

A close-up photograph of a woman in traditional Kalinago attire. She has intricate face paint, including a diamond shape on her forehead and curved lines on her cheeks. She wears a headband with colorful feathers and multiple necklaces made of white, orange, and grey beads. Her hair is pulled back.

# Kalinago Costumes

by Prosper Paris

Historically, the Kalinago painted their entire body with roucou (a paste made from the fruit of the roucou shrub indigenous to Dominica, the Caribbean and Central and South America. The paste is made by crushing the fruit and mixing it with water). A man going on an expedition, or making a visit of importance, was painted by his wife with roucou and castor oil mixed with burnt gum. They used this mixture to paint black moustaches and lines on the body.

The men wore a cord hung on a strip of cloth, five inches wide, reaching to the ground. This is called a waicou. Some men wear the Caracoli, an ornament in the shape of a crescent, which was made of gold, silver and copper. It was hung from their necks, nose, ears and lower lips. When there were no caracoli, they also adorned themselves with parrot feathers. The chief or leader wore a headpiece like a crown, made of parrot feathers.

The young men smeared their faces, and drew Spanish-style moustaches, as well as streaks and slashes on their cheeks and from their forehead to their ears. The nose and lips were also painted with roucou. The area around the eye was painted in black.

The women also painted themselves with roucou, but without the black moustache and lines. They wore the 'Camisa', a larger version of a waicou, about eight inches

long and four inches wide, with beads embroidered at the edges and ends. They wore necklaces, bracelets and earrings made of beads. Their most cherished ornaments were the anklets.

These were made of stout materials and were four or five inches long. They had rims of half an inch at the bottom and one inch at the top. The anklets were sewn around the ankles while the Caribs were still very young, and consequently the anklets got so tight that the calves became far larger and harder than they would, had they developed under normal conditions.

The young women drew on their foreheads, and wore headbands reaching down in a point to their noses. To increase the brightness of their eyes, they drew small lines around them.

Today, one can only see these costumes when the groups are performing publicly.