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## “Knight’s Ville” Opens on St. John as Celebration Honors Tishelle Knight’s Cultural Legacy

**St. John Celebration opened the Village on Sunday as “Knight’s Ville,” honoring Tishelle Knight’s role in Virgin Islands music and culture, with officials linking the event to Emancipation Day, Independence Day and the island’s deep cultural legacy.**

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**Local dignitaries, pageant royalty and Division of Festivals officials cut the ribbon to formally open the 2026 St. John Celebration.**

The 2026 St. John Celebration officially opened Sunday with the traditional Carnival Village ceremony, naming this year’s Village “Knight’s Ville” in honor of Tishelle Knight, whose contributions to Virgin Islands music and culture were recognized by government officials, family

members and community leaders.

Tourism Commissioner Jennifer Matarangas-King said Ms. Knight's voice "has defined the soundtrack of these islands for decades." "Her voice doesn't just fill a room, it fills your soul," she said in her opening remarks.

The evening's proceedings began with Ms. Knight's mother, Sonia, performing the national anthems of the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She later credited the family's musical legacy for her daughter's talent.

"Mommy is so proud of you," she said, while speaking briefly about Ms. Knight's musical ability.

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett said St. John is an island "that knows how to hold history and celebration together at its heart," noting that Virgin Islands Emancipation Day and the United States' Independence Day are both part of the island's annual Carnival celebration.

"St. John's celebration is an act of remembrance," Ms. Plaskett declared. "Every note played on the stage, every dish shared, every dance under the lights – all of it traces back to our roots."

She described Ms. Knight as "a beloved figure to our music and culture," citing her performances across the territory and beyond.

Senate President Milton Potter said Ms. Knight's talent has "helped define modern Virgin Islands music."

"Her voice has lifted us in festival and fete...reminding us that our culture is not just something we watch, it is something we live," Mr. Potter said.

He also spoke about Ms. Knight's ability to blend soca, funk, R&B and traditional Caribbean rhythms "in a way that feels like home to every Virgin Islander." That range, he said, is reflected in the lineup of performances at Knight's Ville, which he said would "turn this village into a crossroads of music, flavor and Caribbean unity."

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach placed the celebration in a broader cultural context, referencing an African proverb that states that "a feast without dancing is incomplete."

He added that "of course, you cannot have dancing without music," and highlighted Ms. Knight's role in the territory's cultural life.

"You pour into us beautiful melodies...and we are grateful to you for sharing that talent with us," Mr. Roach told Ms. Knight.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. also focused on the importance of dance in Virgin Islands culture, saying it has become less common at parties among young people.

"Our children are not dancing anymore," he said. "We need to bring dancing back," he declared, expressing hope that honoring Ms. Knight would help encourage that cultural connection.

Ms. Knight expressed gratitude for the recognition and thanked her parents for encouraging her throughout her life. "These folks have supported me from the time they know I could sing...they were meant to mold me into the person I am today," she said.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally open Knight's Ville, the evening continued with performances from local DJs, bands and artists, including Xtreme Bank, Klimaxx Band, Pumpa and Big Shaw. Events, including Village activities, Food Fair and J'Ouvert, will continue through Saturday, July 4th, when events will close with parade, the final Village night, and Independence Day fireworks celebration.

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