

# Building IP awareness in ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

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Antigua and Barbuda, nicknamed the Land of 365 Beaches lies between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. This twin-island state boasts a rich cultural heritage, a vibrant music scene, and some of the world's foremost athletes, including cricket legend Vivian Richards. With an economy dominated by tourism, financial services and a burgeoning information and communications technology (ICT) sector, how is intellectual property (IP) relevant to this country with a population of just over 85,000 inhabitants? What is being done to leverage the value of its creative sector and to raise the IP awareness of the islanders? **Senator Joanne Massiah**, Minister with responsibility for intellectual property, and **Ms. Ricki Camacho**, Registrar at the Antigua and Barbuda Intellectual Property and Commerce Office, explain.

## *Why is IP important to Antigua and Barbuda?*

**Senator Massiah:** We see IP as a way to expose the creativity of our people and to significantly boost the country's economic prospects, especially where the creative industries are concerned. The government is firmly committed to guaranteeing that the IP rights of our creators and inventors are fully protected by ensuring that the requisite legislation and regulations are in place. The Caribbean region is known for its rich literary and artistic works, its calypso, reggae and dancehall music and its heritage. Many of the region's resources remain untapped and we want to ensure that an effective IP system is in place so that we can fully leverage their economic value for the good of the nation and our people.

## *What are your main IP priorities?*

**Ms. Camacho:** A major priority for the government has been to establish a modern, fully-equipped IP office and deliver a comprehensive range of IP services. We are in the process of reviewing our IP legislation to identify those areas that need to be strengthened to ensure that we are compliant with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the European Economic Partnership Agreement.

I have learned, however, that building an effective IP system and encouraging its use by local entrepreneurs is an ongoing effort and an evolving process. You just have to keep going, learn from mistakes along the way and try to be as engaged as possible with those persons who use our services to get a better understanding of their needs.

**Senator Massiah:** We are also taking steps, with WIPO's support, to register our national fruit – the renowned Antigua Black Pineapple, purported to be the sweetest in the world – as a geographical indication. The sweetness and texture of the black pineapple – so-called because of the dark loamy soil in which it grows – is second to none. Agronomists claim that the prevailing conditions in the area of the island in which it is grown give it its uniqueness. Of course, we want to extract and exploit the full IP potential this distinctive, high-quality fruit offers.

**Ms. Camacho:** Improving IP awareness is another priority. We remain unrelenting in our efforts to ensure that our policymakers and the general public fully understand the importance of IP. Changing perceptions about the role of IP and creating an understanding about its relevance to almost every facet of life, to economic growth and national development, is an ongoing challenge.

We find that although IP has become a buzzword in our society, there is still a lot of confusion about IP rights. People often say they want their copyright protected when in fact they want to register their trademark. Or they say they want to publish an idea for a technology, failing to understand that this would destroy its novelty and make it impossible to obtain a patent. We have devised various public information strategies to help people understand that different types of IP rights protect different aspects of a product.

## *How do you build IP awareness?*

**Senator Massiah:** A few years ago, we recognized that if we could get our young people to understand and appreciate the value of IP and stimulate their own sense of creativity by rewarding them in some way, we could instill in them, from a very young age, an appreciation of what IP is and why it is important. This would also help build greater respect for other people's property – including their IP – and create excitement about tapping into their own creativity.

Our annual World IP Day activities are central to our outreach efforts. For the last two years, in collaboration with Scotia Bank, we have held essay competitions for primary and secondary school students. These competitions have been extraordinarily successful, particularly at the primary school level, and are activities we want to expand on and develop further.

**Ms. Camacho:** We are now building on past successes and taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by media platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook which seem to touch the lives of most young people, as well as, of course, local TV and radio networks and websites, to get our message across.

This year we worked with a hip, young producer and other local artists to put together a series of IP awareness campaigns focusing on different aspects of the IP system in the run up to World IP Day 2013. Our message had to be catchy and one people could relate to. Essentially, we gave them a free hand in the creation and development of the message. One of the key lessons I drew from this is that you have to stand back and allow the artist to be creative. That's what they do best. We were in awe of the final result.

For them it was clear from the outset that by using faces people know and respect, the campaign would become viral, so they got many different, well-known personalities involved: the very popular young local soca singer, Drastic, who also supported our education campaign by visiting schools and sharing his experience in the music industry and explaining why protecting IP is important; the artist, Heather Doram, who designed our national dress; the poet, Toya Turner; a calypso band; and film creator Bert Kirschner who puts together film festivals on the island. The impact has been amazing.

Using artists to communicate the messages through TV, radio, video and social media made for a vibrant and extremely effective campaign. Working with a dynamic public relations firm that knew how to craft our message into something that resonated with our main target audience, the young, significantly boosted the success of our campaign this year.

The activities we organize in the run up to World IP Day each year are really important in Antigua and Barbuda. The support of Scotia Bank through its Bright Future Program™ and other corporate partners, such as LIME, which donated a telephone to the winner of the secondary school essay competition, is invaluable. World IP Day is the one time in the year when the media gets really excited about IP. They support all our events and are genuinely interested in what we are doing.

### ***How would you like to see your IP awareness campaigns evolve?***

**Senator Massiah:** In the future, we envision featuring many more artists in our awareness campaigns and have them endorsed by leading policymakers. Ideally, we would like to see this initiative expanded throughout the territories of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) because, as a region, the various products, talents and creations that we bring to the world really are in dire need of better protection. If the region's artists came together, we could send a very powerful message about the importance of IP and our united commitment to protecting the rights of creators.



The young soca singer, Drastic, supported the education campaign of Antigua and Barbuda's IP and Commerce Office by visiting schools and sharing his experience of the music industry and explaining why IP is important.

The Antigua Black Pineapple which grows in dark, loamy soil, is renowned for its sweetness. With WIPO's support, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is seeking to register it as a geographical indication.



Photo: istockphoto © guvendemir

Antigua and Barbuda is famed for its pristine beaches. To leverage the economic value of the country's many untapped resources, the government is working to ensure that an effective IP system is in place.

Regrettably, what we have observed in Antigua and Barbuda in relation to piracy is that a lot of artists adopt an "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude. Many vendors openly sell pirated music on street corners. Some artists approach them saying, "if you are going to steal my music, let's enter into some sort of an arrangement where you give me a percentage of what you make". That really is not the right approach and perpetuates piracy.

We must clamp down on piracy to encourage creativity. We are persuaded that our new approach to raising IP awareness, which emphasizes what it takes to be creative and to produce, is the key to fostering a broad appreciation of artists and their work. While we accept that we may never be able to stamp out piracy or IP theft completely, we can at least work assiduously to substantially reduce this illegal practice.

But to get there, we need to heighten further awareness about the long-term damage piracy causes and work with the local business community to ensure their enforcement activities are ever-more effective. We also need to bring together the various actors within the law enforcement community across the region - customs, police, judges and magistrates - to combine forces and encourage a more coordinated approach to apprehending offenders, reducing and, where possible, stamping out piracy.

**Ms. Camacho:** We need to foster an appreciation of the multidisciplinary and cross-cutting nature of IP and to develop a more coordinated approach to it within government. We are setting up multidisciplinary committees, such as the Steering Committee on the Antigua Black Pineapple to ensure a more strategic approach to protecting this potentially valuable economic asset. Sadly, IP's economic value is sometimes forgotten amid more immediate economic concerns.

**Senator Massiah:** A multilateral approach is invaluable in establishing the systems, policies and IP awareness initiatives that enable us to protect the rights of artists, inventors and creators. We have had tremendous support from many countries and organizations in our efforts to establish and strengthen Antigua and Barbuda's IP system. There is still much to be done, but we are on the right track and thankful for the assistance which we have received so far. ♦

In 2013, the Antigua and Barbuda Intellectual Property and Commerce Office, in collaboration with Scotia Bank, held essay competitions for primary and secondary school children. Here are excerpts from the winning entries:

Kevin Alexander, Jr., aged 10. Essay theme: Granted special powers to advance to the year 2050, describe the day in the life of a student.

"I got the remote from the bed and pressed the first button. My school uniform was handed to me from the closet, shoes and all. Then I pressed the second button and my school bag appeared from a top shelf. I continue to press more buttons that control the lights, a large digital television screen and my favorite music. It was now 6 o'clock and mom's voice was calling me. [...] I went to the bathroom and a machine arm appeared which brushed my teeth and rinsed them automatically. [...] I am now understanding that everything in 2050 is digital and voice activated. I got dressed, had breakfast and we were off to school.

My mom's car was strange but in a nice way. The doors opened by themselves and we got in. There is no steering wheel, just buttons. My mom placed her hand into the hand print slot and the car started. The jeep came alive and my mom said, "school", and off we went. The news cast came over a small screen on the way. Antigua did not look the same. [...]. Our cars were flying. It was amazing. We reached school in 5 minutes. [...]

My friends and I went through a screen one by one that scanned us and read our names and our classes. [...] There were no teachers. The chairs and desk had their own little screens and our own hand print area with our names. [...] We all placed our hands in the hand print area and our desk came alive with lights and the first lesson. After the break we did Science, Social Studies and Reading. [...] The big screen told us that school was over. We walked back through the scanner. Mom was waiting and the jeep door opened automatically. We were flying again back home. School in the future is really awesome."

Terrikia Benjamin, aged 15. Essay theme: Combating the Destructive and Irresponsible Use of Technology

"Technology features in all aspects of our lives. [...] We can say that technology is the life blood of our society. It is in our homes, schools, churches, medical centers and businesses. Technology indeed has the potential to benefit and improve the lifestyle of people in our society. This is clearly seen in the great improvements that have been made in the banking and educational sectors. Technology, however, can be harmful to society when people use it to engage in destructive, irresponsible and criminal activities such as spreading viruses, hacking, cyber bullying and posting inappropriate pictures and materials. In light of this, government agencies, regulatory bodies and designers must take bold and creative measures to combat these negative practices."



Photos: New Media

Left to right: Mr. Alwyn Crump, Major Account Manager, LIME; Miss. Terrikia Benjamin, winner of the Secondary School Essay Competition; and Mr. Gordon Julien, Manager, ScotiaBank.

Left to right: Mr. Alwyn Crump, Major Account Manager, LIME; Mr. Kevin Alexander, Jr., winner of the Junior School Essay Competition, and Mr. Gordon Julien, Manager, ScotiaBank.