



Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc.

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Testimony provided to: Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and
Recreation Bill No. 31-0303

BY: Frandelle Gerard, Executive Director
Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc. (CHANT)

Good morning Chairman of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation, Senator Myron Jackson, to members of the Committee and all Senators present. Good morning to my fellow testifiers and to the listening public. It is an honor to have been invited to testify on this important piece of legislation, Bill No. 31-0303. On behalf of the Board of Directors of Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc., I am pleased to provide the following testimony:

CHANT is a Virgin Islands non-profit committed to the preservation of the history and culture of the Virgin Islands and St. Croix specifically. One of our goals is to provide residents and guests with an authentic Crucian experience and to relate the history of the Virgin Islands in a manner that is educational, informational and entertaining. With that in mind, it is important that the history, culture and historic sites of the islands be preserved and protected for all to experience and appreciate.

We commend you on the efforts to properly recognize the indigenous people of the Virgin Islands; to repatriate the artifacts of the period; to protect the significant historical sites and; to honor the ancestors by returning and reinterring the remains of the unnamed to a proper burial site. The designation of Magens Bay and Salt River as Amerindian Sacred Places will protect and help to promote the areas as cultural tourism sites.

The extensive history of the pre-ceramic and post-ceramic peoples who inhabited these islands is often relegated to a paragraph in a history book or brought up when commemorating the incursion by Europeans at Cape of the Arrows – better known as Salt River Bay in 1493. The history of the indigenous people of the Virgin Islands is an intrinsic part of our culture and is central to our history and the development of the islands. So many sites have been trampled over for the production of sugar, the construction of homes, hotels and roads, yet on any given day in my youth, arrowheads and shards of ceramic bowls could be found at Salt River. (We were instructed to turn them in to the National Park Service.) The hundreds perhaps thousands of artifacts that have been removed from that area must be documented and repatriated and



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prominently displayed in designated areas where the general public can view and be educated about the people, their lives and their contribution to our culture and society.

How do we tell the story of the ancients, the Saladoid, Ostinoïd, Igneri, Taino and Caribs, who occupied the Virgin Islands and Salt River specifically, without the most important artifacts, the carved Petroglyphs that formed the Batey? Petroglyphs that lined the ceremonial ball court were unearthed in 1923 and removed – they now reside in the bowels of the Danish Archives. The return of these Petroglyphs will allow us to restore the site and to promote the existence of the “only such ball court known in the Lesser Antilles”. The repatriation of these significant artifacts would enhance the “Living Museum” that is Salt River.

Bill No. 31-0303 strengthens the authority of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources as it pertains to the artifacts and sites pertinent to the Native First World peoples. The legislation highlights the importance of the indigenous people and will facilitate the establishment not only of a UNESCO World Heritage site but also the designation of the island of St. Croix as a National Heritage Area.

CHANT stands ready to assist the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation and the community in forwarding the objectives of Bill No. 31-0303.