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Heritage Conservation Organisations: Forging a Stronger Alliance

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What is heritage? Is it more important to manage than conserve Saint Lucia's heritage? Why don't some people place significant value on our heritage? These were some of the questions raised and discussed at the recently held consultation among heritage conservation organisations and practitioners on Thursday September 5, 2019 at Bay Gardens Hotel, Rodney Bay. The consultation, which was organised by the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) and moderated by Agnes Francis of Accela Marketing and



longstanding SLNT member, formed part of efforts to revive previous attempts to create a framework for cooperation and collaboration between and among heritage conservation organisations.

In his opening remarks, Monsignor Patrick Anthony, who provided the context for the consultation, lamented the 'seemingly lack of urgency in preserving our cultural heritage'. He said, "Because of our limited resources – human, financial and otherwise, we need to be able to put together all the resources we have towards our common goal which is the understanding, promotion and preservation of our cultural heritage." Noting our vulnerability as a Small Island Developing State, Monsignor Anthony made reference to the catastrophe caused by Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and the need to collaborate urgently to safeguard our heritage assets.

SLNT's Director, Bishnu Tulsie said, "One of the major decisions coming out of the consultation was the need to create a coalition of heritage conservation organisations. A communiqué outlining the role and function of the coalition will be shared with the public in due course in a bid to raise greater awareness and appreciation of the need to safeguard our heritage and the benefits present and future generations can derive from the adoption of a more cohesive approach towards heritage conservation and management."

Those in attendance included representatives from the Cultural Development Foundation (CDF), Folk Research Centre, Saint Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society, National Conservation Authority, SLNT's Patron Dame Pearlette Louisy, Trust Councilors, staff and members, as well as several individuals who continue to make sterling contributions to the conservation of Saint Lucia's heritage. The participants agreed that teaching the history of Saint Lucia in schools from the earliest stages is one way to inculcate a deeper sense of patriotism. It was also mentioned that traditional and social media must be utilized more creatively and frequently to raise awareness of Saint Lucia's heritage and engender a sense of pride in our heritage that is lived or experienced daily.



Dr. Winston Phulgence contributing to the discussion



Dame Pearlette Louisy addresses participants

The conference also gave the participants an opportunity to share their respective work programmes and discuss common areas of interest and future collaboration. According to Celeste Burton, CDF's Deputy Director, "The Cultural Development Foundation supports the decision to form a coalition, a representative body of the institutions and agencies that are presently working on cultural

heritage preservation and conservation. Being that the CDF's two-fold mandate seeks to balance cultural preservation with cultural development and change, CDF recognizes that it is through collaboration with other organisations that have a wealth of information and institutional knowledge, that our goals will be achieved in a timely manner and with the success required. Statements and efforts at cultural preservation need to be loud and forceful to continue to influence political will, policy decisions and general perceptions. The CDF identifies this as a major priority and hence will be represented on the committee and will work with other organisations and agencies to achieve our shared mandates of cultural preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage."