



# 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](mailto:natrust@candw.lc) Website: [www.slunatrust.org](http://www.slunatrust.org)

**Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy**

April 18, 2020

## **Observing World Heritage Day Amidst COVID-19** **“Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility”**

**By: Joanne Norville**  
**SLNT Communications & Advocacy Programme Assistant**

World Heritage Day is a celebration of the things we have inherited from past generations, be it practices, buildings, traditions, or the beauty of nature which they left us. The tangible and intangible aspects of past generations still influence our culture, our speech and our values as a society. They also help us appreciate the diversity of cultures around the world, and raise awareness about important heritage and cultural sites under threat. World Heritage Day celebrations began in 1983 when UNESCO officially declared April 18<sup>th</sup> to be “International Sites and Monuments Day” to raise the awareness about the vulnerability of the world's built monuments and heritage sites and the need to preserve human heritage and diversity. Every year on April 18<sup>th</sup> we are encouraged to engage in dialogue and take measures to manage our heritage sites for their long-term survival and continuity of our culture, as well as to celebrate the beauty and serenity of our special landscapes. The onslaught of the coronavirus and the social distancing currently in place does not allow us to share aspects of our heritage in ways we are used to. Nonetheless, this period of isolation can help us to reflect on, as well as research the stories behind our natural and built heritage sites and monuments. We encourage you to put your list together and get ready to explore and unearth your rich heritage when COVID-19 has passed.

We encourage youths to get involved in this struggle to sustainably manage our heritage as they are the best ambassadors for protection, preservation and sustainable use. Visiting heritage sites regularly helps build an appreciation for monuments, structures and scenes which are often taken for granted. These sites are unique and should be considered special representations of the character of our community and country. Additionally, engaging in cultural activities, like pot-making, basket weaving, doing traditional dances or playing traditional instruments and learning and singing traditional songs, help build



**School group visiting Walcott House**

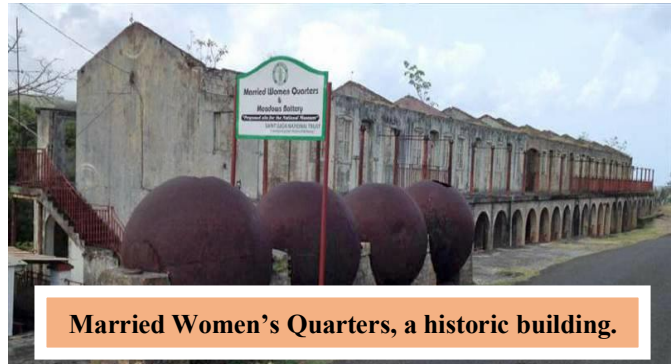
an appreciation for our culture and unique identity. These activities could also be welcomed relief from the stresses of isolation imposed upon us by COVID-19.



**Madras and cultural items**

The 2020 theme of “*Shared Culture, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility*” prompts us to consider the diversity that contributed to our shared cultural uniqueness. In the history of Saint Lucia, we see the influences of Amerindian, French, English, African, Indian and more recently the Middle Eastern cultures. The things that make us unique are the combination of contributions from each of those cultures.

It is therefore our responsibility to hold on to what we have as our culture and heritage, so that it is not completely lost from the world. Just as we would protect and appreciate endangered species for their uniqueness and inherent value so that they will be around for future generations and maybe even benefit from them in some way, so too we should appreciate and maintain our culture and heritage so that the future generations will know, through our monuments and practices, the story of our country. World Heritage Day therefore reminds us of where we came from as a people, and of our responsibility to share the knowledge of our past. We should be willing to share our heritage with future generations and make it attractive to others outside our country, so that we can broaden their appreciation for our unique heritage. It is OUR COLLECTIVE responsibility to maintain our heritage, whether old buildings, cultural practices, or natural resources and scenes. If we do not share this sense of responsibility, we will ultimately lose what we do have and the future generations will not be able to enjoy learning about and experiencing those aspects of their history and nature. For as Marcus Garvey said “a people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”



**Married Women's Quarters, a historic building.**

COVID-19 presently grips the world, but history has shown us that this is not the first pandemic and therefore it is important for us to look back at the events of the past and learn from them, acknowledging the mistakes and building on a foundation of knowledge that will help us now and generations in the future.

*“We should feel empowered by where we came from and who we are, not hide it. It is important to acknowledge that everything we do affects our ancestors as much as they have affected us.”*

*-Lorin Morgan-Richards*