



SAINT LUCIA NATIONAL TRUST

TEL: (758) 452-5005/31495 P.O. BOX 595 CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA WEST INDIES
FAX NO: (758) 453-2791 Email: natrust@candw.lc Website: www.slunatrust.org

Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy

6th October, 2020

SLNT Staged its First Virtual Trust Pioneers Lecture for its 45th Anniversary

By Eleanor Maurille

SLNT Programme Assistant- Documentation Centre

Whose heritage is it? Who has the right to heritage assets and should it be exploited or governed? These and other points were reflected on during the Saint Lucia National Trust's (SLNT) 7th annual Trust Pioneers Lecture held on September 26, 2020. Like many other events taking place in this COVID-19 era, it was conducted virtually. Prayer was delivered by the SLNT's Communications and Advocacy Officer, Karetta Crooks Charles, following which the instrumental version of Saint Lucia's National Anthem was aired.

Mr. Bishnu Tulsie, the SLNT's Director welcomed all who had tuned in and noted the lecture had come at a time when there are ongoing significant threats to our archaeological assets. This is why the topic selected: "*Patrimony or Patricide: The natural and human impacts threatening archaeological heritage*" was very appropriate, he observed. The Director briefly spoke about the organization's financial situation and provided an explanation on the non-convening of the overdue quarterly membership meeting. He also spoke to the Trust's upcoming Annual General Meeting slated for November.



SLNT Director Mr. Tulsie, as well as feature speakers Dr. Phulgence and Dr. Hofman presenting at the 2020 Trust Pioneers Lecture

SLNT Chairperson, Alison King delivered a brief introduction of the first featured speaker, Dr. Corinne L. Hofman. Dr. Hofman began by giving an overview of the indigenous occupational

history of the Caribbean, noting that the first settlers came from various parts of South and Central America. Caribbean communities, she noted, have been exposed to climatic conditions since the occupation of the archipelago 8,000 years ago and have been continually confronted with natural weather phenomena that have impacted Amerindian settlements located primarily along our coastlines.

Two examples of such site are Anse Trabaud in Martinique which is located in an area vulnerable to storm events and Anse a la Gourde in Guadeloupe where research has shown that there was a shift in settlements due to perpetual sea level rise and coastal erosion.

Human impacts, she continued, accelerate damage to the coastline. These include the construction of roads, airports and touristic resorts as well as sandmining. Golf courses, she noted, are a major cause of coastal erosion, thereby contributing to heritage loss.

Dr. Hofman cited a few examples of rescue missions which addressed the imminent threat posed by natural hazards and could have resulted in the loss of important archaeological artifacts. These include a midden area in St. Eustatius that was completely eroded and Morel, a site located along the northern coast of Guadeloupe. Research showed that 30 meters of coastlines were lost between 1940 and 1990, causing dramatic loss of a portion of archaeological deposits.

Rescue missions were also undertaken at the La Voutte and Giraudy sites in Saint Lucia. These were done at the behest of the Saint Lucia Archaeological & Historical Society. The Giraudy site was threatened by a touristic development and the Hewanorra International Airport. The excavation at Anse La Voute revealed that this was an area of great historical significance. In 2007, a large number of eroding human burials were exposed after the passage of Hurricane Dean. As a result of the rescue operation, very complex burial rituals were observed, fifty-two human burials were found and several pieces of artefacts were unearthed.

According to Dr. Hofman, archaeological excavation at the site of the Argyle International Airport is an extremely successful example of collaborative efforts in the preservation of archaeological heritage. The St. Vincent and Grenadines National Trust, with financial and logistics support from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, Leiden University Faculty of Archaeology and St. Vincent and Grenadines Airport Development Company teamed up to avoid the potential loss of numerous colonial and pre-colonial archaeological sites as a result of the airport construction.

Summing up her presentation, Dr. Hofman noted that the impacts of natural phenomena and human interventions on the archaeological remains of the Caribbean islands, particularly Saint Lucia, is very worrying as is the lack of legislation for safeguarding our cultural heritage. She continued, “these factors are rapidly destroying Caribbean landscapes and also erasing the often undocumented indigenous past from local, regional and global history”. Rescue operations, she continued, should be undertaken involving local communities, government and non-governmental institutions and civil society organizations in order to prevent the further loss of our rich cultural heritage. In closing, she recommends that the island draw up archaeological value maps for environmental planning as was done in St Eustatius and Saba. These, she said,

would assist government and other parties involved in the planning process for proposed development.

The second guest speaker, Dr. Winston Phulgence began by revealing that the topic was actually one of the first publication that he co-authored fresh from university. He was alarmed after reading that a number of golf courses were earmarked for Saint Lucia. Based on the current trend of development at that time, he concluded that the Caribbean, including Saint Lucia, was slowly losing its patrimony, possibly inching towards patricide.

His research over the years has shown that heritage is always contested. Like Dr. Hofman, Dr. Phulgence believes that all stakeholders should be involved in the management of our heritage. Heritage, he noted, is very important to the public because it gives them a sense of identity. Unfortunately, he noted, the Saint Lucian public is not as well informed in matters of heritage conservation as they should be. He noted that government's role is to create legislation and implement policies which would help to manage our heritage, and develop economies in a sustainable manner. Unfortunately, though, he noted that government is often uninformed on heritage management issues.

He further explained that non-governmental organizations play a critical part in the management of our heritage. Most environmental organizations in the Caribbean are often plagued with institutional weakness and more often their advocacy is viewed as political activism. Developers play a key role in the process as well. Interestingly, he noted that developers most times are from countries where heritage legislation is enshrined in any type of development and bemoans the lack of incentives given to developers to protect heritage sites. The conundrum, he lamented, was that prime real estate most times are prime heritage sites. Other stakeholders in the process include heritage professionals, and he opined that heritage organizations need to be engaged in more youth outreach programmes.

How do we then change our trajectory? Dr. Phulgence's solutions were simple: Heritage legislation must be enacted; Government institutions must be strengthened with heritage professionals; Professional archaeologists and heritage practitioners must be hired; NGOs must increase their public engagements and heritage awareness; and History MUST be taught in schools.

In closing, Dr. Phulgence noted the following, "to avoid patricide, there has to be matrimony between all stakeholders. Heritage must be seen as a national resource and managed as such. Development should not be the destruction of the past but a negotiation in the present which sustains the future. To do otherwise is to commit patricide."

After the presentations, Mrs. Crooks Charles launched the SLNT's special initiative dubbed, '[45 Actions for 45 Years of Conservation](#)' geared at celebrating and getting members and non-members more involved in the work of the organization over the next year. Activities include clean-up campaigns at natural and built heritage sites, island wide membership recruitment drives, continued promotion of the SLNT's GlobalGiving Fundraising Campaign, advocating for Saint Lucia to ratify and implement the Escazú Agreement, family fun days and heritage tutorials, among other activities.

The livestream of the Lecture can be viewed at the following link:
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1429995023876871>. You are encouraged to watch and share this vital information with your contacts.