

**TITLE 2: NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**DIVISION 4: LAND RESOURCES**

**§ 4871. Short Title.**

This article shall be cited as the Commonwealth Museum Act of 1996.

**Source:** PL 10-5, § 1.

**Commission Comment:** PL 10-5 took effect March 13, 1996. According to PL 10-5, § 2:

Section 2. Findings and Purpose. The Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature finds that:

(a) The cultural and historical heritage of the Commonwealth is the foundation on which the identity and pride of the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is based. The acquisition, preservation, study, interpretation and exhibition of local artifacts and related materials are vital to the promotion of increased knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the history and cultures of the Northern Mariana Islands;

(b) the rich traditional knowledge of our elders particularly in the areas of local history, medicine, fishing, navigation, arts and crafts, language and dance are rapidly disappearing. A concerted effort is needed to provide facilities and methods to promote activities that will record, preserve, document and transmit this knowledge for future generations.

(c) the rich collections of archaeological, historical and cultural artifacts of our heritage and related materials now held by government agencies and willing donors are presently at risk; subject to damage, deterioration and permanent loss. Adequate storage and preservation facilities are needed to assure the safety of these artifacts.

(d) extensive collections of irreplaceable artifacts related to our heritage exist in museums around the world. These could and should be selectively repatriated if adequate museum facilities and professional staff were available in the Commonwealth;

(e) there are very limited means by which the general public can view, study and appreciate the artifacts of our heritage, and very few places where our cultures and history are presented with information explaining their meaning, purpose and importance;

(f) the lack of interpretive information relating to the cultural artifacts, materials, and historic sites of the CNMI provide little opportunity to appreciate and understand their significance to our heritage; or to promote the respect that is due these artifacts and materials; and the historic sites that define our cultures.

(g) it is therefore the purpose of this legislation, in accordance with the mandate of [N.M.I. Const. art. XIV, § 3], to establish a cultural and historical museum to serve the people of the Commonwealth; to promote local cultural pride; to insure the preservation of our heritage; to promote better understanding and foster local study of our heritage; to increase appreciation and respect for cultural artifacts and historical sites; to provide the general public, scholars and visitors a focus for cultural studies; and to provide a proud sense of identity to present and future generations of Commonwealth residents.