



Guampedia.com

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Know our island. Know our history. Click to know! — *Volume V. Issue XII.*

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Culture of Connecting Educational Recovery Project *A Look Back At 2022*



For the last three years, our island has faced countless challenges in adapting to the constantly evolving circumstances brought upon by the COVID19 pandemic. Island students especially, felt this strain as their educational journeys were directly impacted by the limitations and restrictions that were put in place. Seeing the need to ensure these students were given as much support, the Office of the Governor established the [Governor's Youth Empowerment and Education Assistance grant program](#). This program aimed to provide funding to educational institutions, government entities, community organizations, and non-profit organizations in developing activities and programs to support the whole student from

academics to social well being.

In August 2021, Guampedia was awarded grant funding and began its Culture of Connecting Educational Recovery Project. This project would take the form of 13 initiatives, each aimed at supporting island youth as they navigate the increase in education within the digital world. For the past year, the Guampedia team has been hard at work tackling each initiative. Thanks to the overwhelming support from various organizations and collaborations with different agencies, each initiative was successfully launched with the completion of significant milestones.

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Initiative #1: Website Content Audit, Update, and Redesign

This first initiative is one that is integral to the heart of Guampedia. Guampedia is built upon the mission of providing accessible peer-reviewed articles and media for those seeking a richer peer understanding of the history and culture of our people. Over the past 14 years, Guampedia has published over 1200 entries. Within the last year, over 500 of those entries have been reviewed, reformatted, and updated. This included an update of the photos in each entry as well as a reworking of their “For further reading” sections to guide readers to additional sources.



Rebuilding from the Destruction of War



Initiative #3: Voices of Our Elders

This initiative builds upon our existing [Voices of Our Elders](#) section, where we feature oral histories and interviews of cultural practitioners, traditional and academic scholars, war survivors, and island leaders. This pandemic reminded us of the deep importance of our *manâmkö* in passing on island wisdom to the next generation. Through this initiative, we wanted to preserve as much of their experiences and perspectives possible so that students may still be able to hear their stories firsthand despite social restrictions. We have now added interviews from [Dr. Lawrence Cunningham](#), as well as a seven-part series with former [Speaker Joaquin C. Arriola](#).

Initiative #6: Developing User Surveys and Profiles

Currently Guampedia has more than 1,200 entries, 3,500 photographs, numerous video and sound clips and dozens of e-publications. As content continues to grow, so too does the need for assisting our visitors as they navigate the site. This initiative was aimed at laying the groundwork for such assistance. In September, the user survey was launched to collect data on the types of people that use Guampedia and the information they search for. Outreach events in Guam and the mainland United States were conducted with the aim of encouraging people to take the survey and promote islander-centered educational resources. Data from this survey is essential in the planning of future content as well as the development of unique profiles for visitors, presenting them with curated entries, videos, and e-publications that can enhance their experience when visiting the site. Click here to [take our survey!](#)



Initiative #9: Guampedia Heritage Gift Shop Outreach

While dedicated to providing access to our island's long and rich history through entries and videos, Guampedia has also made efforts to showcase the CHamoru/Chamorro culture as it is practiced and perpetuated today through supporting local artists. In this initiative, Guampedia is focused on featuring profiles and products of cultural producers on the [Guampedia Heritage Gift Shop](#). In addition to providing these artists with a virtual space to promote their work, this increase in visibility was also aimed at exposing the youth to new cultural avenues of self expression.

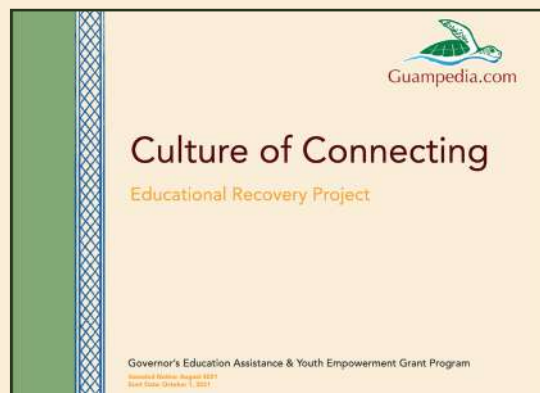


Initiative #12: Collaboration with Commission on Decolonization



This year, Guampedia collaborated with the [Commission on Decolonization](#) in the development and installation of the [Fanohge CHamoru: Put i Tano'-ta](#) exhibition at the Guam Museum. This initiative was aimed at bringing Guampedia's content on Guam's Quest for Self-Determination, out of the website and to the public through an interactive and immersive exhibition of the history and future of Guam's quest. Before the exhibition closed, 3D, still and video images were taken to memorialize the exhibition and create an online version. This ensured that educators and students, as well as those living abroad, could still experience this collaborative effort.

These are just a few of the initiatives and their objectives we have reached this year. Click the image on the right to view all 13 initiatives, the projects that have been completed in each, and what to expect as we continue this project into 2023.



Magof Nochebuena

Celebrating Christmas in the Marianas



(Left) Christmas party at Inarajan School in 1959. (Center) Cover of the 1972 Guam Recorder. (Right) Nativity scene at the Governor's House in 1963/ Photos courtesy of the Micronesia Area Research Center.

Christmas in the Marianas is a unique experience that blends centuries of CHamoru/Chamorro history and culture. The many holiday traditions and customs practiced by our people during this season reflect deep cultural values that existed before the arrival of Christianity with influences from Spanish and American colonization.

Only recently has the word “Christmas” been used to describe this holiday. From the beginning of the Spanish administration of the island to the decades following the end of WWII, the term “*Nochebuena*,” or the “Good Night,” was used. During this time, much of the celebrations were held the day before Christmas on December 24. From morning until the afternoon, families would send children to other houses delivering gifts of food varying from bananas to shellfish. As these gifts were received, families would immediately send

back gifts of their own in the spirit of *chenchule'* (reciprocity). This would continue until the afternoon when families would rest for the *missan gayu* (midnight mass). At exactly 12am on December 25, families would fill pews of the church to celebrate the birth of the *Niño Jesus* (Baby Jesus). The day itself would then unfold as a normal one with families abstaining from work.

Today, many of these traditions, as well as others, are still practiced. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, families dust off old figurines and gather *lumot* (moss) from the limestone forests to erect a *belen* (Nativity scene) in their homes. These scenes depict the witnessing of shepherds, magi, and animals to the birth of Jesus and were the centerpiece of home decoration before Christmas trees were brought to the Marianas. Families also expressed their *promesa* (promise) to the *Niño Jesus* through the nine consecutive nights of prayer. These prayers,

collectively called the *Nobena I Niño Jesus*, described the story of Jesus’ birth and could end on either Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, or on Three King’s Day in early January, depending on each family’s tradition. On these days, carollers from the Church would also visit houses throughout the villages singing songs and bringing statues of the *Niño Jesus* for people to *mangingi* (sniff) and receive his blessing.

Although more and more traditions are added to holiday celebrations as the years go by, it is important for us to remember and continue the traditions of our elders. By continuing these practices, we perpetuate centuries of heritage that reflect the uniqueness of our people and their history. Click here to read stories of a [Christmas celebration in To'to in 1964](#) and [Christmas on Guam in 1972](#).



Felis Nabidat & Happy Holidays

