

# PRESS RELEASE

Tel: (284)468-2730

Official Government Website:

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## Virgin Islands Delegation to Participate in CARIFESTA

Release Date: 21 August, 2025



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:

1. **Cultural Exchange and Promotion** – To highlight Virgin Islands traditions, talents, and artistry while learning from the diverse cultures across the Caribbean.
2. **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 Choucouthou – Student
- Jhonette 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.