



Center for Responsible Travel

Transforming the Way the World Travels

www.responsibletravel.org

Panel 1: Social Inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction

Presentation Overview – Allison Caton, owner, Isle of Reefs Tours

My background: I was born on Carriacou and moved to Brooklyn, New York, with my family in 1983, when my parents left the island in search of better employment opportunities.

Why I decided to move back to Carriacou: A large portion of the working-age population on Carriacou have migrated to North America and Europe to seek employment. Persons in the diaspora typically do not resettle to Carriacou until retirement; consequently, there is polarity in the population on the island, where you have large numbers of youth who are, for the most part, cared for by retired relatives, typically grandparents. I wanted to move back at a young age so I can help to contribute to the development of the island.

Overview of tourism on Carriacou and the economic situation: Tourism on Carriacou is small-scale and seasonal. The majority of the visitors to the island are tourists who are vacationing on mainland Grenada and come up to Carriacou for a day trip during the winter months.

Life on Carriacou: Kayaks, as the natives of the island are called, have survived from the land and sea for generations, and, as such, many families farm their land and fish the nearshore reefs. Surplus fish and produce are frequently shared with relatives, neighbors, and friends.

Life is laidback and simple. Everything happens on a smaller scale and at a slower pace on the island. The tiny size of the island means that there are no rivers or lakes to supply fresh water. Therefore, each household is responsible for collecting and storing rain water in cisterns and tanks for their household uses.

The decision to start a tour company: I started [Isle of Reefs Tours](http://www.isleofreefstours.com) to create more activities on the island for visitors to take part in. I also wanted to create a product that would leave people with a good impression of Carriacou. During my tenure with the Board of Tourism, there was a paucity of offerings that provided good value for money to the tourists.

As a native of Carriacou, I understood the charms and unique selling points of the island. However, being away from the island for over two decades provided me with insights on what tourists expected on an island vacation. These two realizations place me in a unique position to combine these insights with my attention to detail and create the tour packages that have been immensely successful.

Reflections on giving back to the community and creating good jobs: My personal and business mantra is to treat people the way I would like to be treated. Consequently, I treat my staff with the respect and

compassion they deserve. I ensure that they are paid a fair wage and have the opportunity to grow personally and professional by facilitating their training.

I also give back to my community primarily through my interactions with youth. I give of my time and resources primarily through my directorship of the L'Esterre Junior Sailing Club and the [Carriacou Music Foundation](#), which are two local organizations aimed at equipping youths with a skill and work ethic that will benefit them later in life.

Challenges: Owing to the fact that everything has to be shipped to the island, the cost of operating a business is very expensive, and there are often shortages of quality inputs. There is also a significant lack of financing options to facilitate the startup or expansion of business.