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**Means of acquiring and transmission of knowledge on traditional
medicine and spirituality among Afro descendants of the Caribbean
Coast of Nicaragua, 2017**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all Afro-descendants' people of the East Coast of Nicaragua, specially to our ancestors who for more than thousands of years have been working with nature; sharing their wisdom and knowledge with commitment, love, kindness, guaranteeing life and healing in the communities. "Today our traditional healers deserve to be recognize with admiration and respect."



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ABSTRACT

One of Bob Marley's outstanding quotes reads as follow: "If you know your history, then you would know where you coming from, then you wouldn't have to ask me, who the heck I think I am." Statement that demands the Afro descendants to write their history, chronicles, descriptions or stories of their lifestyle and to record those of their ancestors.

Historically it is known that the Afro descendant people of the East Coast of Nicaragua have very few Creole/English written narratives about themselves; this lack of native's systematic archives is due to the cultural fact that all the historical and folklore traditions accounts are shared orally from one generation to the next. The purpose of this study was: Systematize the process of acquiring and transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality among the Afro-descendants in the municipalities of Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon, 2017.

The pathway used for the creation and recreation of the process of acquiring and transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality among the Afro-descendants was qualitative with a retrospective approach, from an intercultural and gender perspective. This work pretends to fit within the frame work of the CCRISAC's method (Cultivo y Crianza de Sabidurias y Conocimientos) in which one is called to create, nurture and reap the fruits of a participative and collective process that articulate to reproduce or rescue knowledge; in this case, ancestral knowledge. The final product (outcome) is based on oral history.

Oral and experiential teaching are the main method of transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality among the Afro-descendants' healers. The study also suggested that the art of acquiring knowledge on both traditional medicine and spirituality seems to be closely related to willingness and volunteering, there is a sense of a divine calling and braveness to respond.

The practice of traditional medicine and spirituality is fundamental for the Afro descendants, this guarantee the prevention of diseases and a healthy community; as well as strengthen their identity and culture; therefore, it is important to keep it alive among the young generation. In order to conserve and protect ancestral values the Afro

descendants' communities need to know, practice and write their own history in their native's language.

RESUMEN

Una de las citas sobresalientes de Bob Marley dice lo siguiente: "Si conoces tu historia, entonces sabrías de dónde vienes, entonces no tendrías que preguntarme quién diablos creo que soy". Declaración que demanda a los afrodescendientes a escribir su historia, crónicas, descripciones o historias de su estilo de vida y recopilar las de sus ancestros.

Históricamente, se sabe que las personas afrodescendientes de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua tienen muy pocas narraciones escritas en criollo o inglés sobre sí mismas; la ausencia de documentos nativos se debe al hecho cultural de que todas las vivencias de las tradiciones históricas y folklóricas se comparten oralmente de una generación a otra. El propósito de este estudio fue sistematizar el proceso de adquisición y transmisión de conocimientos sobre la medicina tradicional y la espiritualidad entre los afrodescendientes en los municipios de Bluefields y Laguna de Perla, 2017.

El camino utilizado para la creación y recreación del proceso de adquisición y transmisión de conocimientos sobre medicina tradicional y espiritualidad entre los afrodescendientes fue cualitativo con un enfoque retrospectivo, desde una perspectiva intercultural y de género. Este trabajo pretende encajar dentro del marco de trabajo del método CCRISAC (Cultivo y Crianza de Sabidurías y Conocimientos) en el que se orienta a crear, nutrir y cosechar los frutos de un proceso participativo y colectivo que se articula para reproducir o rescatar los conocimientos y valores ancestrales. El producto final (resultado) se basa en la historia oral.

Entre los curanderos afro-descendientes la enseñanza oral y vivencial son los principales métodos de transmisión de conocimientos sobre medicina tradicional y espiritualidad. El estudio también sugirió que el arte de adquirir conocimientos tanto sobre la medicina tradicional como la espiritualidad parecen estar estrechamente relacionado con la voluntad y el voluntariado, hay una sensación de vocación divina y valentía para responder.

La práctica de la medicina tradicional y la espiritualidad es fundamental para los afrodescendientes, esta garantiza la prevención de enfermedades y una comunidad saludable; así como fortalece su identidad y cultura; por lo tanto, es importante mantenerlas vivas con programas de promoción continua. Con el fin de proteger y conservar los valores ancestrales las comunidades afro descendientes necesitan saber, practicar y escribir su propia historia en su idioma nativo.



I. INTRODUCTION

Peter Tosh's song prays: "As long as you are a black man, you are an African!" Believe it or not, Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast is the home of many Afro-descendants who have experienced various discriminative actions and tricks programmed to dehumanize and strip them away from their black identity. Among those, their traditional healing system and spirituality were "offended" and "satanized"; the main intention was to suppress the Cosmovision of the people. Life can be very uncertain for a population when they look back and see none or very little traces of prints on the pathway of their ancestors or told that they are uncultured.

There is a lack of systematic archives on the traditional knowledge and practices, which are generally transferred orally by parents and grandparents who are the sole source of traditional knowledge (Van Wyk, et al., 1999, Bagwana, 2015). The above statement is a projection of the very same situation Garifuna and Creoles of the East Coast of Nicaragua are now experiencing. Most of the knowledge shared within the Black families is done through oral history, the practice that is now scarcely happening due to the globalization and the invasion of technology within the Black communities.

This work will also allow the researchers to initiate a recollection of some ancestral practices and traces of African culture and beliefs that the Garifuna and Creole/Black people of Nicaragua held on to for centuries as their "health system and as part of their spirituality." The result of this process encourages the elderly Afro-descendants to promote their knowledge and permit others to systematize their experiences on spirituality and healing with the use of the herb, animals, roots, and prayers to keep the black people cosmovision alive. This contribution will also lead to demystify all those negative and despicable beliefs associated with Black people, such as witchcraft and satanic practices.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY (harvest planning)

General Objective:

Systematize the process of acquiring and transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality among the Afro-descendants in the municipalities of Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon, 2017.

Specific objectives:

- ❖ Define the concept of traditional medicine and spirituality within afro-descendant traditional healers.

- ❖ Identify mechanisms of acquiring knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality.

- ❖ Identify mechanisms of transmitting knowledge of traditional medicine and spirituality among Afro-descendants.

- ❖ Define methods of conservation and protection of knowledge on Traditional Medicine and Spirituality.

III. UNDERSTANDING OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE (LITERATURE REVIEW)

The concept of acquiring knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality is an “ability to know as opposed to having knowledge” of traditional medicines and the whole process of healing, said one of the respondents. As one grows, he taught “how to come to know, as opposed to how to have the knowledge.”

The Western approach to disease diagnosis and treatment is by far different from how knowledge of illnesses and treatment is applied under the traditional perspective of disease management and control. Knowledge acquisition by trained western doctors is through diagnosis: a doctor may never tell the nature of the illness and its corresponding mode of treatment until a diagnosis is carried out. On the other hand, people schooled in traditional thought will reject the western method of knowledge accumulation as it assumes a standard progression of disease in individuals. It is quite simplistic for the western perspective to fail to recognize that people react, and are affected differently, even in circumstances when they are faced with similar challenges. Disease symptoms also manifest differently, and it could be wrong to assume a standard progression of disease amongst patients. The traditional approach, therefore, holds that “there is no standard patient and therefore no standard medicine.” Emphasis is put on individual patients in the state in which they appear as the most important source of information and knowledge about that particular patient as opposed to generalizations associated with the western model of treatment (Bagwana, 2015).

Transmitting or transmission of traditional knowledge

According to Eyssartuer, Lado & Lozada (2008) cultural transmission is defined as "a process of social dissemination in which behavior patterns, cosmological beliefs; the culture's technological knowledge are communicated and acquired". They also stated that "this way of transmission is not simple, and it depends on many factors, such as age, gender, and other socio-cultural factors." They mentioned that "cultural transmission occurs between individuals of different generations but within genealogy (vertical transmission), as is the case from parent to child; and it may also happen between

individuals of the same generation, irrespective of their relationship (horizontal or contagious transmission). It has been found that vertical transmission is highly conservative. That is why, with this type of transmission, innovations might be very slow to spread in the population unless other modes of cultural transmission are also employed". (Eyssartier et al.;2008)

Creoles

The afro descendant population known as Creoles is a mixture of Africans and maroons, mixed with other ethnic groups such as British, Indigenous and Chines. They inhabit mainly the area of Corn Island, Pearls Lagoon and Bluefields. Creoles community still conserve their cosmovision and retain their language. The majority belong to protestant religion, they are Moravian, Anglican, Baptist and evangelist.

Garifuna

The afro descendant population known as Garifuna is the product of a racial and cultural interchange between indigenous Caribs and marooned Africans on the island of St. Vincent, in 1797 the Garifuna were deported to Central America, where they reproduced and transformed a unique language, culture and identity. The first Garifuna Settlement in Nicaragua was founded in 1880 by Joseph Sambola.

Afro-descendants

The word afro- descendants is a universal, global identity that encompasses all human beings regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, culture, physical features, etc.

Afro-descendants also refers to people of African origin who were brought as slaves during the colony to replace the labor of indigenous peoples exterminated in the United States and other countries of the continent. Historically they have been victims of racism, racial discrimination, and slavery, with the consequent denial of their human rights, conditions that are at the base of marginalization, poverty, and exclusion that express the profound social and economic inequality in which they live.

Definitely "Afro-descendants" is a social and academic construction at the same time. It is also part of what we have called intellectual sovereignty linked to the concept of self-determination, the right of peoples and any human being to have a name, in this case, the children of the diaspora, we had to re-conceptualize ourselves, breaking with the colonial-western definition of "black" imposed in half a millennium of theoretical subjugation.

Historically, Afro-descendants have been victims of racism, racial discrimination, and slavery, with the consequent denial of their human rights, conditions that are at the base of marginalization, poverty, and exclusion that express the profound social and economic inequality in which they live.

For the present study, we will use the concept of Afro-descendants provided by Cabella (2008) defined as follows: "it is considered that a person is Afro-descendant or, black if he responds that he has Afro or Black ancestry.

Traditional Medicine

According to Traditional Ancestral Medicine Law, (Law No. 759), traditional medicine of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua is: - "The sum of all knowledge, skills, and practices based on theories, beliefs and native experiences of different cultures, whether or not they have an explanation; that they use to maintain health and to prevent, diagnose or treat Physical and mental illnesses". It is the result of a complex historical process involving ancestral factors of generations of populations interacting with other systems, mainly European and African. The set of knowledge, songs, and rituals possessed by the communities is also part of traditional ancestral medicine system (Ley de Medicina Tradicional Ancestral, 2011, Aguilar et al., 2004 quoted by Joseph, 2010).

The Law No. 759 also mention that healers, traditional therapists, agents of traditional medicine or specialists in traditional knowledge are the indigenous and Afro-descendant people who offer some service to prevent diseases, cure or maintain individual, collective and community health, framing their practice and knowledge in the Cosmvision of the traditional health system. The services provided by these agents are expected to be

remunerated most of the time, in kind or monetary, in recognition of their work, which can be negotiable depending on the payment capacity of the patient (Joseph, 2010).

Spirituality

It is a latent force or power that exists in the universe, independently of human beings, who in turn are under the influence of their general presence. This force lacks inherent properties positive or negative, good or bad (Ley de Medicina Tradicional Ancestral, 2011).

Traditional healers fulfill different social and political roles in the community, including divination, healing physical, emotional and spiritual illness, leading birth or death ceremonies, finding lost cattle, defending warriors, counteracting witchcraft, and telling the history, cosmology, and beliefs about their tradition. Writers also claimed there are two main types of traditional healers: the diviner and the herbalist. These healers are the South African healers are highly respected in their community, where sickness is considered to be caused by witchcraft, pollution (contact with impure objects or occurrences) or through neglect of the ancestors, (Campbell, 1998, Cumes, 2004).

Within the Afro-descendant populations, there are many ways of manifesting the spirituality, such as: "Obeah is power, It is a belief, An African tradition, A human tradition, Obeah is Egyptian, Obeah is Ashanti, Obeah is Hebrew, Obeah is Jamaican. Many statements can describe Obeah, but all will only touch upon small facets. They are the reflective faces of a diamond. We see what is shown back if we gaze into one face. This is our own image. The Trinidadian sees Obeah as wholly Trinidadian; the Jamaican sees Obeah as a Jamaican phenomenon" (White; 2009-2015).

White stated (2009-2015)"Obeah is not an incident owned by a single culture. He also referred that the word Obeah comes from the language Patois spoken in Jamaica. Even though, these practices and beliefs are originated in Africa and transformed into what can be call the modern Obeah. Obeahism is also a traditional practice in North America, Europe, and India.

Nine-Nights, also known as Dead Yard, are some funeral tradition practiced in the Caribbean, mainly in Afro-descendant populated areas (Grenada, Trinidad, Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, among others). It is an extended ritual that lasts for several days and nights during which friends and family get together to remember the dead. This spiritual ceremony is rooted in the African religious costumn. Interestingly, beside condolences and memories, food and drinks are serve, and a lot of old hymns are chanted with tears and bawling.

Spiritualism is manifested in so many ways that on the ninth night it is expected to have the spirit of the dead wandering around the house on till just before midnight. That's when the spirit will be sent to its resting place forever. At this celebration stories about the dead one and the fondest memories are shared, along with prayers and games, such as dominos and cards (Leary, 1997 p.48).

Healing through spirituality

Traditional African healers tend to combine the body and the soul as the used different charms, chants and casting of spells in their treatments. In cases where spirits of dead relatives trouble the living and cause sickness, the healer prescribes remedies by making sacrifices, in order to put the departed soul to rest so that they will no longer worry the living, especially children.

In most African cultures, the healing process is considered a religious ceremony. During this process the spirit of God is evoked for curing. Africans have a religious worldview which makes them conscious of the viability of divine or spirit intervention in healing with many traditional doctors referring to the supreme god as the source of their medical force. Because it is considered that this god is generous enough to give this power to the traditional healer, they are expected to practice healing freely.

In the ceremony the traditional healer combats the evil spirit, driving them away, and protect the people. Usually, in this ritual, there are several traditional healers performing at the same time. To cure they go into a trance, which varies in depth as the ceremony proceeds.

In order to have harmony between the living and the dead, which is vital for a trouble-free life, healers believe that the ancestors must be shown respect through ceremony and animal sacrifice, (Cumes, 2004, p. 10). They perform summoning rituals by burning plants, chanting, playing drums and dancing. During this ritual traditional healers will often give their patients muti—medications made from plant, animal, and minerals—saturated with spiritual meaning, which often have a powerful symbolism; for example, lion fat might be prepared for children to promote courage. It is mentioned that there are medicines for everything from physical and mental illness, social disharmony and spiritual difficulties.

Drumming and ancestral dancing

Bryant (1970) refers in his study that Sangoma can also literally mean 'person of the drum' or 'the drumming one.' He also stated that drumming is an important part of summoning the ancestors. At the beat of the drum, the possessed person is called to dance and celebrate his or her ancestor. This ritual will continue until the sangoma goes into a trance where he or she will meet with the ancestor (Cumes 2004, p. 9.).

Afro descendant's Cosmo vision on Traditional Medicine

Cosmovision is the way to value life and its origins, as well as the interrelationship with nature, suggests that this system of values, norms, knowledge and practices is determined by the natural environment which is inhabited by the population, (Ley de Medicina Tradicional Ancestral, 2011).

According to the research "The coexistence of traditional medicine and biomedicine: A study with local health experts in two Brazilian regions," the Afro-descendants' worldview of a situation opposite to what is considered adequate health has been locally called many terms, such as disease, sickness, affections, and health problems. The medicinal plants (traditional medicine) are preferred to treat simpler health problems that do not require medical care, such as gastrointestinal problems, general pain, flu, and colds. The biomedicine is used principally for problems with blood pressure, general pains, and endocrine and nutritional diseases. In general, the use of medicinal plants and biomedicines occurred in a complementary form in both regions. This study also found

that there were knowledge and appreciation for traditional health practices in both regions, (Zank & Hanazaki, 2017).

IV. PATHWAYS USED FOR THE CREATION AND RECREATION OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE (RESEARCH METHOD)

The pathway used for the creation and recreation of this study was qualitative with a retrospective approach, from an intercultural and gender perspective. For this study, the researchers embraced an insight of the ethnographic method, since the same aimed to understand how people living on the Southeast Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua do research and transmit their knowledge of traditional medicines and spirituality.

Using the method of CCRISAC in which one is called to create, nurture and reap the fruits of a participative and collective process that articulate to reproduce or rescue knowledge/ in this case, ancestral knowledge.

This method carries one to reflect on the everyday activity done in the communities such as farming, reproducing and reaping. Therefore, during the cultivation of wisdom and knowledge, the researchers will be relating to the traditional scientific methodology to a communitarian and his everyday living.

The final product of this process is based on oral history that will carry us to a recollection of ancestral wisdom and knowledge; all gather from experiences, observations, memoir and actual practices provided by elderly community leaders, traditional healers during the nurturing process.

Area and Sample

In preparation of the soil, grains and garden the researchers decided to work in Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon basin (Marshall Point, Orinoco, Haullover and Pearl Lagoon), choosing the Afro-descendants traditional healers as their grain who provided basic information on the means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality.

The sample size of this study was 15 participants: 8 from Bluefields and 7 from the Pearl Lagoon Basin, which was represented by 5 men and 10 women chosen by convenience, purposive sampling and snow ball techniques. The researchers selected the names of all

interviewees from various lists of workshop and exchange experiences among community healers. Other names included as the field work advanced.

The participants were notified about the study and its objectives and then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix). The interviews were done at each participant's home and recorded only with their permissions. The interviewees were also warned to feel free not to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable and that they could stop the interview at any time.

Technics

The researchers prepared a questionnaire which was used for the interview process. The interview had approximately 13 open-ended questions on both areas: traditional medicine and spirituality. The first section of the instrument (questionnaire for individual interview) included demographics data. This section briefly described a general insight about the participants of this study. The answers given on the second part of the instrument explained to the researcher what the interviewees know about traditional medicine and spirituality, how they learned or acquired information on the topic and how it was/is transmitted to others. The researchers also embraced the tools of observation to register their experiences of sharing with the traditional healers. (Appendix A). The information recorded was based on their personal experience and observations made while working and sharing time with the participants of this study. Both observational notes and the review of literature contributed to the processing of this work. It is worth mentioning that there was also a presentation and validation of the first draft of the final report with all participants.

Data Processing and Analysis

Audio-taped interviews were transcribed, respecting the linguistic expressions of each participant in order to preserve the integrity of the discourse, which were read and coded according to objectives of this study to analyze the data.

For the coding and analysis of the information, the researchers used the matrix analysis technique designed in Microsoft Excel program, where the data displayed into tables for the outcomes per person and process.

Ethical consideration

Ethical challenges in traditional medicine researches require a comprehensive framework. URACCAN University is known for promoting the Regional Intercultural Health Model (MASIRAAS); therefore, the researchers performed with respect and manners towards the traditional medicine beliefs of the participants of this study. Besides, the following ethical considerations were guaranteed:

- Anonymities: each participant registered during the fieldwork; however, his/her name will be published in the final document if he/she agreed.
- Confidentiality: meaning that any information gotten during the fieldwork from the participants of this study could stop the researchers from publishing his or intervention upon request.
- Informed consent: the researchers explained to each participant of this study the purposes, of the same and requested their signature upon agreement of the interviewee.

V. SYSTEMATIZATION OF CCRISAC (HARVESTING)

5.1 KNOWLEDGE ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUALITY

The East Coast of Nicaragua is historically known for its afro-descendant communities, and their cultural background is enriched with a wide range of healing knowledge and experiences expressed in dreams, songs and rituals; during the CCRISAC process the healers were able to relive and share their traditional abilities and healing practices done within the community.

After complying with the logistic arrangement the researchers took a very bumpy ride from Bluefields to Pearl Lagoon Basin; their itinerary to the various communities was as followed: Pearl Lagoon, Haulover, Orinoco and Marshall Point where they identified traditional healers, bush doctors, and midwife who were willing to share their livelihood.

When asked: What is traditional medicine for you? Most of the participants of this study stated that it is the use of various plants, herbs, prayers that their ancestors applied to heal different types of sickness. They also said that traditional medicine is a holistic, effective and secure healing practice since it has no side effect. Interestingly, traditional healers have a clear understanding of what is traditional medicine. Their concept did not differ from that of the World Health Organization and the Nicaraguan Law No. 759.

When talking about traditional medicine, both male and female participants expressed a lot of love, pride, self-assurance and respect towards their practice and ancestral heritage.

As the researchers explored the meaning of spirituality, participants of this study stated: "...is when one works with prayer, even as you pick the plant to guarantee that the treatment works effectively. It is also when one dreams with ancestors or a recently dead relative - who would transmit knowledge by revealing an incident to occur or what bush or plant should be used to heal a specific person". Mr. Trinaly said "this experience (dreaming with the ancestors) happens when there is difficulty in healing someone or if someone is coming to seek for help". These findings coincide with those of Bagwana who wrote that Knowledge through dreams is when the healing spirit may manifest in dreams, indicating to the healer to use specific herbs to heal a particular disease. This

understanding shows the connectivity with the ancestral memories within the community. It also expresses a sense of continuity as the living continues to respect and follow the orientation of their ancestors.

The participants also stated that spirituality is a symbol of believing in that extraordinary force, it can also be considered as the mystical part of life, in the words of Miss Lola “only our flesh dead... our spirit no dead”. Both Miss Lola and Mr. Simon agreed that the spirits stay around even after death; therefore, you should talk to them (ancestral spirit). For others, the spirit is represented and seeing as an angel that brings the message about family member’s health and what should be done for healing. Interestingly, in many cases the participants of this study claimed that the good spirit would come to you once or twice to teach about healing with bush medicine; however, if you do not pay it attention, then the spirit would not come back to you. Premonition is also expressed to explain the energy of the spirit as Mariela Price stated: “sometimes, I am sitting down alone and like feelings come to me just as if it is telling me to get up and go out to someone and guide them.” The healers of traditional medicine that work with spirituality have to be brave; Miss Elma warns “if you are afraid you would not go to pick that bush”; while one of the respondents stuttered and said “I don’t work with that...” referring to spirituality.

Even though, most traditional healers usually focus only on herbs and natural plants for their healing procedure; there are still a few participants of this study who recognized the curative power within the spirit that surrounds nature. A participant expressed a sense of fear towards spiritualism since he considered it to be a negative force. He also expressed concern as to what the people within the community would say about him and his work. Within the context of traditional medicine on the Southeast Coast of Nicaragua it is observed that spirituality is also a fundamental element, as it plays a vital role in the healing and recovery of the community.

The researchers considered the above statement important in order to understand some of the realities Afro descendant communities of Nicaragua were forced to live for many centuries; due to the spreading of Western Christianity that prohibited the practice of traditional medicine and spirituality. This study also reflects that in spite of fear or rejection

this powerful healing process maintained its life because of its affordability, availability, and accessibility among the afro-descendant.

5.2 MECHANISMS OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUALITY

In this modern world the mechanisms of acquiring knowledge tend to be from a formal academics perspective; however, within the Afro communities of the East Coast of Nicaragua there are still traditional manner of acquiring knowledge. This research was able to systematize a few experiences of the traditional healers in which verbal and nonverbal mechanisms were used by their ancestors.

When asked: How did you acquire knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality? All participants recognized that the value of sharing time with the elderly ones within their family system and community (great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, aunts, relatives, and neighbors) is the primary source of acquiring knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality. Miss Raquel, daughter-in-law of Mr. Florentino Joseph who was known as a prominent outstanding healer-prophet on the East and Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, reaffirmed: "I learned about traditional medicine and spirituality from the prophet of Kahkabila". On the other hand, Mr. Simon assured that his learning experience is due to: "Dealing with my ancestors through my old people, my grampa, my papa and uncle." Miss Ermelinda also shared her experience by saying: "I learned from my mother that was a midwife, I used to go around with her and collect the herbs she needed."

A few participants also stated that they have learned about spirituality by observing and helping the elderly ones around their communities. Others referred to acquiring knowledge on spirituality as having a particular type of communication with the ancestors through dreams. Other ways of gaining knowledge on spirituality is from their personal experiences such as being attended by traditional doctors who healed through spirits, volunteering to be helpers of the official traditional doctors and getting involved in reading about healing with spirits and herbs (Seven Book of Moses and others). Miss Lola also

stated “I learned to dress the dead by curiosity and by being around helping the elders. I know when people going dead because my skin gets black and blue”.

Within the Afro community, it is a belief that traditional medicine is useful and necessary to guarantee the health system of their communities. For some participants the practice of traditional medicine is a spiritual- ancestral calling or our God-given gift; however, for others, it is not a gift since this method of healing can be learned by anyone that has interest. This system of healing tends to cure many sicknesses that the occidental medicine does not cure. Some of the participants confirmed that after being healed with traditional medicine, there would be no needs of repeating the treatment.

Also when asked about spirituality, one traditional healer answered: “Spirituality is a good practice, it is not bad...because it is a way of healing a person by the spirit with prayers of the Lord”; even the Bible teaches about prophets and their power of healing. On the other hand, Miss Lola affirmed that practicing spiritualism requires braveness and the person has to be healthy, willing to talk back at the presence of the duppies or spirits around. The belief they expressed is that the ancestor would pick the person he or she would want to work with, considering their humbleness and positive attitude in following their instructions. When dealing with spiritualism, there are many beliefs such as: - if one does not obey the message given by the ancestor, his/her spirit will whip the healer. And if you do not put into practice what is told to you in dreams after the first or second visit you will surely lose the ability of healing or preventing a specific sickness or some incident that will occur.

There were a few participants of this study who expressed their skepticism towards the power of spiritualism. They agreed that death has no power; therefore, it makes no sense talking to a dead body. When talking about spirituality, one of the respondents said that “...this is just a tradition that some people practice and if they put their mind to it, then they can do it.”

5.3 MEANS OF TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUALITY

Around the world the Afro communities are known to be rich in cultural expressions; most of these tend to be transmitted orally, from one generation to another. The Afro-descendants of the East Coast of Nicaragua shared similar experiences as they conversed with the researchers about several traditional methods that are done orally to pass on their knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality.

Teaching

For the majority of the ones interviewed, education is fundamental; therefore, teaching is the key methodology of transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality. The Afro-descendants' healers explained various teaching procedures, which reflected their cultural settings and beliefs.

In some setting the teaching-learning process was done within the family circle where the bush healer would open spaces for the younger ones to learn, as Miss Lola said: "I learned from my grandparents, by observing my aunt Clara, hanging around other midwives, doing errand (collecting bush for the elders) and through curiosity". Miss Ermelinda, on the other hand, said: "I learned from my mother that was a midwife, I use to go around with her and collect herbs." Miss Graciela said that her teaching-learning experience was done orally by her grandmother and her husband, who was a botanic man. These experiences explain what Bagwana (s.f) meant when he wrote: "...the transmission of Knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality is a social construction."

Even though some of these teaching-learning processes are done within the family setting, it is important to mention that several bush doctors recognized that the transmission of knowledge of traditional medicine and spirituality is a particular task. The healers were very careful in choosing who they would guide or teach, they aimed to train only people who are considered humanitarian and not malicious. Mr. Trinally reaffirms the above by saying "I would recommend teaching, but not to anyone; because you have to

know who to pick”. He continued to say “it has to be someone you know not going to get rich of it, but instead help”. The researchers discovered that transmission of knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality is dependent on teaching, which is a product of a generational interaction and secrecy that was passed down to others within a family and community system. This traditional practice is scarcely exercise among the Afro-descendants of the East Coast of Nicaragua.

All participants agreed that sharing knowledge on traditional medicine and Spirituality is vital to keep the continuity of this ancestral practice. They recognized that the inaccessibility to the western doctors or health system is a threat to their wellbeing; therefore, they related the knowledge of traditional medicine and spirituality as a way of saving lives in their communities. They also emphasized the value of sharing this knowledge within the neighborhood through different methods such as:

Synchronized practices (ancestral and modern practices)

1. Some participants mentioned that for the transmission of the mysticisms of healing (traditional knowledge) to the new generation, they need to have a space with good condition to attend the patients and also teach those interested in learning.
2. Other respondents revealed that one could transmit his/her knowledge of using herbs and spirituality to cure by using the mass media (radio and TV).
3. Other methods recommended to promote workshops and encounters with bush doctors and students to exchange experiences and knowledge.
4. They also expressed their desire to meet and work closely with personnel of their health centers and do home visits.

The researchers realize how transculturation plays an important role in the transformation of the ancestral healing practices within the Afro descendants of the east Coast of Nicaragua. For instance, the transmission of knowledge among the traditional healers to other generation tends to be less mystic and more willing to share. The experts believe that this can be because of the transformation within the Nicaraguan health system (Intercultural Health Model), the promotion of the Laws 423, Law 759 and the Regional

Intercultural Health Model that open opportunities for the exchange of experiences and articulation among traditional healers, western health workers and communitarians as a whole.

It is obvious that the transmission of knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality is now synchronized with modern technology. Mixing the practice of traditional medicine with means of communication somewhat is contradictory to the mysticism of the ancestral tradition; however, it can be a very effective manner of creating awareness and giving life to an ancestral heritage.

5.4 PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF KNOWLEDGE ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUALITY

The Ancestral Traditional Medicine Law of Nicaragua (Law759) recognizes that it is the responsibility of the State to act in order to protect, preserve, promote, educate, research and disseminate the traditional knowledge on ancestral medicine and the protection of rights of collective intellectual property; including practices, processes and bioethical resources, and their integration into structures, institutions, plans, programs, projects and public services of the National Health System, it is important to state that this article (9) has not been put into total practice. Among the traditional healers of the East Coast of Nicaragua there is a great concern about protecting and conserving their ancestral traditions.

Creoles and Garifunas healers of Nicaragua, participants of this study, recognized the importance of not forgetting or abandoning the practice of traditional medicine and spirituality. They also expressed their concern about not having this knowledge and experiences recorded. Amid the modernization and globalization of this area the traditional healers are challenged to intentionally hold on to some of their ancestral practices as they reassured healing with herb and spirituality is not only a means of conserving a tradition but also a way of guaranteeing health within their communities. Some of the respondents of this study claimed that they are showing their children and

rest of family the various healing plants and herbs with their respective healing properties and doses. They are also motivating the younger generation to have interest in learning and getting involved and not considering the practice of traditional medicine as obeah (or an occult practice). On the other hand, one respondent believes that this knowledge is a gift that cannot be shared but should be of good use. The healers also affirmed that they are cultivating bush gardens in order of protecting the plants and herb they use to prevent or cure diseases.

When referring to spirituality, from the perspective of one participant of this study, reaffirms that it is a gift, and the protection of the same comes by not sharing it. Miss Manuela and Miss Elma believe that if the family members “have the interest to learn about spirituality they could by observing, talking and practicing with us.” Some respondents think that it is necessary to write down their dreams. In this manner, they record the accounts of their dreams and meanings. When they referred to bathing the dead the respondent claimed that some young people had shown interest in learning this practice; therefore, they are teaching them; even though, it takes more time in getting the job done. Interestingly some traditional healers believe that they can share the knowledge, but it all depends on the spirit to lead the person. Fomenting healing plants and herbs gardens is a manner that the Afro traditional healers believe that there is a closer relationship between them, nature and their ancestors.

5.5 VALUE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUALITY

The healers, participants of this study, highly expressed their esteem and value on traditional medicine and spirituality. As they emphasized that the importance of sharing this knowledge is to help people who may not have access to any other health system; there are times that the occidental medicine cannot heal and the traditional medicines or spirituality can do the job. Knowledge concerning traditional medicine and spirituality is something positive, and it is vital; therefore, is fundamental that the communities continue to promote and practice these means of healing. One respondent acknowledged the value of traditional medicine and spirituality as “very important, since God made the

plants, herbs, and the bush, these are what help us.” Another participant of this study said that she values Traditional Medicine as “something great because it helps many people in their recovery and healing of diseases as I pray over the patient and ask God to bless the treatment.”

Traditional doctors of the East Coast of Nicaragua value their work of traditional medicine and spirituality as a beneficial and humanitarian healing practice carried out in the Afro-communities, especially where there is limited access to western medicine, as Mr. Simon said that he would value it “One hundred percent good... because I work with herbs and prayer and I have seen many people cured”. On the other hand, Mr. Trinally also said: “It is perfect because I heal people with it...I don’t charge I just let the people give me what they can give; I value the importance of helping other people” ... Miss Elma also expressed her tranquility of serving the communitarians as: “sometimes when I work some pay me, and sometimes they don’t pay at all, but I don’t pay that no mind, I just want see that the sick them get good.” At the end of the day, traditional healers expressed their satisfaction for having complied with the responsibility and demand given to them by the population.

As to the intercultural aspect, some traditional healers believe that the art of healing and spirituality should be shared with any ethnic group, because “there will be a time when we all can need of each other.” However, there are those who affirmed that this practice should be shared only within the Afro descendant’s communities.

VI. FINAL OUTCOMES

1. The Afro-descendant traditional healers manifested a broad definition of traditional medicine and spirituality which coincide with the definition of the World Health Organization and the Nicaraguan Law No. 759. Interestingly, when asked about these concepts they did not show any effort of remembering such definition, they shared they everyday work and the interpretation of the same.

Even though, the participants of this research did not refer to any relevant studies their knowledge about healing through dreams coincide with those practices of other Afro communities as Bagwana shared in his study “Indigenous knowledge of traditional medicine”.

2. Traditional healers of the Afro-descendant communities of the East Coast of Nicaragua expressed a variety means of acquiring their knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality. All participants of this study referred to their ancestors and the importance of spending quality time with them, moments that were embraced to guarantee the continuity of life by sharing their healing properties. Interestingly they desire of keeping a healthy community is manifested even after death, through which the spirit continue teaching, and the living one continues acquiring knowledge.

Even though the art of acquiring knowledge on both traditional medicine and spirituality seems to be closely related to willingness and volunteering, there is a sense of a divine calling and braveness to respond.

3. Teaching is the main method of transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality among the Afro-descendants’ healers. According to the interviewees, this process was done orally and by observation. Most traditional doctors expressed the willingness of their ancestors to share their knowledge by keeping them around and assigning responsibilities.

4. Transmitting knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality can be considered as a process through which secrecy and mysticism are passed down to others within a community system.

5. The government have not done much concerning the protection and conservation of knowledge on spirituality and traditional medicine; however, it is important to know that the traditional doctors are working hard not to forget or abandon their healing practices. They have been forced to take personal measures such as motivating the younger generation to have an interest in learning, get more involve and change their negative perception of traditional medicine as obeah. They are also showing their children and rest of family the various healing plants and herbs with their respective healing properties and doses. Additionally, they are cultivating bush gardens to conserve the plants.

6. All participants value traditional medicine & spirituality as something positive and vital because it contributes to the wellbeing of the community.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

1. Traditional medicine is very positive and vital; therefore, it is fundamental that the communities continue to promote and practice this means of healing.
2. Afro Communities need to start doing collection and recording of the elderly bush doctors' experiences and knowledge.
3. MINSA should open more spaces for traditional medicine clinic according to the Nicaraguan Law No. 759.
4. MINSA and IMTRADEC-URACCAN should promote areas in which bush doctors can meet and share their experiences among themselves.
5. All native language should be means of communication in the exchange of knowledge and skills between traditional healers, MINSA, and the people of the region (in compliance with Law No. 759).
6. IMTRADEC-URACCAN should promote the mechanism of articulation among traditional healers and coordination with MINSA to guarantee a support system or working in a team.
7. To protect and conserve this valuable knowledge it is necessary for MINSA and all educational centers to motivate the younger generation in participating and interacting with traditional healers to learn more about these practices.
8. MINSA and IMTRADEC should foment and promote live pharmacies (herbs and healing plants garden) in the communities.

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IX. ANNEXES

Time table

Steps NO.	Activities	Responsible	Participants	Resources	Date
1.	First meeting with Vice- rector and coordinator of DIP	Vice- rector	Vice- rector MAPC. Grace Kelly MSc. Neidy G	Internet CPU Data Show	Last week of June 2017
2.	Contact Afro commission members who would be part of the process	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G	---	06/30/17
3.	Meeting to review given document	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G	Various Document	07/05/2017 0706//2017 07/07/2017
4.	Literature review related to traditional medicine and spirituality.	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		07/7/2017
5.	Constructing research proposal	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		07/10/2017- 0711//2017
	Translation of letter of consent and Validation of the instrument	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G	URACCAN's Spanish letter of consent - First draft of questionnaire	07/11/2017
6.	Field work	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly.		07/13/2017 to 08/13/2017

	Literature review related to the process of doing CCRISAC	Investigation team	MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G Two community alumni of URACCAN.	Documents about CCRISAC	07/17/17
7.	Meeting with Master Neidy Gutierrez	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G	First draft of research proposal	07/26/2017
8.	Ordering of the information (Transcription and coding of finding)	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		7/14/2017
9.	Analysis and discussion of the result	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		8/01/2017
10.	Constructing the final report	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		11/23/2017 05/21/18
11.	Communication of the results	Investigation team	MAPC. Grace Kelly. MSp. Wendy J MSp. Ivania G		08/15/2018



Questionnaire for In-depth interviews

I. Demographic data

Date: _____ Name: _____

Community: _____ Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

II. Mechanism of building knowledge on Traditional Medicine

What is traditional medicine for you?

How did you learn about traditional medicine?

What did they tell you about traditional medicine?

What do you propose to protect this knowledge?

III. Mechanism of building knowledge on Spirituality

What is spirituality for you?

How did you learn about spirituality?

What was said to you about spirituality?

What do you propose to protect this knowledge?

IV. Means of transmission of knowledge on Traditional Medicine

How would you value the knowledge of traditional medicine?

What strategies would you recommend in the transmission of traditional medicine?

Do you consider it is important to share knowledge on traditional medicine? Why?
And How?

V. Means of transmitting knowledge on Spirituality

How would you value the knowledge of spirituality?

What strategies would you recommend in the transmission of spirituality?

Do you consider important to share knowledge on spirituality? Why? And How?

VI. Conservation and protection of knowledge on Traditional Medicine and Spirituality.

What activity do you propose to conserve and protect the knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality?

Do you think traditional medicine knowledge and spirituality should be transmitted to other ethnic groups? Explain

Do you think knowledge on traditional medicine and spirituality should be shared among other ethnic groups? Explain



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URACCAN-BLUEFIELDS**

CONSENT FORM

PREVIOUS CONSENT, INFORMED AND FREE TO RESEARCH AND PUBLISH

The Territory / Community / Company / District _____
_____ of the municipality of _____ hereby grants
the prior consent, informed and freedom to URACCAN to do the research entitle:-

With the objective of: _____

which will be developed from _____ to

_____.

This information will be used solely and exclusively for academic purposes. The corresponding instances authorize the publication of the results of the research, after validating the results in the community / organization.

Name and surname of the emissary/representative: _____

Position: _____ Signature: _____

Place/address: _____ Date: _____