

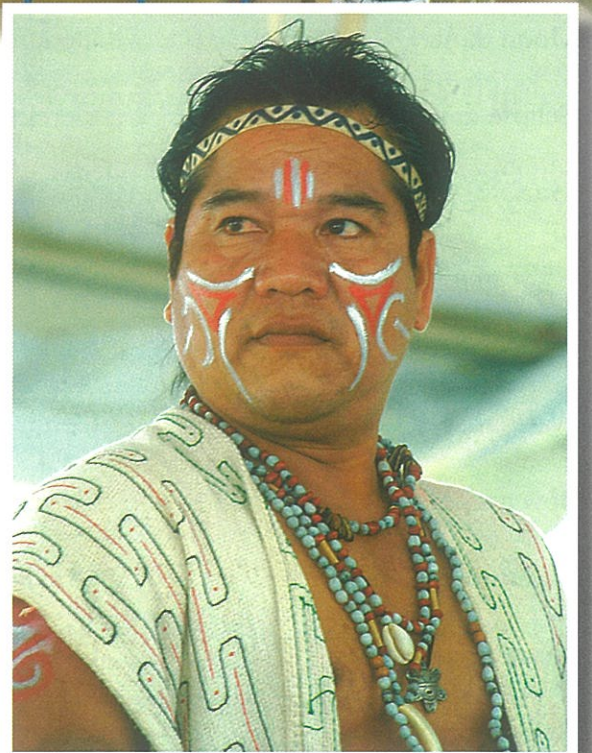


The Karifuna Cultural Group

by Prosper Paris

The Karifuna Cultural Group was formed in 1978. The aim and objective of the group is to revive and maintain the Kalinago Culture.

The group has accomplished a number of projects to raise the awareness among the larger Kalinago community of the importance of keeping the Kalinago Culture alive.



The group started as a Karifuna Youth Group. At that time, the group focused on Drama. By 1980-81, it established itself as a Cultural Group.

On the question of Carib identity, Karifuna has always been at the forefront. The group educates and informs its members and the larger community through songs, dance, storytelling, workshops and popular theatre.

A number of prominent warriors have been, and some still are, members of the Karifuna Cultural Group. Among them is Dr. Worrel Sanford — founding member, former Chief Garnette Joseph — founding member, former chief Irvine Auguiste — founding member, Mrs. Sylvanie Burton — District Development Officer, Nicolas Sanford, Jacob Fevrier and many others. In fact, over two hundred persons have been members of the group.

Karifuna had the opportunity to

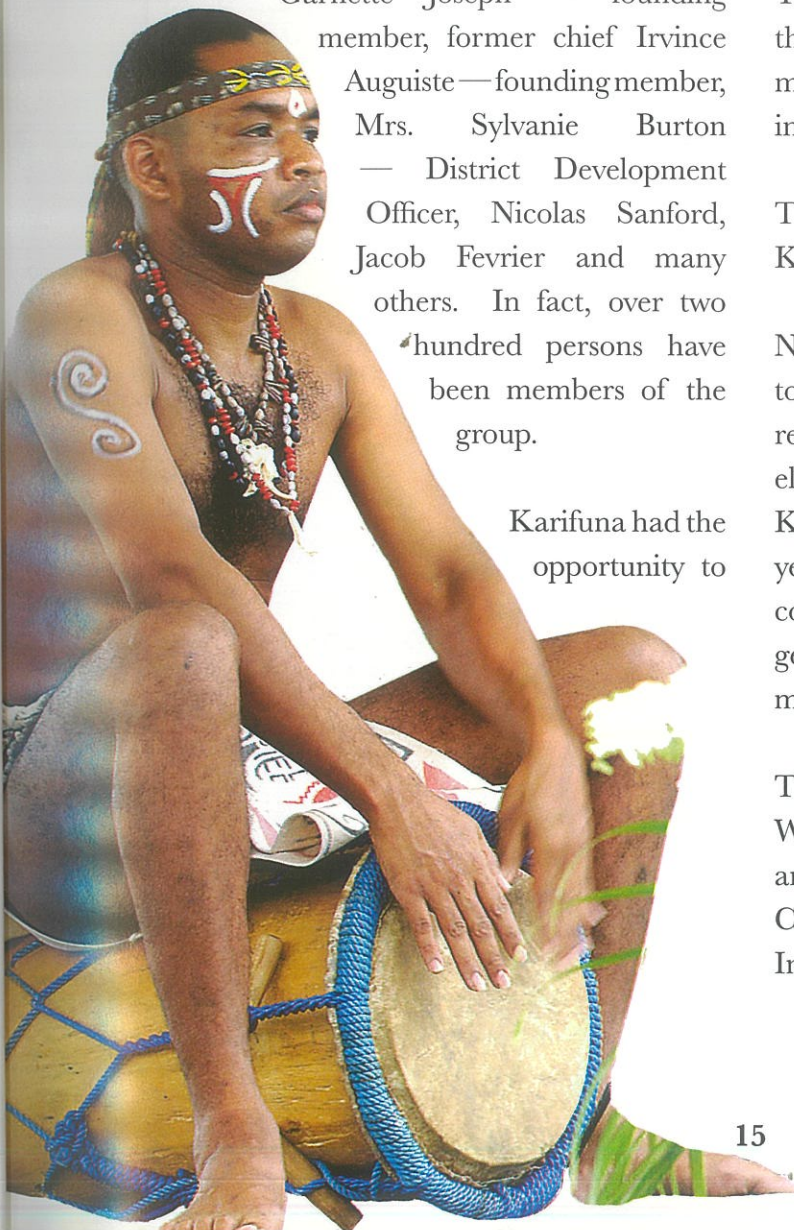
represent Dominica in a number of festivals, trade shows and educational forums at local, regional and international level. The group has taken part in documentary films and movies such as the *Orchid House*, *Seven Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Spirit of Jaguar*, *Columbus* and *Chocolate Pollen*.

Karifuna has performed in a variety of places, including Martinique, Guadeloupe, Trinidad, U.S.V.I, Canada, France, England and the U.S.A. The group's first major achievement was being part of a contingent to represent Dominica in Carifesta 1981 in Barbados. It went on to receive the Edward Oliver Leblanc Trophy that same year. Karifuna has been the recipient of the Golden Drum Award and many more recognition awards, both here and in the region.

This did not come easily; like all other groups, Karifuna had challenges to face.

New members had to be trained constantly to replace those who left to take on new responsibilities, or to seek "greener grass" elsewhere. Unlike other groups in Dominica, Karifuna is not a seasonal group; it functions year-round. The group is guided by a constitution. A yearly plan is put in place at its general meeting which is held annually in the month of December.

The group is engaged in activities such as Carib Week, which was first organised by the group, and later taken over by the Carib Council, Carnival, the World Creole Music Festival and Independence.



The work and contribution of the Karifuna Cultural Group have had tremendous impact on the Kalinago people. They can now identify themselves with something positive.

The group's performance is a major attraction for the Dominican public and to the tourists who visit the island.

But this is not the only work the group does. Dance performance is only one component of the group's work.

Over the years, Karifuna has performed and encouraged the planting of the larouma reed, which is used in basket making. The group organised and funded a project to experiment with the growth of larouma at different elevations in the Carib Territory. This project was very successful and many producers are planting plots on their own.

Karifuna also works on the restoration of the Kalinago Language, the backbone of Kalinago culture.

The group organised and funded the Inter-School Dance Festival and Kalinago History quiz competition. This will be done on an annual basis as long as resources permit. The group recorded its first compact disc, "Nou Se Kalinago", in the year 2000. Six of the tracks are in the Kalinago language.

To date, the group has a membership of twenty persons, ranging in age from ten to fifty-five.

Karifuna has passed through many rough roads and still there are challenges ahead. But its members are proud to be the longest-serving group in the Carib Territory.

The progress they have made over the last twenty years would not be possible without the support of the fans and parents of the members.

The group is very thankful for those who have encouraged and given moral support. Karifuna will continue to hold strong and make a difference.

