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## Children's Parade Met with Spectacular Reviews from Territory's Leadership

**Grand Marshal Michelle Smith leads a parade filled with vibrant school troupes and cultural displays, earning high praise from territorial leaders for strong participation and community support**

Carnival / **Published On January 08, 2024 04:13 AM /**

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**Children Parade 2024 on Friday, Jan. 5, 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM**

**ST. CROIX** — The St. Croix Crucian Christmas Festival's Children's Parade was a colorful blend of music, movement, moko jumbies, and royalty, leaving organizers and the territory's leadership beaming.

Officially opened by Grand Marshall Michelle Smith — a young, local track star — the parade featured several school and community troupes who thrilled spectators, including several

members of the territorial government. When the Consortium's cameras caught up with Governor Albert Bryan Jr., he disclosed that he had attended several festival events, noting that “we’ve had good participation” throughout the various festivities, concerts, and competitions.

Senator Donna Frett-Gregory was also buoyed by the crowds who came out in support, and reminded spectators that the participating children “put in a lot of effort into getting themselves together.” Meanwhile, Senator Novelle Francis Jr. thanked the Division of Festivals and the V.I. Police Department for the safety and success of the festival.

Festival royalty as well as monarchs from several elementary and high schools — including institutions from sister island St. Thomas — graced the parade route. Among them was 16-year-old Alayah Watley, the Festival’s Junior Miss, who intends to use her reign to promote the teaching and wider use of American Sign Language throughout St. Croix, through the “Read Between the Signs” program.

From the sidelines, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach told the Consortium, “It’s been a great festival for me and a lot of people. The energy has been so high.” He commended the parade’s organizers and participants who he said “do so much to keep these traditions going. We want to let them know that we really appreciate it.” Mr. Roach also celebrated troupe leaders and festival participants, noting that they “inspire children with their costumes and their presentations.”

Among the celebrated troupes was the St. Croix Majorettes, recently honored by the V.I. Legislature and currently celebrating their 50th anniversary. Speaking on behalf of another troupe — a group from St. Thomas celebrating the 175th anniversary of emancipation — territorial Emancipation Committee chair Carol Burke encouraged additional parent participation and hoped that “as a community, we go back to family and being present in the lives of our children.”

The St. Croix Christmas Festival will [wrapped on Saturday](#) with the Adults Parade and final Village night. According to Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, through the festival, Crucians get a chance “to tell the world that this is not a small place. It might be small in size but it's big on talent, character and culture.”