



A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'NDI-IGBO NORTH EAST ENGLAND (NINEE)

Who are Ndi-Igbos?

The phrase 'ndi-Igbo' is an Igbo language phrase (historically spelled 'Ibo'), which means 'Igbo people'. It has been adopted by Igbo language speakers across the world to describe the 40 million people across the globe whose mother tongue is Igbo. The Igbos are notably from the South East of Nigeria and predominantly from the following states: Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Rivers and Delta. Before British colonial rule in Nigeria, the Igbo tribe was politically fragmented except in Kingdoms such as Nri, Arochukwu, Agbor and Onitsha who had centralised chiefdoms, hereditary aristocracy or kingship customs with a traditional ruler (Eze). Igbo cultures varied from one another by art styles, attires worn by men and women; and religious practices. Christianity came to Igbo-land in the 1800s and today a lot of Igbos are overwhelmingly Christians, although a very small percentage still practice the traditional religion instituted by the forefathers. In Igboland various communities, citizen could either be organised in subgroup according to their clans, lineage, village affiliation or dialects. The Igbos are very highly educated people and serve within the UK's public especially within the NHS but are also active within education, private and voluntary sectors. Only 2% of UK's population speak Igbo and the academic attainment of Black African Igbo speakers is said to be similar to that of White British students¹.

NINEE – A brief history

In 2010, a group of friends met together in friend's living room and engaged in discussion, which led to the birth of an association for Igbos, who live in the North East of England. As there isn't a large Igbo population in Tyne & Wear in comparison with places like London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, it made sense to expand the boundaries of the Association to other areas of the North East in order to attract more members into the organisation. The first New Yam Festival in 2010 was

¹ Von Ahn et al (2010), 'Languages, ethnicity, and education in London'; in DoQSS Working Paper No. 10-12; London: Institute of Education





the 'eureka' moment for the group. This was very successful and was funded from individual member's financial contribution. The group was formerly inaugurated on 24th September 2011 and was formerly registered with Newcastle CVS in 2013. Between 2011 and 2012 the group had already started to take shape and make big strides by choosing its name. It chose to be called NDI-IGBO NORTH EAST ENGLAND (NINEE) with a chosen motto: OFU OBI KA ANYI JI AGA N'IRU –meaning, "...In unity we progress." For ease of identification and pronunciation for people in our host community, it came up with the acronym NINEE, which is what it's commonly known as. NINEE was established as an organisation that **will not** affiliate or align itself with any political party or religious organisation. Its key mission is to provide cultural and social interaction for people in the North East, who are of Igbo origin, by promoting a cohesive community amongst them and their affiliates; and by sharing their rich cultural heritage, goodwill and values. Through NINEE the following objectives were set out towards the advancement of the association:

- To promote and maintain the IGBO culture and tradition through education and cultural events
- To inculcate the Igbo culture and tradition in our children, so that they can reflect it positively in our multi-cultural environment, towards building a more cohesive society.
- To offer social, moral, psychological support and material assistance not only to members but to causes within the wider society in time of need.
- To provide an avenue for networking and social exchange between members and the wider Community
- To share our colourful and vibrant Igbo heritage and tradition with the community we live in through our traditional food, music, dance and folklore as a way of promoting health and wellbeing.

NINEE's logo

For its logo, unveiled in December 2014, the organisation has adopted the Igbo roped pot as a focal point. The Igbo roped pot was cast in bronze and was dated to have been cast between 800 and 900AD by archaeologists, who have simply described the pot as the most intricate bronze sculpture ever fabricated by man. It is noted that many more artefacts like these were manufactured in the heartland of Igboland when most of present-day Europe was in the Dark Ages. To the Igbos, who live in the North East of England diaspora, it is a reminder that we must try and excel



and build on the enterprising nature, successes, ingenuity and creativity of our ancestors and not rest on our oars.

NINEE's achievement

Our achievement has been documented in the attached PowerPoint slides, which was put together in April 2015, although there's been a lot more achievement since then.

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