



Conference on Victoria: Imagining – Involving - & Investing in Our Future: August 5 – 8, 2010

Secretariat: Greco Training Center:

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**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY ACCLAMATION AT THE CLOSURE OF THE FIRST VILLAGE INDABA
CONVENED AT VICTORIA NURSERY SCHOOL DURING AUGUST 5 – 8, 2010:**

PREAMBLE:

We, Victorians gathered at this First Village Indaba, having risen up and standing in the place of our noble Ancestors and representing the present generation of Victorians inclusive of those absent and those unable to attend this First Village Indaba to which we were all summoned in a timely manner through a combination of means both formal and informal, oral and written to consider the general decline of the Village and the resultant social, economic, and moral, detrimental impact on our children and heritage, do make the following Resolutions.

That we, recalling the prolonged degradation of our Ancestors, and being mindful of the sufferings they have endured and the sacrifices they have made and their profound social and financial investments and rich legacy; noting the general decline of the estate they purchased and thereby founded the First Coastland Village established in post-emancipation Guyana. Having met together during the period August 05 – 08, 2010 at the Victoria Nursery School adopt the following binding Resolutions and pledge ourselves to work untiringly for their realization.

We hereby charge our Leaders and Conference Organizers to study the implications of these Resolutions and diligently pursue their implementation by working with and through resident Victorians and those in the Diaspora; statutory bodies (namely the Grove/Haslington Neighbourhood Democratic Council, the Regional Administration of Region #4, and Central Government); development agencies; and other bodies local, national, and overseas.

That under the umbrella of the Victoria Reconstruction Trust (VRT) efforts will begin immediately to formalise responses aimed at restoring Victoria to its once pristine condition and to her regaining her place as a leading community in Guyana. That the VRT will foster robust discussions on all issues of development, human and material, and seek the best advice, social and technical, and thereafter inform Villagers and thereafter embark upon initiatives to realise the goals and objectives in keeping with the spirit of the Conference and as outlined in the Conference Programme.

That the energies, skills, creativity, and expertise of all Victorians would be harnessed and engaged forthwith to ***develop a comprehensive PLAN for the Village*** bearing in mind the decline of the Village economy and changed national and global realities. Further, that we will study and re-examine the ***Agreement for the Good Regulation and General Benefit of Victoria*** which our Ancestors crafted and enacted in 1845 to discover where a return to those fundamental principles would be advantageous and rewarding for us or where modifications would be necessary.

Considering the great enlightenment realized during the Conference, we firmly request that our profound gratitude be faithfully conveyed to the distinguished Guest Speaker, Brigadier David A. Granger for his illustrious presentation, as well as to the distinguished academicians who expounded needed fundamentals and studied options for stemming the decline of the Village.

We further request that a summary of the varied discussions that took place during ***the Indaba of the First Village*** be prepared and made available for further study, and that considering the significant uplift we received during the Indaba that consideration be given to building upon the foundation established by planning and organising another such Indaba to coincide with the 2011 anniversary of the purchase of the estate of Northbrook by our Ancestors.

We, Victorians have adopted the following Resolutions, of a general nature, an immediate and specific character, and those of a long-term and futuristic bearing, by acclamation, confident that by the help of Almighty God success will attend our mission.



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Resolution No. 1:

“Rebirth of the Victoria 83”

Whereas the Village of Victoria was the first village to be established after the abolition of slavery; And whereas the “Group of 83” proprietors who purchased the village embodied the hallmarks of leadership, including conviction, courage and innovation which are relevant and necessary in our time; And whereas the investment by the “Group of 83” proprietors with the purchase of Plantation Northbrook, later renamed Victoria, represented an investment in the freedom and independence of all Guyanese and a firm commitment to the long-term development and future of the country;

Whereas the people of Victoria decided to convene a conference to galvanize residents to creative action in the spirit of the pioneering “Group of 83” in order to compensate for the deepening spread of hopelessness among the young and to arrest further decline in the social and economic fabric of the once prosperous and leading rural community; And whereas the conference also sought to stimulate entrepreneurial activities and foster renewal for members of the Victoria Diaspora, groupings of Victorians and friends for the benefit of all Guyanese;

Noting that the Conference aimed to discover, document, and analyze with a view to strengthening the existing economic, financial and human resource development programs that currently exist in the village in order to facilitate their improvement, expansion, and transformation for the benefit of all Guyanese; Noting further that the outcomes of the conference contemplates a future akin to the spirit of the pioneering “Group of 83” for all Guyanese, individually and collectively;

Be it resolved that the Victoria Conference held from August 5 to 8, 2010 decides as follows:

That this conference be recognized as the “Rebirth of the Victoria 83.” Additionally, as an affirmation of the contribution of the “Group of 83” proprietors to the long-term future of Guyana, that all Guyanese be recognized henceforth as representing the “Rebirth of the Victoria 83”. That representation be made to have such a motion tabled in the National Assembly and that the Administration be encouraged to have this concept adopted as a national concept.

Resolution No. 2:

Conversion & Transformation of Secretariat into a Business Support Enterprise

Whereas there is a desire by residents of Victoria and other villages to engage in entrepreneurial activities, And whereas these persons have expressed an interest in receiving support in the planning, establishment and operation of their businesses,

Recognizing the need to have a facility capable of providing the desired services and that was easily accessible; Further recognizing the need for such a facility to be staffed with competent personnel and equipped with suitable equipment, furniture and fixtures,

_Be it resolved that the Victoria Conference held from August 5 to 8, 2010 decides as follows:

To vigorously seek funding in the form of grants and seed monies and through its own efforts, encourage the establishment of an eventually self-sustaining Business Support Enterprise that could provide advice, guidance and support during the planning, establishment and operation of a business. To encourage the establishment of business incubators and other support services that could aid the planning and development of investment initiatives.



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Further that the Business Support Unit will develop mechanism for information infrastructure and for strengthening capacity to gather, evaluate and disseminate information to aid in the economic planning and financial development in meeting the information needs of Victorians and others, and agree that such an entity should adopt the terms-of-reference for its operation;

That every effort should be made to create the entity within the shortest time possible so as to have the first research assignment culminate with a seminar that should be held in Victoria no later than the first quarter of 2011; That the entity so created should be located in a suitable place in Victoria.

Resolution No. 3:

Approach Banks to set up Branch in Victoria.

Whereas there is a recognized need for a reliable and sustained system of financing for the development of personal and business activities in Victoria and other villages on the East Coast of Demerara, And whereas the people of Victoria are desirous of having convenient financial services, including access to business financing, within their reach,

And noting that the Victoria Reconstruction Trust was established to meet the personal and business financing needs of the community, Also noting that there are no financial institutions servicing the communities of the East Coast of Demerara: Further noting that the people of Victoria are desirous of strengthening their relationship with relevant financial institutions in Guyana.

Be it resolved that the Victoria Conference held from August 5 to 8, 2010 decides as follows:

To encourage and support the strengthening of the VRT to enable it to contribute to meeting the financing needs of Victorians and others; To encourage the VRT to examine all possible options and decide on an approach to increase its ability to contribute to meeting the financing needs of the villagers and others. To commence engagement with suitable financial institutions towards realizing the goal of the establishment of a branch of that institution at Victoria.

Resolution No. 4

Public Safety

Whereas the East Coast Highway runs through the Village, and because it is a main thoroughfare for residents and our vulnerable children; And considering the increase in vehicular traffic plying the highway often with blatant disregard of the imposed speed limit and the danger this presents,

Further, recalling the recent intervention of the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, and having registered our disapprobation at the offensive and non-consultative manner in which such efforts were being pursued, And whereas we are in full support of measures to impose and maintain public order and frown upon the disorderly trend of make-shift places of business being unregulated and established inappropriately on public spaces,

Be it resolved that we Victorians do hereby direct our Leaders to make appropriate representation for the construction of traffic devices within the portion of the highway running through the Village; for the construction of a sidewalk on the South of the East Coast Highway covering the length of the Village; and for regular policing presence to reduce any additional incidents that are not correctable by those measures.



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Further, that in the interest of public safety and good order discussions among the Representatives of Victoria, the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, and the Police of “C” Division be accelerated to treat urgently with the dangerous and disorderly traffic congestion at the Four Corners Square, heightened by encumbrances at the Guyoil Gas Station and that alternative arrangements be made for the parking of minibuses and cars that undertake inter and intra Village transportation.

Resolution No. 5:

The International Year for People of African Descent

Noting with favour the long awaited and just development of the United Nations in designating 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent; and being fully supportive of efforts aimed at recognising and redressing the centuries of slavery and degradation endured by people of African descent; and further recognizing that the aftermath of slavery with its psychological effects continue to afflict peoples of African descent, inclusive of ourselves, we hereby declare our full support for the observance of 2011 as INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICA DESCENT and pledge our support for a credible program of national activity, and call upon our Leaders to plan significant activities to mark the observance and that those activities be incorporated within the expected national activities.

Further, we hereby declare our intention as a matter of solemn obligation to have a suitable Monument established on the historic and sacred site of the Slaves Pay Office and that all Victorians are made to contribute to the establishment of the same. That renowned Sculptor and son of the soil, Mr. Ivor Thom be urged to complete his work within good time in order for its unveiling on the anniversary of the purchase of Plantation Northbrook in 2011.

Additionally, we urge that discussions be initiated at the local and national levels to focus on the declining social and economic prospects and impoverishment of peoples of African descent in our beloved country with the objective of arresting this decline. That the contributions of internationally imposed economic measures and insistence upon macro-economic frameworks that ignore local realities, and further that inherited, derived, and designed inappropriate governance structures, and systemic political obstruction of access by people of African descent to and participation in the wealth that accrues to Guyana be also vigorously investigated and studied and corrected.

Resolution No. 6:

Persistent Flooding and the Disruption of Social Life and Resultant Economic Depression

Given that all Victorians have experienced persistent flooding in their homestead and in their farms, we call upon our Leaders to engage with the relevant authorities to bring an end to this state of affair. We believe that through the application of science and technology and consideration of how other societies have approached the matter of water management the sickening situation could be resolved or significantly mitigated in order that we Victorians may lead a more satisfying life and reap adequate rewards for our labours.

We note that the meagre “flood relief” interventions of central Government have over the years been unable to compensate for the severe losses which have proven to be severe social and economic setbacks and have rather produced a feeling of abandonment by central Government and a belief that



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we are subject to unequal and inequitable treatment when help and other economic alleviating measures of other communities are objectively examined.

We however, note with appreciation the present efforts being undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture but with knowledge of its inadequacy, we call for a comprehensive treatment of the interlocked and inter-connected drainage system stretching from Ann's Grove to Enmore. We believe that only when such an approach is taken that we would be relieved of the unnecessary burden of persistent flooding which frustrates our gallant efforts at eking out a livelihood from the land.

Resolution No. 7:

Structures for Community Social Life

Considering that at present there exists no suitable community facility (apart from Churches and Schools) for social, recreational, and educational efforts, and observing the rise in unsocial behaviours, and declining achievements in education, we desire to see the Community Centre at the North and the Playground attached thereto be modified, upgraded and expanded to meet changing demands and needs and that these be brought under the direct management of the VRT with accountability to the NDC and Regional Administration.

Additionally, that having considered the socially limited facilities in the South of the Village and being cognisant of the many ways such an absence has affected the full growth of residents of that section of the Village, we agree to seek an appropriate site and to garner resources to establish a modern Civic Centre in that part of the Village. With its modern facilities such a Civic Centre will provide after school programs, social counselling, educational guidance, family life education, alternative ways to settling disputes and other contentions that normally arise in communities.

We note the presence and commitment of trained social workers and community helpers and professional persons residing in and out of Victoria to freely volunteer in providing such needed services.

Resolution No. 8:

Transforming the VRT

Since the five-year pioneering work of the Victoria Reconstruction Trust has recorded remarkable educational and employment successes which have begun to favourably impact the community, we hereby agree that the VRT be further developed, and its constitution be modified to transform it into an umbrella NGO under which will sit representatives of all registered and unregistered social and economic groups and organizations and a formal management board be formed to govern its activities.

That the present undertakings of the VRT, namely the GRECO Training Centre and the Sewing Production Unit be upgraded and expanded to become two central production and training centres.

Further, we, Victorians are united in our call for the speedy return of the facility presently being occupied and serving as the principal campus of Greco Training Centre, to be transformed into a business centre in order to facilitate other training and employment ventures.



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Resolution No. 9:

Increase in Intra-Village Traffic and Safety of Pedestrians

Recognising the entrepreneurial spirit that has led to the development of the intra-Village transport service, and desiring to encourage the further growth and development of this spirit in other social and productive sectors, we count it our duty to acquaint persons working in that sector of the regulatory measures and the need for self regulation to ensure good order.

Further, Observing that there has been a steep increase in vehicular traffic plying the main Middle Walk Road, and considering the implications of this development for the safety of pedestrians we ask our Leaders to investigate and study a plan to designate that Road a One Way Street South and simultaneously that efforts be undertaken to have the other two access roads upgraded to all-weather roads; also that cross streets be upgraded so that the Village becomes a connected network.

Resolution No. 10:

The Memory of Our Ancestors

Believing it to be our bounden duty to perpetuate the memory of our Ancestors, the “Group of 83” Proprietors whose faith, selflessness, and boldness remain unmatched, and observing that time threatens to erase their names and contributions, be it resolved that from henceforth attention be given to naming community facilities and streets after the “Group of 83” and in their honour.

Observing that successive generations are losing a sense of their history and the philosophy that propelled their Ancestors, be it resolved that efforts commence immediately to record the oral history and traditions of our Ancestors and that such be available in various communications format (books, DVD, online sites) to be easily accessible to Victorians of all ages and in every place.

Additionally, that representation be made to the Ministry of Education for the history of Victoria to be given a separate and distinct place in the curriculum of schools and particularly in the curriculum of the of the two Nursery schools and the two Primary Schools that help in the education of the children of Victorians.

Resolution No.11:

Reclamation and Return of Land made Available for Industry

Proudly recalling that the idea to establish a Radio Factory in Victoria was the brain-child of Victorian Mr. Uriel Assanah; and recalling the supportive intervention of central Government led to the establishment of the GRECO, the Guyana Radio and Electronic Company; And that the lands for the establishment of the said entity was procured from ancestral holdings and given for the said purpose;

And further, bearing in mind that the property was never correctly on the Register of Assets of the now defunct Guyana Telecommunications Corporation; and that the said structure was neither built nor maintained nor acquired, according to public knowledge, by the now defunct entity:

Be it resolved, that since the said premises was unintentionally and mistakenly transferred with the divestment of the GTC and being wrongfully and negligently acquired by the Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Company, that our Leaders with good advice make every effort to have the said premises returned to the Village to be transformed into a hub and base for future business undertakings and



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also for the attraction of technological high-end industry in keeping with Guyana's development strategy.

That renewed representation be made firstly to the Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Company encouraging a display of good corporate conduct and a magnanimous display of corporate gesture in delinking and returning the said patrimony to the community of Victoria to which it rightly belongs. That the Government of Guyana as minority shareholder in the telecommunications company be requested to use it leverage in the interest of Victoria enabling the return of the valuable development asset. This course of action assumes greater urgency considering Government's indicated willingness to divest itself of its interest in the company.

Resolution No. 12:

Community Broadcasting

Acknowledging that the media economy and tradition have led to the continued practice of the centralization of broadcast media in cities, and the long established tendency for these media to overlook developments in areas away from that centre, and their refusal or incapacity to treat rural communities as important players in the country's development, and further noting the transformational developments that have occurred through community media in countries like ours.

Additionally, recognising the pressing need to continually inform and encourage residents in economic development activities and social and educational concerns; And admitting the scope and immediacy of the challenge and seeking proven cost-effective ways, we hereby agree to inform and consult with the Minister responsible for Information with the responsibility for spectrum allocation, His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo, and to subsequently apply to the Frequency Management Unit for a license to operate a limited-hours low frequency community radio.

Admitting that this Resolution possesses the same boldness and faith displayed by our Ancestors we situate this Resolution within the efforts of central Government to accelerate the development of Guyana through ICT and other technological measures that are cost effective and have multiplier effects. Further, we do not doubt that in the same manner that the Purchase of the First village catalysed and catapulted the formation of Villages in Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice similarly this development managed well can lead to revival and restructuring of Village economies and the enlargement of the development prospects of Villagers.

We offer that Victoria presently possesses the capability to manage and operate such a facility with a cadre of young people and experienced individuals to guide and lead this entity. We also believe that dedicated programs to arrest functional illiteracy and other social ills would go a far way in developing the community.

Resolution No. 13:

New Primary School

Recognising the valiant efforts of teachers from Victoria and other Villages to form and instruct the minds of our children but noting the severe setbacks they face in the two school environments serving our community, and believing that such limitations ensure that our children are permanently receiving



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a substandard education that circumscribes their prospects and decreases their life-chances, be it resolved that the Ministry of Education be engaged with the view of highlighting these inadequacies and be offered the suggestion of combining the those two schools as a means of realizing economy of scale and improving the education of our children.

Further, we suggest that a new site at Belfield is a better environment offering ample scope for the social and recreational elements that are vital to an all-round education.

Resolution No.14:

Agriculture and the Village Economy

In spite of perpetual economic losses due to flooding and although the spirits of our people have been repeatedly broken by unrecoverable financial losses that ensue from flooding, agriculture in its present form and whatever future transformation is possible remains the backbone of the Village economy.

As there are many unresolved matters relative to lands aback of the Village, and as many Villagers have not engaged in the legal procedures to ensure that they are the legal owners of the lands they possess and which have been passed on for generations since the purchase of the estate, be it resolved that with good guidance Villagers be encouraged to regularise their holdings.

Further, that State lands that fall within a section of the Village and which for the almost 200 years have always been deemed to form part and parcel of the lands available to Victorians, be maintained in the same fashion. Additionally, considering that new approaches may be necessary in land use to ensure economy of scale, that with good advice Villagers be encouraged to consider the configurations that may be possible and be advised on the collective marketing of crops.

That since the drainage and irrigation of Victoria is inextricably linked with the water system that runs from Ann's Grove to Enmore, that discussions of this matter include the Guyana Sugar Corporation, and the varied stakeholders so that the works and plans of the Ministry of Agriculture considers that reality.

Resolution No. 15:

Reestablishment of Savannah Lands for Cattle

Whereas the maintenance of the Savannah lands where Villagers' cattle were kept in previous times has fallen into disuse, and whereas it is imperative that cattle and livestock be kept away and separated from farmlands, we pledge ourselves to work for the reestablishment of this facility and recommend its utilization.

Further, we agree that principles of livestock management be reintroduced and Villagers be advised to diversify their economic activities.

Conclusion:

We the residents of Victoria meeting at the First Village Indaba on August 5 – 8, 2010, approve the foregoing Resolutions by acclamation and request the organisers of this Conference to perfect these and forward them to the relevant authorities. We pledge to work together and believe that with the help of Almighty God our undertakings will succeed.

Concluded and agreed to on this 8th day of August in the year 2010.