



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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April 17, 2019

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TALENTED STUDENTS SHOWCASE VIRGIN ISLANDS CULTURE AT FIRST ANNUAL CULTURAL SHOWCASE AND COMPETITION**

ST. CROIX, USVI— Students from the Alfredo Andrews and Pearl B. Larsen elementary schools and St. Mary's Catholic School took home winning titles at the Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education debut Cultural Showcase and Competition held April 15 and 16 at the University of the Virgin Islands Great Hall in St. Croix. The competition saw entries in poetry, song, original poetry, storytelling, and skit.

Participating schools were the Pearl B. Larsen, Juanita Gardine, Lew Muckle, Alfredo Andrews, and Claude O. Markoe elementary schools and the St. Mary's Catholic School.

Department of Education Acting Assistant Commissioner Maria Encarnacion and St. Croix District Acting Deputy Superintendent Victor Somme III shared opening remarks.

“Good morning. I’m very excited to be here. As everyone knows culture is the way we live, it’s how we speak, and it’s what we eat. It’s the music we listen too, it is everything about us. So to those teachers that are here today and support staff, I just want to thank you for working with these boys and girls to have them showcase our culture this morning,” said Acting Assistant Commissioner Maria Encarnacion.

Keeping with the momentum, Acting Deputy Somme stated, “The work that you are doing today is important. This is important work... It is our job as educators and students to teach our culture. So there is no dispute that what you’re doing today is tremendously important.”

The competition covered two days. On Monday, April 15, schools performing in the poetry, song and original poetry categories competed, and on Tuesday, April 16, storytelling and skit competitors made their presentations, followed by the awards ceremony.

Mistress of Ceremony Susie Bough James read the rules and rubric immediately before each segment. Students and teams were judged based on memorization, effective speaking, emotional impact, insight and cultural relevance, originality, and time, to name a few. After each performance, the judges tallied their scores.

A few notable highlights of the showcase were the Pearl B. Larsen team's entertaining recital of a combination of culturally relevant poems; "Clear the Road" by Alfredo Andrews; Quelbe song rendition "Daddy All I Want For My Birthday Is A Flute," by Claude O. Markoe; Juanita Gardine's Vienna Cake Mystery Skit and the Alfredo Andrews Original Skit "The Hard Headed Boys."

The performances were outstanding, making it a tight competition for the judges. In addition to the remarkable display of Virgin Islands culture, students revealed how talented they were in song, spoken word, and acting.

Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education Director Valrica Bryson and organizer of the event gave closing remarks following the trophy presentation.

"I am very proud of the two days that we had. I hope next year after the schools see the great job you did we'll have some more schools partaking in this Cultural Communication Showcase." She continued, "I congratulate everyone; I want you to know that everyone is a winner. Just the fact that you got up on stage to take part and showcase Virgin Islands culture made you a winner."

Dodson James, Vivienne Pacquette, Jennifer Toussaint, Alscess Lewis-Brown and Joan Paulus were judges for the competition.

## **WINNERS BY SELECT CATEGORIES**

### **Poetry**

1st Place: Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School

- St. Croix adapted from Nevis / I Find No Place At All Like St. Croix/ Bless Our Island

2nd Place: Juanita Gardine Elementary School

- This Island is Mine

### **Song**

1st Place: Alfredo Andrews Elementary School

- Clear de Road

2nd Place: Claude O. Markoe Elementary School

- Daddy All I Want For My Birthday Is A Flute

3rd Place: Claude O. Markoe Elementary School

- It's Not About Me

### **Original Poetry**

1st Place: Alfredo Andrews Elementary School

- The Virgin Islands Where I Live

2nd Place: Juanita Gardine Elementary School

- Turtles

### **Storytelling**

1st Place: Melodi de la Cruz of St. Mary's Catholic School

- Anansi and the Grasshopper

2nd Place: Jahnoah Escobar of Juanita Gardine Elementary School

- Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock

### **Skit**

1st Place: Alfredo Andrews Elementary School

- The Hard Headed Boys

2nd Place: Juanita Gardine Elementary School

- The Vienna Cake Mystery

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