

PRESS RELEASE

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June 30, 2026

Mattatuck Museum and Afro Caribbean Cultural Center to Present Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Exploring Indigenous Legacy of the Caribbean

WATERBURY, CT – Mattatuck Museum and the Afro Caribbean Cultural Center will present “*Caribbean Indigenous Resistance / Resistencia indígena del Caribe ¡Taíno Vive!*” July 11 through October 4, 2026. The exhibition from the Smithsonian presents the history of the Taínos, the Indigenous peoples of the northern Caribbean islands, and how their descendants are reaffirming their culture and identity today. The trilingual (English/Spanish/ Hiwatahia) exhibition was organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in collaboration with the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of the American Latino.

The exhibition explores the Taíno heritage of today and how their descendants are participating in a growing movement to reaffirm their Caribbean Indigenous identity and culture. The term Taíno refers to the diverse Arawak-speaking peoples of the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico) and their descendants within and outside of the Caribbean. In 1492, the Taíno discovered Christopher Columbus, an encounter that set-in motion a Spanish invasion that devastated the Taíno civilization and decimated their population. However, the exhibition reveals that in places like Puerto Rico, Cuba and Jamaica, historical records and regional traditions point to Indigenous survival and rich cultural legacies within and outside the Caribbean.

Visitors will learn about the Taíno survival journey through stories, contemporary crafts, musical instruments, and utilitarian objects associated with aspects of Native day-to-day life. The exhibition includes a short video that showcases the impacts of colonial encounters in the Caribbean and the nexus of the first interactions between the new and the old world.

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Audiences will discover examples of Indigenous musical instruments such as the maracas and the güiro, traditionally made from the dritas fruit of the Higuera tree, native to parts of Central America and Puerto Rico. Contemporary objects such as jícara bowls show the traditional eating and drinking utensils first used by the Taínos that were made from the fruit of the gourd tree.

The exhibition received federal support from the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the National Museum of the American Latino. The exhibition is co-presented by the Mattatuck Museum and the Afro Caribbean Cultural Center. The Mattatuck thanks the Yale Peabody Museum and cultural consultants Stephanie Bailey (Indigenous Caribbean descent from Boriken) and Sanakori (Taíno from Boriken) for lending additional expertise and objects to our presentation.

The opening ceremony of the *Taíno Vive* exhibition will begin with a traditional welcome from Kaskie of Quinnitukqut, delivered in the Hiwatahia (Higuaguayah) language of the Higuagaya Taíno of the Caribbean Tribe. The ceremony will include the sacred blowing of the Caribbean conch shell, the traditional Taíno horn, followed by a prayer offered in the native language to Atabey, the Mother Earth Zemi, honoring the spirit of the land and ancestors. This moment sets a reverent tone and grounds the exhibition in living Taíno culture and tradition. Support for the blessing ceremony is provided by the Arts & Tourism Commission of the City of Waterbury. In conjunction with the exhibition opening, the Mattatuck Museum will host a free Summer Spectacular Mini Family Fun Day on Saturday, July 11, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Admission for the Family Fun Day and exhibition opening is free, thanks to sponsorship by the State of Connecticut on behalf of the CHET 529 College Savings Program. The celebration will feature family-friendly activities inspired by the Museum's summer exhibitions, including a museum-wide scavenger hunt, hands-on art projects, and opportunities to explore Caribbean Indigenous culture. The Afro Caribbean Cultural Center will lead a special educational workshop that invites participants to engage with Taíno history, cultural traditions, and contemporary Indigenous identity through interactive learning and creative expression.

For more information about the exhibition, visit www.mattmuseum.org

ABOUT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICES

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 70 years. Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.

ABOUT THE AFRO CARIBBEAN CULTURAL CENTER

The Afro Caribbean Cultural Center is a community-rooted organization dedicated to empowering Afro-Caribbean, Black, and Taíno communities through the arts, education, cultural preservation, and activism. Guided by a vision of equity, healing, and intergenerational connection, the Center fosters youth education and self-determination, strengthens community relationships, and uplifts the rich cultural heritage of Afro Caribbean and Taíno peoples. As a thriving cultural hub, the organization serves as a space where traditions are honored, creativity is celebrated, and communities are empowered to build a more inclusive and just future. For more information, visit www.taino-nation.org

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ABOUT THE MATTATUCK MUSEUM

Located in the heart of downtown Waterbury's architectural district, the Mattatuck Museum is a vibrant destination, known locally and regionally as a community-centered institution of American art and history. The collections at The MATT span the history of American art from the colonial era to the present day with special strengths in Naugatuck Valley history and Connecticut artists, as well as artists from around the world representing the diversity of our community. The collection includes more than 8,000 objects including paintings, unique works on paper, photography and sculpture.

In February 2021, The Mattatuck reopened after a \$9 million renovation project to reimagine the Museum while continuing to be a welcoming, inclusive, stimulating, and enriching community anchor. The "new" Mattatuck Museum, designed by Ann Beha Architects, includes an extensive 14,000 square foot renovation to the existing space and an addition of almost 7,000 square feet to enhance public access, educational programming, collections storage, and exhibitions.

The Museum is operated with support from the Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development/CT Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Museum is a founding member of the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums and is a member of the Connecticut Art Trail, a group of 29 world-class museums and historic sites (ctarttrail.org).

The Mattatuck Museum is located on the Green in Waterbury, CT at 144 West Main Street. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The Museum is closed on Mondays from September through May. The Museum offers free, convenient off-street parking directly behind the Museum and in additional lots on Park Place. The Mattatuck Museum website (mattmuseum.org) outlines the Museum's updated guidelines for visitors, including



what to expect on your visit, cleaning and safety protocols, and frequently asked questions. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more updates and content.

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