

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## De Jongh Celebrates Last USVI/BVI Friendship Day As Governor

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It was his last USVI/BVI Friendship celebration as governor, and Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. celebrated knowing that, after the weekend was over, next year's event would be hosted by the territory's new leader.

The delegation out of Tortola of nearly 100 people, led by BVI Governor John Duncan and Premier of the British Virgin Islands, Dr. Orlando Smith, were greeted by steel pan entertainment as they entered the waterfront and made their way through Emancipation Garden on St. Thomas for a cultural fair and presentations. The weekend marked the USVI/BVI Friendship's 42nd observance, but de Jongh pointed out the ties between the two territories were forged "thousands" of years before.

The Governor also noted the movement between the two island jurisdictions -- sharing family, education, healthcare, work and more, and said it has aided in the growth of both economies.

"Although this special holiday is just 42 years old, the relationship between our two island groups spans thousands of years. There's no doubt that many of our families are the same and that individuals have moved back and forth between both jurisdictions for work, healthcare, education and family responsibilities," the USVI governor said.

He continued: "In both Virgin Islands, many of our residents are direct descendants from emancipated slaves, who built their lives on agriculture, fishing, and basic trades. Over the years, communities were established with schools, churches and necessary government services. Our populations have grown, along with our economies."

The festivities also included a breakfast at Grand Hotel after which the BVI delegation was treated to a walking tour that highlighted the many ties that bind the people of the USVI and the BVI.

"I know that our two jurisdictions have established and maintained an excellent working relationship that allows us to effectively deal with common issues, such as law enforcement, boundaries, fishing, and more," de Jongh said. "It is a mark of our special kinship that we can deal with such issues and policy decisions in a straight-forward and open manner. I feel blessed to have been an integral part of such a unique and special relationship, and hope that my efforts since becoming Governor in 2007 have further strengthened the bond between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands."

In closing, de Jongh said it has been a privilege for him to participate in the USVI/BVI Friendship celebrations and thanked the people of the Virgin Islands for giving him the opportunity to do so over the last eight years, something he said will be cherished by him and his wife, Cecile, for years to come.

"Let us remember that common values, history, heritage, proximity and economics have brought us together and will always keep us close," he concluded.