

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Tel:** (284)468-2730

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## Virgin Islands Delegation to Participate in CARIFESTA

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The Government of the Virgin Islands is proud to announce the participation of a 53-member delegation at the upcoming Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA). The delegation will be led by Premier, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, and Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith, Junior Minister for Tourism and Culture, will join. Accompanying them will be Mr. Joseph Smith Abbott, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, and Mr. K'Mari Fahie, Assistant Secretary in the Ministry.

The Virgin Islands' participation in CARIFESTA underscores the Territory's commitment to showcasing its rich cultural heritage, promoting the creative industries, and strengthening ties with regional neighbours. Through music, dance, art, fashion, literature, film, and youth representation, the Virgin Islands delegation will represent the diversity, resilience, and talent of the Territory's people on an international stage.

The purpose of this mission is threefold:

- Cultural Exchange and Promotion To highlight Virgin Islands traditions, talents, and artistry while learning from the diverse cultures across the Caribbean.
- Strengthening Regional Partnerships To engage in dialogue and collaboration with other Caribbean nations to advance cultural and creative industries.
- 3. **Tourism and Economic Opportunities** To showcase the Virgin Islands as a vibrant cultural tourism destination, further supporting the Government's efforts to diversify the economy.

## **Performing Delegation**

- Sylvanna Charles Dance Lead/Choreographer
- Ro'Elle Baird Dancer
- Ethan Marcellin Dancer
- Kamira Wheatley Dancer
- Maya Marcellin Dancer
- Ze'Mirah Martin Dancer

- Adaiah Primo Dancer
- Donya Davis Dancer
- Vincent Malone Visual Artist
- Via Donovan-Hodge Visual Artist
- Karl Burnett Visual Artist
- Markita Turnbull-Smith Fashion Designer
- Linette Rabsatt Poet
- Andria Flax Author
- Abbria Hodge Youth Poet
- Trinity Lettsome Youth Poet
- Michael Jefferson Youth Poet
- Anika Christopher Author
- Natalie Hodge Film & Media Lead
- Shade Blackmon Film & Media
- Dakarai Wheatley Youth Film Maker
- Mia Lennard Youth Film Maker
- Naudia Turnbull Film Maker/Animator
- Amos Pollard Youth Film Maker
- Kyra James Youth Rep (Culture)
- Te'Kory Penn Youth Rep (Theatre)
- Shamoy Smith Youth Rep (Music)
- Raenisia Scatliffe Marketing
- Andrea France Social Media

## Youth (Student) Delegation

- Kelberlin George Chaperone
- Akeem Stanley Chaperone
- Rochelle Frett Chaperone
- S'yiesha Keith Student
- Tarina Roberts Student
- Haleem Jacobs Student
- Ethan Faulkner Student
- Brenique Deane Student

- A'nyah Thomas Student
- Zoe Patandin Student
- Chelsea Simpson Student
- Zara Pascoe Student
- Malia Choucoutou Student
- Ihonette Smith Student
- Reniah Massac Student
- Kaliise Leonard Williams Student

Premier Wheatley expressed his pride in the delegation, stating:

"The Virgin Islands has a rich cultural story to share with the region and the world. Our participation in CARIFESTA provides an invaluable opportunity to celebrate our identity, strengthen regional connections, and explore new avenues for growth in culture and tourism."

Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith, Junior Minister for Tourism and Culture, also emphasised the cultural significance of youth involvement:

"I am especially proud that so many of our young people are part of this delegation. CARIFESTA is not only about celebration, it is about legacy. By engaging our youth in this regional platform, we are investing in the future of Virgin Islands culture and ensuring that our traditions, creativity, and identity continue to flourish for generations to come."

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development thanks all cultural partners, artists, educators, and supporters who have contributed to preparing the delegation for this significant regional event.

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