

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With School In Session On Monday, Most Easter Campers Head Home Early

VIC News / **Published On April 02, 2018 10:14 AM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Around midday on Easter Monday is normally the time when most Easter campers on St. Croix start packing their belongings to head home for work and school on Tuesday. But the 2018 camping season, which saw lower turnout than previous years because of multiple factors, came to an end for most campers one day early, on Sunday, as Department of Education (D.O.E.) has made Easter Monday a school day.

Campers at several locations told The Consortium that Sunday would normally be a fun day or beach day, but with school in session on Monday, they were forced to gather their camping gear early and go home. Fields that were lined with tents on Saturday -- including Seventh Day Adventist campers across from the Southgate Baptist Church on

the east end -- dwindled on Sunday to a few here and there.

There were also less campers this year, a consequence of hardships caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and the migration of many Virgin Islanders to the mainland following the storms.

A drive down Frederiksted Beach, where campers would normally be lined from almost the start of the stretch to the very end, was a patchwork on Sunday. And some locations known to have campers were near empty.

It was also a startling to see Green Key Beach, located just pass Cheese Burgers in Paradise, which flourished with campers last year, almost empty, with the campers that traditionally make the site one of the best -- complete with full kitchen and bar -- not attending this year.

Nonetheless, those who made it out to camp appeared to have enjoyed themselves by making the best of it. Cramer Park, for example, saw a lot of campers this year, along with deejays to keep the mood alive. And Salt River's regular campers, some of whom have been camping at the location for over 50 years, did not allow circumstances to halt their tradition. "[I do] the same thing every year," said Cruz Delgado on Sunday morning. "This year I get 52 years in Salt River" as a camper. Ms. Delgado was preparing to fry chicken and Johnny cakes when she spoke with The Consortium, and was waiting on additional family members to join her.

It would have always been an interesting observation to witness the first Easter camping season following two of the most devastating storms the U.S. Virgin Islands has experienced. The ruin caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria include displaced families, homelessness, unemployment, loss of property and migration -- to name a few. Many Virgin Islanders are still attempting to get back on their feet, and for many who've camped in the past, being on a beach in a tent for several days was the last thing on their minds this year.

Even so, the fact that a good number of residents still turned out, speaks to the love Virgin Islanders have for the Easter camping tradition, a tradition, it appears, that has weathered the severest of storms.