

PRESS RELEASE

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A 53 Member Delegation to Represent the VI at CARIFESTA 2025

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Premier and Minister of Finance and Tourism, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, has announced that the Virgin Islands' cultural ambassadors will tell the Territory's stories at the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) in Barbados from August 22 to 31.

Fifty three talented Virgin Islanders across music, dance, theatre, and crafts, will represent the essence of the Territory's cultural identity, during the Caribbean's greatest celebration of culture, creativity, and connections.

Premier Wheatley said, "These cultural ambassadors will not only share their gifts with regional and international audiences, but also tell our stories in a way that ensures the Virgin Islands is recognised as a vibrant and integral contributor to the Caribbean's cultural tapestry."

Premier Wheatley said during a press conference on Monday August 18 that the significance of this participation extends far beyond performance, as CARIFESTA provides a unique platform for cultural exchange, collaboration, and inspiration, deepening regional bonds and shaping Caribbean identity.

"As Premier and Minister of Culture, I commend our delegation for their dedication and commitment as representatives of our Territory. I also extend gratitude to the many supporters and organizers who have made this journey possible," he said.

The Honourable Premier has also reassured that safety is a priority and that the relevant authorities are monitoring potential weather systems and no one will be put at risk.

The local delegation will be led by Junior Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture, Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith, who said in supporting this delegation, the ministry of fulfilling a very important mandate: "to preserve, promote, and showcase the unique culture of the Virgin Islands, while also positioning it as a source of national pride and an avenue for economic opportunities."

Honourable Hodge-Smith said this year's delegation is special as "it brings together seasoned cultural practitioners who have been honing their craft for years, alongside new emerging artists bringing fresh energy and perspective". She said

this ensures that the Virgin Islands culture remains alive, dynamic, and relevant.

Honourable Hodge-Smith added, “Beyond simply facilitating travel and participation, our goal is to empower the artists by creating spaces for them to develop their craft, gain exposure, and build network that will benefit the Territory a long time after CARIFESTA ends.”

Thirteen students are among the 53-member delegation participating in this year’s CARIFESTA XV, being held under the theme: “Caribbean Roots; Global Excellence”.

The last CARIFESTA was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2019. The Virgin Islands participated in the capacity as an observer.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture is committed to preserving the rich heritage of the Virgin Islands, and ensuring that our culture is celebrated at home and showcased to the world.

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