and one with cartography experience for the map

I will do anything to save the mountains – I love these hills. So it was easy for me to join the team. I met a lot of people and learnt about the work of JCDT and Youth PATH which I didn't know exists. I hope I can continue to do more. I think JCDT should get the Edna Manley School of Visual Art involved at a greater scale.

Kurt Grant helped us a short while as we rushed to get things ready for the opening ceremony



David McKintyre from the area worked hard around the artist while learning some of the skills



## CHALLENGES

The experiences gained while working on the project were tremendous. Most of the work on the interpretive aspect was done from a cadre of volunteer youth participants ranging from ages 14-30. The various talents and personalities from diverse backgrounds merged to create a synergy that under guided supervision produced a master piece in the form of the Kids Discovery Zone Interpretive Centre. Working with the youth was easiest part. They were always willing and eager to take the drive up the mountains for a job they enjoyed. The challenge in this was keeping them focus at all times in meeting the daily “*weather*” schedule and our intended deadlines. The weather was our greatest challenge and was therefore the cause of most other problems.

Holywell is in the ‘mist’ of the National Park. It is on most occasions extremely moist. The artists found this an extremely difficult environment to work in, at time it was too damp and cold for them to work for extended periods. Some of the work at times had to be done over. We got over this by taking some of the work to Kingston (example the tiles). 2005 was extremely wet in Jamaica and the unprecedented rainfall patterns caused landslides that blocked the road way to Holywell on different occasions. This postponement at times affected the schedules of the different volunteers and so when the time was dry and convenient for work, the artists were not necessarily available. The weather was also a factor in the scheduling of the official opening and even on the day of the actual opening, it rained and the fig was fully down. This also had cut the agenda short and affected the filming of the occasion. Also most of the volunteers are students and this too impacted on the availability of their time. We overcame this by making available accommodation for them at Holywell. Much of the funding in the line item “Interpretive Art” was spent on providing meals, transportation (fuel) and art materials for the artist to do work. We found out that it was more economical in the end to have them night over when they were available than traveling up and down the mountains each day.

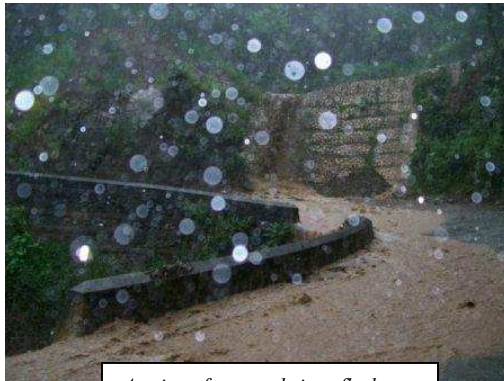
## *Challenging scenes*



*Mopping up the mess*



*Working hard to save the paint job from getting wet*



*A rainy afternoon brings flash flood down the mountain side*



*This has been one of the most memorable experiences of my career as an educator. The Youth Visioning Project has been an inspiration for further development of heritage and tourism for and by Youth in Holywell, Jamaica. It is therefore with much gratitude that I say thank you on behalf of Youth PATH Jamaica and the JCDT to UNESCO, and the PATH volunteers for their work on the development of the interpretation on the KDZ*

**Marolyn Lucy Gentles: Youth PATH Manager  
Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust  
(JCDT)**