

Happy SXM DAY 2026

A Special Edition by

The Daily Herald

CONSTANT ATTENTION

Tomorrow, Wednesday, November 11, is Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten Day, honouring the two-country island's spirit of unity and togetherness embodied by the Treaty of Concordia. It's the French side's turn to host this edition of the joint celebrations.

"The Friendly Island" and its people have persisted in their continued peaceful co-existence with basically free movement of persons and goods across open borders throughout the centuries despite many challenges – some caused by nature and others man-made. Needless to say that such a unique relationship requires constant attention.

After all, what is good can always get better.

Happy SXM Day!
The Publisher



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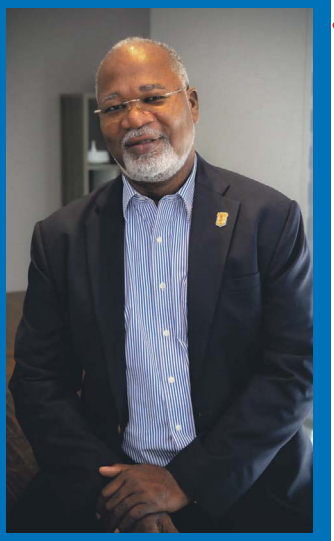
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SAINT MARTIN / SINT MAARTEN DAY MESSAGE



From Louis Mussington

President of the Territorial Council of Saint Martin

The special bond that unites us

Dear Saint-Martiners,

On this November 11, we celebrate much more than a date marked on our calendar. We celebrate our history, our identity, our traditions and, above all, the special bond that unites us with our island. Saint Martin Day is a special occasion that reminds us of what makes our territory so rich and unique. One island, two sides, but one shared history, united families, shared traditions and a deep sense of belonging.

Saint-Martin is a land of encounters, diversity and cultural blending. Our heritage, languages, music, cuisine and customs are all testament to this richness, which is passed down from generation to generation and even shared greatly with our island visitors as we continue the Festival de la Gastronomie that begins today.

This day is also an opportunity to pay tribute to those who came before us and helped shape the soul of Saint-Martin. To our elders, who have worked to preserve our values, traditions and way of life together; their legacy is a precious treasure that we all have a responsibility to pass on to future generations. As we watched the cultural parades that joined our two sides of this one nation for the first time this year, we can be proud of our willingness to continue combining our efforts.

I would also like to address a special message to our young people: Be proud of your roots, your history and your culture. Take the time to learn about your island, understand its past and keep its traditions alive. For it is by knowing where we come from that we can fully appreciate who we are. Beyond our differences and administrative borders, Saint Martin Day reminds us that our greatest strength lies in our ability to live together in respect, solidarity and unity.

On this day of celebration, I sincerely hope that we will continue to nurture the spirit of brotherhood that is such a defining characteristic of our island. May this celebration be a moment of joy, reunion and collective pride for each and every one of us. To all Saint-Martiners on both sides of our island, I wish you a wonderful Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day celebration.

Happy St. Martin Day to all!

Saint-Martin

SAINT-MARTIN'S DAY

PROGRAMME

NOVEMBER 11 2026, FRENCH QUARTER





OFFICIAL CEREMONY

9:00 AM	**Ecumenical Service**	*Tabernacle Methodist Church*
10:30 AM	**Wreath-Laying Ceremony**	*French Quarter Border Monument*
11:00 AM	**St. Martin's Day Parade**	*RN7 Route Nationale 7 > Rue Coralita*
11:45 AM	**Official Ceremony**	*French Quarter's Sports Complex (Dojo)*

ENTERTAINMENT

Thelbert Carti stadium

2:00 PM	**MC Phoxx, DJ Lil Cuz, King Timo**
3:00 PM	**Games with Funtopia**
3:00 PM	**Football Game U15**
3:30 PM	**Food Competition**
4:00 PM	**Miss French Quarter**
4:00 PM	**DJ Joquone, SXM Majorettes, 2 Shores One Family, African Dancers, Lili Peekaboo & Daughter**
6:00 PM	**DJ Big Sexy, Madd Crew Dancers, Exclusive Family, Rythm & Groove**
7:30 PM	**Football Game U20**
8:00 PM	**DJ Siw'Roo, 3G Units Band**
9:00 PM	**Bottle Neck Crew**
10:00 PM	**Skillfull Band**
11:00 PM	**DJ Siw'Roo**

SAINT MARTIN / SINT MAARTEN DAY MESSAGE

ONE ISLAND, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

My fellow St. Martiners,

On November 11, we celebrate the island we call home and the people who give it life, character, and purpose. From our districts to our shores, from the northern hills to the southern coast, Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day brings us together through a heritage that belongs to us all.

Our island holds two jurisdictions, many backgrounds, and a remarkable range of traditions. Yet the connections between our people have always reached across the border. We share family ties, friendships, livelihoods, and memories. We recognise ourselves in the sound of our music, the flavours of our kitchens, the stories of our elders, and the familiar warmth of a greeting.

These everyday connections are amongst our greatest strengths. They remind us that unity is something we practise through how we live, how we treat one another, and how we respond when someone needs help.

This Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day, I invite us to make that spirit a stronger force in our national life.

For those of us entrusted with public office, this means listening carefully, working together, and keeping the needs of our people at the centre of our decisions. The concerns families face do not stop at the border. Our shared environment, the movement of our people, the opportunities available to our youth, and our preparedness for emergencies all call for sustained cooperation between the two sides of our island.

Our people should experience that cooperation in practical ways: Institutions that communicate, services that respond, and decisions that reflect an understanding of our shared home. As Prime Minister, I remain committed to advancing a relationship grounded in mutual respect and meaningful results.

Cultural pride carries an equally important responsibility. Our heritage lives on when we teach our children the history of this island, support our artistes, preserve our historic places, and create space for our elders to share what they know. It grows stronger when young St. Martiners see that their voices, talents, and ambitions have a place in shaping our future.

We must give them reasons to believe in that future. A young person should be able to look at St. Martin and see opportunities to learn, build a career, start a business, raise a family, and contribute. That hope deserves our attention throughout the year.

Today, I pay tribute to the generations whose labour and sacrifices helped build this island. I also thank the frontline workers, teachers, healthcare workers, entrepreneurs, public servants, volunteers, and countless others whose daily efforts sustain our communities. Much of their contribution takes place quietly, but its value is felt in every part of our society.

As we gather with family, enjoy our traditions, and celebrate together, let us carry the spirit of this day into the days that follow. Let us show greater patience towards one another, take greater care of our surroundings, and approach our differences with respect.

Our unity is strongest when every person can feel its value in their daily life.

On behalf of the Government of Sint Maarten, I extend warm Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day greetings to everyone across our island and to our people abroad, who continue to carry St. Martin in their hearts.

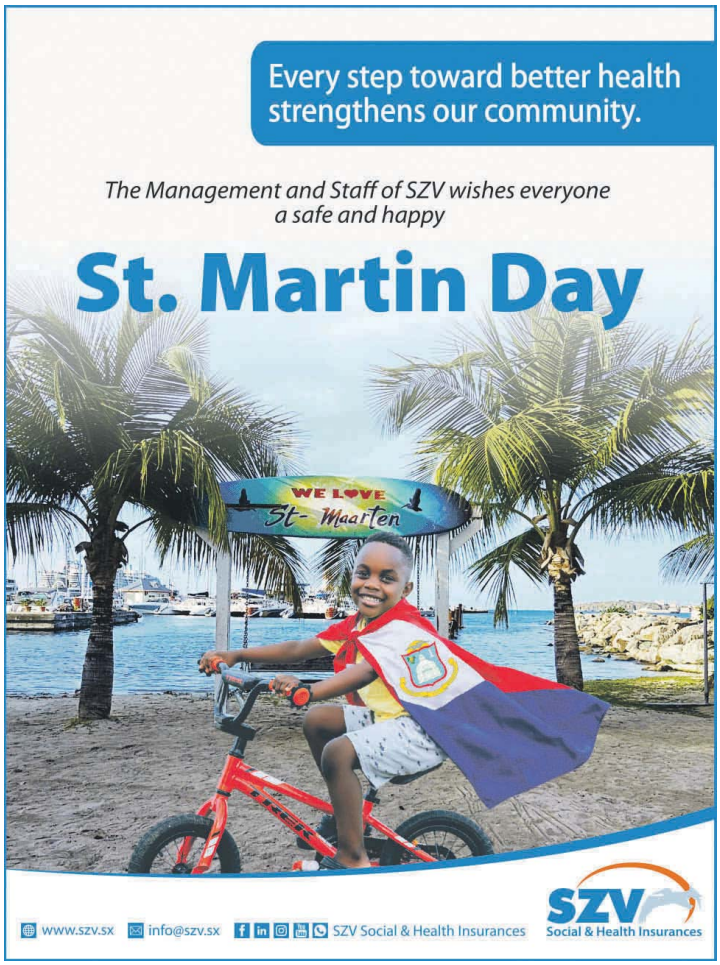
May God bless our people and our beloved island.

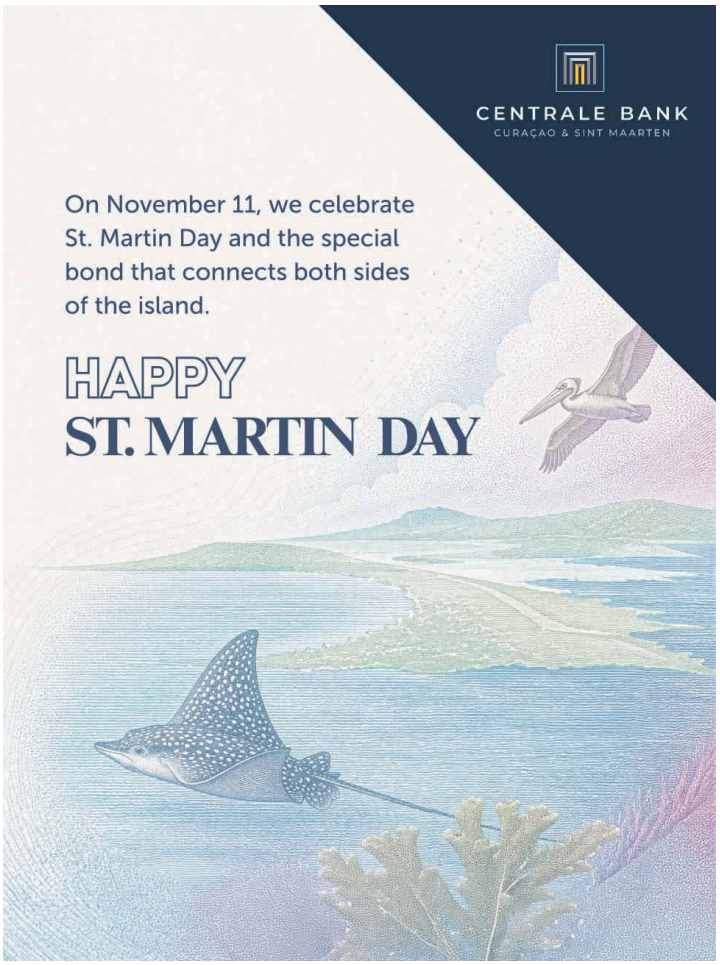
Happy St. Martin Day!



From Dr. Luc F. E. Mercelina

Prime Minister of Sint Maarten






Happy
Sint Maarten's Day
2026
Let's celebrate the strength of our people,
the richness of our culture, and the bright future
we continue to build together.
ORCO BANK
Your Personal Banker


Happy Saint Martin / Sint Maarten Day!
Signature Aviation SXM celebrates with you and
wishes for continued solidarity, peaceful co-existence,
strong family bonds, patriotism, and togetherness.
May this day bring joy and unity to all!
SIGNATURE
AVIATION
Signature Aviation SXM - Proudly serving the community with excellence and care.







Read up on your heritage

Looking to take a deeper dive into the island's history and culture? Publications, along with regular events by non-profit, volunteer-based organisation Les Fruits de Mer association, are a great way to delve into this knowledge. Having published more than 60 books about the island, we thought it would be nice to ask the team for a few top recommendations. Through its Amuseum Naturalis at The Old House, a free community museum, the association also offers free admission to the public, school visits, and hosts educational events including the Migratory Bird Festival and Endemic Animal Festival.

Its main goal is to provide information, accessible to everyone, about the island's nature, heritage and culture. Wildlife educator, author, and the association's co-founder Mark Yokoyama explains: "We believe that everyone should have access to information about their island. We have published over 60 books about St. Martin for all ages. One of our goals is to give a book about St. Martin to every student every year they are in school. So far, we have distributed over 60,000 books."

A few of Yokoyama's top picks are mentioned below.



What book would you recommend for a general/broad overview of local culture?

SoualiKulture is an activity book we did with the Soualiwomen Kultural Association. It was created for students, but it also is a great overview of many cultural topics like food, farming, fishing, art, music, carnival and more. You can learn a lot about many aspects of St. Martin culture, and the activities are really fun for people of all ages.

How about one that has a nostalgic factor?

Stories from the Heart is a book we did recently with the Hearts United foundation. It has interviews with 18 seniors on St. Martin and is full of nostalgic memories and stories from the old days.

What book would you recommend that might have some surprising information, even for people who have lived here their entire lives?

Homemade is a book we did with Celeste Beaupertuhy. He did drawings and descriptions of all the toys kids made on St. Martin in the 1940s and 1950s before it was easy to buy toys in stores. We also did interviews with his friends and others who told us about making and using toys back then. It is really amazing to learn history through the lens of childhood memories.

As a local history enthusiast, what are some books/reading materials by other authors or poets that you have enjoyed?

Rising Spirit, Ruby Bute's autobiography, is really fascinating. In particular, I enjoyed her description of growing up in Aruba. Her parents traveling to Aruba for work had a big impact on her family and this is something that happened to many families at this time. It is also amazing to read about the St. Martin community on Aruba during that era.

Rising Spirit, mentioned above, is for sale at the Ruby Bute Silk Cotton Grove Gallery and Estate in Friar's Bay.

Visit www.lesfruitsdemer.com and amuseumnaturalis.com for more information. Almost every book is available online for free as a downloadable PDF (www.lesfruitsdemer.com/resources/books/).

For printed books by Les Fruits de Mer, check Sint Maarten National Heritage Foundation & Museum, Shipwreck Shop stores, and Amazon, or visit the Amuseum Naturalis at The Old House on a Saturday morning.



39th Annual St. Maarten | St. Martin's Day
AROUND THE ISLAND RELAY RACE

WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2026
7.00 AM | BELAIR FITNESS CENTER



ROUTE DIRECTION: COUNTERCLOCKWISE

Leg 1: Start at Belair Community Center parking lot and exit onto Welgelegen Road, turning left towards Belair and Divi Little Bay. Follow the road until the start of Front Street and turn onto the Boardwalk at Walter Plantz Square. Finish in front of Walter Plantz Square by the pier. **Total Distance: 2.43 Km / 1.51 Miles**

Leg 2: Continue along the Boardwalk towards Pasanggrahan Royal Hotel, then towards Greenhouse Restaurant. Turn left into Kanaal Steeg, heading towards the Vineyard building. Continue on W.G. Buncamper Road towards the Freedom Fighter Roundabout and straight onto Suckergarden Road. Finish just past the Guana Bay Road intersection. Total Distance: **2.15 Km / 1.34 Miles**

Leg 3: Continue straight up the hill along Suckergarden Road towards Defiance, going down past Middle Region. Finish at the bottom of the hill before the Bishop Hill Road intersection. **Total Distance: 2.52 Km / 1.57 Miles**

Leg 4: Turn left onto Bishop Hill Road towards the Belvedere Roundabout, crossing the border and following the main road through French Quarter. Finish at the Community Center near the big church. **Total Distance: 2.89 Km / 1.80 Miles**

Leg 5: Continue through French Quarter, following the main road towards Orient Bay. Finish at the viewpoint of Orient Bay & La Galion: Paradise View. **Total Distance: 2.44 Km / 1.52 Miles**

Leg 6: From the Orient Bay viewpoint, follow the main road, passing the Orient Bay entrance towards Grand Case. Go straight at the roundabout at French Cul-de-Sac and turn right onto Route L'Espérance towards Grand Case Airport. Finish at the parking lot of Discover CrossFit. **Total Distance: 3.33 Km / 2.07 Miles**

Leg 7: From Discover CrossFit, continue in the direction of Grand Case Village, following the one-way road along the waterfront. Pass the church and exit onto the main road, N7. Continue towards La Savane gas station. **Total Distance: 2.91 Km / 1.81 Miles**

Leg 8: Climb out of La Savane, staying on the main road, passing Rambaud, then up Morne Valois and down to Galisbay. Turn right at the Agrément roundabout towards Omni Stadium. Finish at the Galisbay gas station. **Total Distance: 3.42 Km / 2.12 Miles**

Leg 9: Follow the road along the waterfront of Marigot, passing Le West Indies Mall, to the cemetery. Turn left at the roundabout towards Marina Royale and turn right into St. James/Lowtown. Continue along Bellevue Road to the Border Monument. **Total Distance: 4.38 Km / 2.72 Miles**

Leg 10: From the Border, turn right onto the Causeway. Cross the Causeway to the Simpson Bay side using the pedestrian crossing, turn around and come back to Carrefour in Cole Bay. **Total Distance: 2.76 Km / 1.71 Miles**

Leg 11: From Carrefour, follow Union Road to the Cole Bay roundabout, turn left and climb Cole Bay Hill. At the Indigo Bay roundabout, turn right onto Link One, and turn left at the One Tete Lokay Roundabout outside Learning Unlimited School. Continue along Welgelegen Road and finish at the Belair Community Center parking lot. **Total Distance: 4.17 Km / 2.59 Miles**

Around the Island RELAY RACE

This year marks the 39th edition of Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day Around the Island Relay Race – an iconic event hosted by St. Maarten Roadrunners to celebrate island unity.

Up to 60 teams will race, carrying the baton counter-clockwise around the island. The adrenaline-filled day starts and ends in the parking lot of Belair Community & Fitness Center, with things kicking off at 7:00am on Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day. Each team counts 11 runners, and each runner must complete their own leg of about 3-4km and run with the baton in hand.

The public is kindly asked to not drive next to or behind the runners. This causes a back-up of traffic and creates dangerous exhaust fumes for runners behind you. Understandably, you want to cheer on your runners, but this can be done for a moment before pulling over or going ahead.

Sponsors and partners include Tri-Sport, Philipsburg & Maho Pharmacies, Pro-Physio, Sint Marten Medical Center, Tortuga, Driven Media, Algemeen Pensioenfonds Sint Maarten (APS), We Are SXM, and Airwave.

For more information, see www.sxmroadrunners.com; photos are courtesy of St. Maarten Roadrunners.



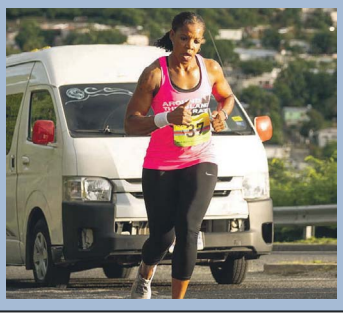














‘November 11 is our day’

Collectivité Cabinet Director Junisa Gumbs urges all to keep St. Martin’s traditions alive

Preserving St. Martin’s cultural identity, strengthening the sense of belonging among residents on both sides of the island and ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their heritage are among the key messages behind this year’s St. Martin Day celebrations, according to Director of Cabinet of the Collectivité of Saint-Martin Junisa Gumbs.

For Gumbs, November 11 is about much more than a day of festivities. It is an opportunity for the people of St. Martin and St. Maarten to celebrate their shared history, traditions, languages, food and music, while reflecting on what it means to belong to the island.

This year’s celebrations carry additional significance following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the French and Dutch sides of the island, recognising the Unity Flag as their shared cultural symbol.

Gumbs said the agreement has given November 11 an even stronger meaning, reinforcing the cultural connection between the two sides despite their different administrative systems. “We may have different administrative systems, but we share one island, one history and a cultural heritage that connects us,” she said. “November 11 is an opportunity for the people of both sides of the island to proudly show what makes them ‘from here,” Gumbs said.

As Director of Cabinet, Gumbs is responsible for ensuring that the vision and priorities of the President and elected officials are translated into concrete actions. Her work includes coordinating major institutional events and working closely with the General Administration and technical departments responsible for operational, logistical and security arrangements. Her involvement in St. Martin Day is therefore both a professional responsibility and a personal commitment. However, she is clear that the celebration ultimately belongs to the people of the island. “St. Martin Day is an important occasion for our elected representatives, but above all, it is a celebration that belongs to the people of this island.”

While the official programme provides an opportunity for residents to come together, Gumbs wants the celebration of St. Martin’s identity to extend beyond the organised activities.

She believes residents can contribute in simple but meaningful ways, including raising their flags, wearing the island’s colours, preparing traditional dishes and sharing stories about their heritage. “St. Martin Day should not be limited to an official programme. It should be visible in our homes, our businesses, our neighbourhoods and our everyday conversations.”

She also hopes residents will leave the celebrations with a better understanding of the island’s history and cultural identity. “If someone discovers something new about our history, learns about a tradition they did not know, or simply feels a stronger sense of pride in being from St. Martin, then the celebration has achieved something meaningful,” she said.

One of the developments Gumbs considers particularly encouraging is the growing popularity of the cultural parade, which she said is gradually becoming one of the highlights of the celebrations. She also pointed to the involvement of the French Quarter community on the French side, where residents have increasingly taken ownership of the November 11 festivities.

Through music, traditional food, cultural performances and activities throughout the day, the community has helped showcase the island’s heritage. “In many ways, November 11 has also become the French Quarter Fête, and that is some-



Continued on page 11







S'MaatnUnited Cultural Parade in photos

Next: Official parade still to come tomorrow, November 11

An energetic and uplifting celebration of the island's shared culture, heritage, and identity, the S'MaatnUnited Cultural Parade wove its way through the streets of Marigot on Sunday, November 8. The pre-holiday event was a collaboration between Foundation SMNCP (Sint Maarten National Cultural Parade) and Festival des Traditions et Cultures Saint Martinoise. The colourful community celebration set the tone for the official Saint Martin/Sint Maarten Day Parade, which takes place tomorrow, November 11. (See schedule in this edition for details.)































The Flamboyant Soualiga Artist Collective brings Sint Maarten's heritage to life through story, song, & cultural expression

The Flamboyant Soualiga Artist Collective, a group of dedicated local artists, performers, and cultural advocates, is sharing Sint Maarten's rich history and living traditions through dynamic performance art and community engagement.

Originally formed under the umbrella of the "Spring Garden Crew" in connection with Heritage Experience initiatives, the collective brings together prominent Sint Maarten cultural figures and artists, including artistic mentor Clara Reyes, producer and performer Lorenzo (Sigma Defence), author and video creator Artem (Graveyard Verses), vocalists Benjamin Bell, Lady Baker (Jasmine) and Naomi Warsop (Its-Buttonz), alongside artists/performers Karim Toulen and Kiara Vanterpool (Kyro). Through traditional music, oral storytelling, folk dance, and interactive theater, the ensemble creates immersive cultural showcases that celebrate the island's ancestral roots, native flora, and community spirit.

The collective's journey began with community-driven historical enactments and site-specific tours across local heritage sites. Having recently transitioned into an independent artist collective – now proudly performing as The Flamboyants – the group continues to expand its reach. From viral cultural videos shot along Sint Maarten's coasts, to live theatrical performances across the island, the team is actively developing original productions, workshops, and school presentations designed to pass Sint Maarten's legacy on to the next generation.

The Flamboyants tailor their performances to highlight key historical moments and seasonal traditions across the island's calendar:

St. Maarten Day – November 11:
Educational visits and performance showcases at local schools, such as the A.C.E. Foundation School in Cole Bay and Montessori Primary classes, bringing traditional songs, folk dances, and stories to youth.

Emilio Wilson Park Cultural Showcase – November 17:
Dedicated historical performances and community storytelling events at Emilio Wilson Park.

A Bush Tea Christmas – December 19-20:
A flagship holiday production celebrating Caribbean folk medicine, traditional bush teas, Christmas carols, and island heritage.

For the members of The Flamboyants, participating in these cultural showcases is more than a stage performance; it is a vital service to the community. "What makes working with this collective so powerful is the unity and pure joy of bringing our island's living history to life," says producer and performer Lorenzo (Sigma Defence). "It deepens your appreciation for where we come from and reminds us of the strength and beauty in our shared roots."

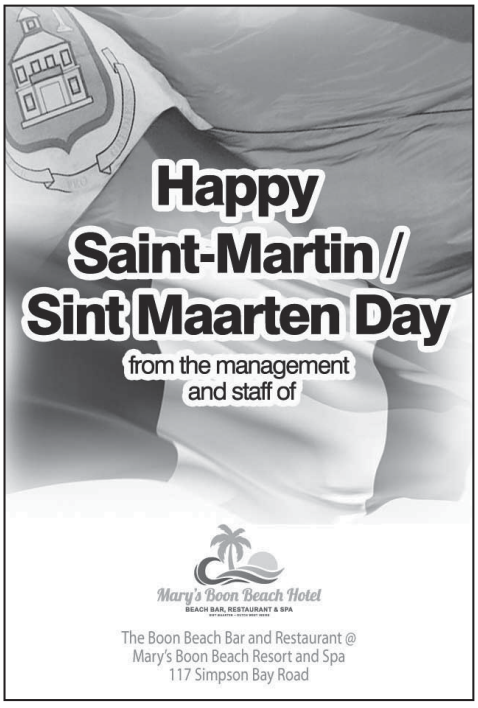
The Flamboyants invite residents and visitors alike to attend upcoming performances, collaborate on community projects, or book cultural presentations.

Social Media: Follow the collective's updates, performance clips, and behind-the-scenes content on Instagram and Facebook under The Flamboyants SXM and Clara Reyes.

Email & Inquiries: For booking inquiries, school performance requests, or media interviews, please contact the collective via email or through official social media platforms.

Inquiries & Bookings: For bookings, school performance requests or media interviews, please contact the collective at +1 (721) 523-1963.





'November 11 is our day'
Continued from page 7

thing worth celebrating," she said.

She described the community's involvement as an example of how residents can take ownership of a cultural celebration and give it their own special character. A particularly notable development this year was the introduction of the first cultural parade organised on the French side. Gumbs described it as a wonderful display of creativity, cultural expression and community pride, adding that initiatives like this demonstrate how the celebrations continue to evolve.

There is no single overarching theme guiding this year's programme. Instead, the central message remains the celebration of the island's identity, cultural heritage and unity.

The Unity Flag continues to represent the shared cultural connection between both sides. Gumbs also noted that discussions surrounding a flag representing French Saint-Martin could create new opportunities for cultural expression in future celebrations. However, she stressed that decisions on the matter rest with the elected representatives.

For Gumbs, one of the most important aspects of St. Martin Day is ensuring that younger generations understand and appreciate the culture they have inherited. She believes young people should be encouraged to participate in cultural parades, traditional performances and community activities, while also taking the time to speak with older generations and learn about the island's past. "Culture cannot survive through books and speeches alone. It must be experienced, practised and passed on," she said.

Her own experience of studying abroad helped strengthen her appreciation of the importance of knowing where she comes from. "As a young Saint-Martiner who had the opportunity to study abroad, I quickly understood how important it was to know where I came from," she said.

She explained that living away from the island made her more conscious of the questions people ask about one's country, culture, language and traditions. Those experiences, she said, made her realise how important it is for people to understand their own heritage and be able to speak confidently about it.

She also highlighted the importance of preserving the smaller cultural references that help define the island's identity, including the Coralita, yellow butterflies, traditional dishes, music, local expressions and stories passed down through generations. For her, these are not simply reminders of the past but living elements of a culture that must continue to be shared and experienced.

"What I find particularly beautiful is seeing these cultural references celebrated openly, allowing younger generations not only to hear about their heritage, but to see it, feel it and experience it."

Gumbs believes preserving St. Martin's identity is not the responsibility of government alone. Residents, businesses, associations and community organisations all have a role to play. She also sees cultural preservation as important to the island's tourism economy, pointing out that the island's appeal extends beyond its beaches. "As an island whose economy relies heavily on tourism, our culture is one of our greatest assets. Visitors do not come to St. Martin simply for our beaches. They also come for our people, our food, our languages, our traditions and the unique character of our island."

However, she believes residents must first recognise and appreciate their own culture before they can effectively share it with visitors. The celebrations also provide opportunities for local vendors, artisans, food providers and community organisations. With activities taking place throughout the day in French Quarter, the event allows residents to showcase their products, talents and traditions while generating local economic activity.

Gumbs said she hopes to see families, young people, community groups and visitors actively participating throughout the day.

The work behind the celebrations

While the cultural activities are what the public sees, Gumbs said organising a major public celebration requires considerable preparation, particularly when it comes to balancing security requirements with the festive atmosphere residents expect. The Collectivité must anticipate risks, coordinate the relevant services and ensure that appropriate security arrangements are in place, especially when large crowds are expected.

"One of the greatest challenges in organising a major public celebration is finding the right balance between ensuring public safety and maintaining the festive, welcoming atmosphere that people expect," she said.

She also acknowledged the work of the General Administration's technical and administrative staff, many of whom have been involved in organising St. Martin Day for decades.

Gumbs said their experience, knowledge and commitment are essential to the celebrations, even though much of their work takes place behind the scenes. "I believe it is important to recognise their contribution, because an event of this magnitude is always the result of collective effort."

One of her most meaningful experiences during the preparations was being present for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between both sides concerning the Unity Flag.

She said witnessing the commitment to recognising the island's shared cultural identity was particularly significant.

Gumbs said decisions about expanding the programme in future years will ultimately be made by elected representatives, while her role will remain focused on supporting their vision through administrative coordination and technical assistance.

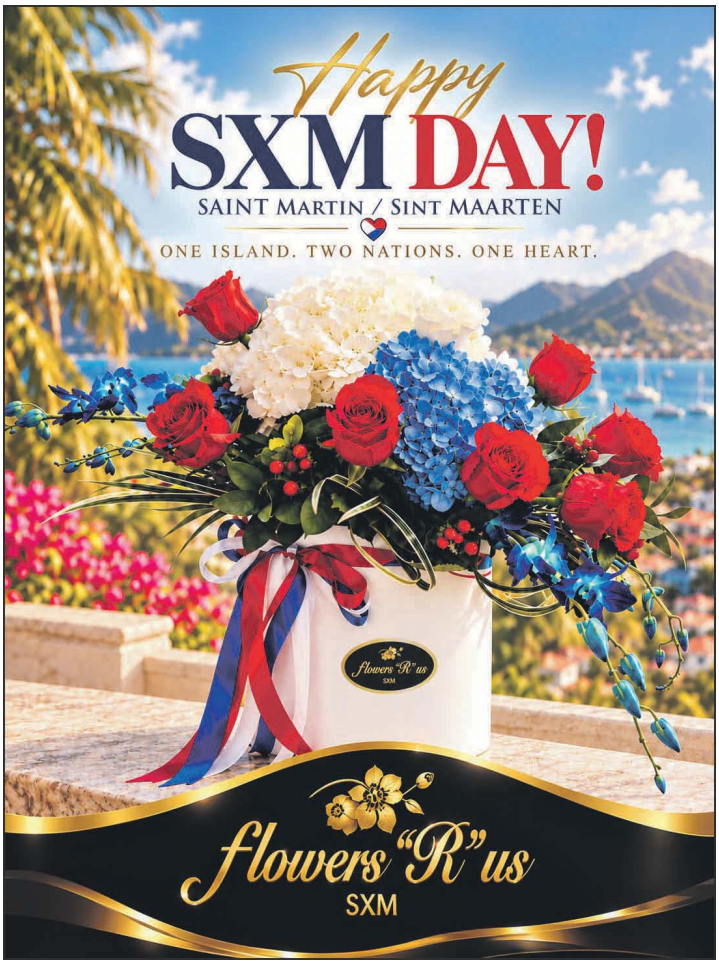
'Knowing where we come from'

Ultimately, Gumbs hopes this year's celebrations will leave residents feeling proud of their heritage, more connected to one another and motivated to play a part in preserving the island's traditions.

Her message is one of belonging, pride and collective responsibility, extending beyond November 11 itself. "St. Martin is more than the place where we live. It is the place that shapes who we are," she said.

She called on residents to celebrate the island's history, honour those who came before them and inspire future generations to carry the heritage forward. "Whether you were born here, grew up here or have made St. Martin your home, take a moment to appreciate the richness of this island and the responsibility we share in preserving its heritage. Because knowing where we come from gives us the confidence to know where we are going."

"Happy St. Martin Day to everyone," she said.











Keeping St. Maarten's traditions alive:

The cultural legacy of the late Esther Narcisco-Williams

St. Maarten's cultural heritage is made up of more than the traditions people remember. It lives in the clothing worn by generations before us, the crafts made by hand, the stories passed down through families, the music and performances that bring communities together, and the skills that are shared from one generation to the next.

Esther Narcisco-Williams understood the importance of keeping those traditions alive. Through her work in arts and crafts, traditional clothing, cultural events and theatre, she devoted much of her life to ensuring that St. Maarten's history and identity would not be forgotten.

Following her passing, the island has lost one of its dedicated cultural advocates, but the work she championed remains part of the island's heritage. Her contribution was not simply about producing crafts or organising events. It was about creating opportunities for people to reconnect with their roots, appreciate local talent and recognise the value of the traditions that make St. Maarten unique.

Narcisco-Williams was the president and driving force behind Our Creations, St. Maarten Arts and Crafts Foundation, an organisation established to promote local arts and crafts while safeguarding the island's cultural identity.

The foundation recognised that arts and crafts offer a way of understanding a people's history, skills, creativity and values. Its work involved researching and documenting aspects of St. Maarten's heritage and turning that knowledge into tangible creations that residents and visitors could see, appreciate and enjoy.

One of the organisation's central aims was to pass on the knowledge of ancestors, raise awareness of traditional clothing and customs, and encourage people to make use of these traditions, particularly during cultural celebrations and special events.

Its activities were intended to involve people of all ages, including visitors, and to give local creative talent a platform. Through annual events, designers, seamstresses and models were able to showcase their work and compete for prizes, while members of the public had opportunities to learn more about local arts and traditions.

Among the foundation's yearly activities were the Creative Paper Apparel Competition in February, the Cultural Tea Party in July around Emancipation Day, and the Smaatn National Cultural Parade for St. Martin Day. The organisation also hosted arts and crafts fairs, courses and workshops.

These activities helped bring culture into public spaces and gave local artisans and creative people opportunities to share their skills. They also reflected Narcisco-Williams' belief that cultural preservation should involve active participation rather than simply remembering how things were done in the past.

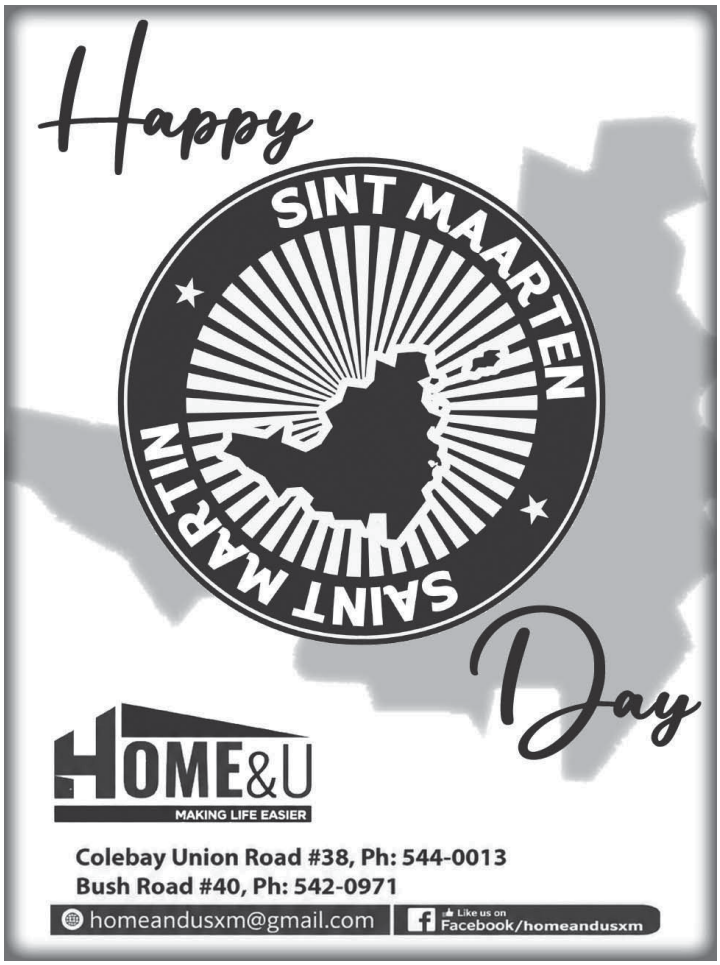
One of the foundation's most significant projects was the Titah Frock, a statuette created to represent St. Maarten's history and cultural clothing traditions.

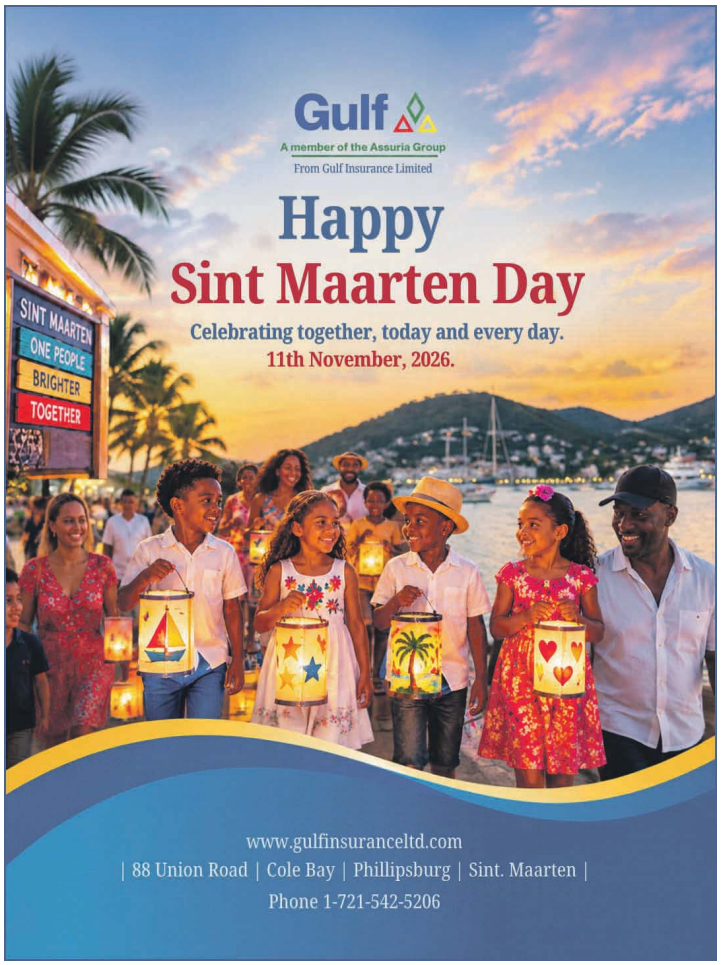
Made from Plaster of Paris and hand-painted by different local artists, including members of the foundation's board, the statuette brought together the creativity of local artists and a story rooted in the island's past. Its official launch took place on July 15, 2021, in the presence of then Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (ECYS) Rodolphe Samuel, the then Culture Department Director Clara Reyes, UNESCO St. Maarten Secretary General Marcellia Henry and invited guests.

The name Titah has a special cultural connection. It is the name little children would use for their sister when they were unable to pronounce the word sister.

The frock itself draws inspiration from the patchwork clothing that was once made from leftover pieces of fabric. In earlier times, people who sewed clothing for

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Keeping St. Maarten's traditions alive

Continued from page 12

wealthy families would save the scraps from the garments they made. Those pieces of fabric were then used to create patchwork frocks for themselves.

Although made from leftover material, these frocks became something to admire. The Titah Frock project brought attention to that tradition, with its floral prints representing St. Maarten's cultural wear. The design was registered with the Bureau for Intellectual Property.

The project was also intended to create opportunities for others to become involved in cultural preservation. The foundation planned to involve creative senior citizens, who would be able to earn a stipend by painting the Titah Frock statuettes. It also wanted to encourage young people to participate.

That vision reflected an important part of Narcisco-Williams' approach to culture: preserving traditions while making room for new generations to learn, create and contribute. It was not enough for traditional knowledge to remain with those who already possessed it. It needed to be shared so that younger people could understand its value and carry it forward.

The foundation also sought to support the local creative economy by promoting products made on the island. Its St. Maarten Crafters Creations evenings gave residents opportunities to purchase handmade gifts, arts and crafts, as well as traditional local treats such as coconut tarts, sweet potato pudding and sugar cakes.

These gatherings also brought cultural entertainment into the experience. Past events featured the Joyful Ringers Bell Choir, other carolling groups, the Bottleneck Blowing Stars and cultural dance groups. Visitors could enjoy the entertainment, purchase locally made products and dine at restaurants on the premises.

Such activities connected different aspects of St. Maarten's culture. The crafts, food, music and dance were not treated as separate elements, but as parts of a shared heritage that could be celebrated together.

Narcisco-Williams' contribution to the arts also extended to theatre. A playwright and theatrical producer, she used performances to bring stories to life and create opportunities for local actors, dancers and musicians.

Drawing on her faith and love of community, she directed productions



including The Rise and Fall of King Solomon. Her work brought together performers with different talents and experiences, encouraging artistic collaboration while giving local stories a place on stage.

Narcisco-Williams was also an active member of the Cole Bay Theatre Company. Her contribution to theatre was recognised when she received a Sage Cultural Award during the ceremony on December 29, 2023, at which members of the group were individually honoured.

Her work across arts, crafts and theatre demonstrated the many ways in which culture can be preserved. It can be found in an old-fashioned garment recreated by a local artist, a handmade item inspired by ancestral knowledge, a traditional food shared at a community event, or a story brought to life through a theatrical performance.

Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Minister Melissa Gumbs also recognised the importance of Narcisco-Williams' contribution to the island. In expressing her condolences in a press release issued earlier, the Minister highlighted the way she made cultural heritage something people could see, touch and cherish.

She said Esther understood something very important: Our culture is not just something we remember; it is something we create, share, and pass on. Through Lulu's Dolls, the beautiful Titah Frock and her tireless support of local artisans, she brought our heritage to life in ways that people could see, touch, and cherish. She was passionate about what she did, and our country is richer because of it. My heartfelt condolences go out to her family, friends, and the entire cultural community. Her work will continue to tell our story for generations to come.

A "singspiration" night had been planned to celebrate the life of Narcisco-Williams for Sunday, November 8, at the Methodist Church in Philipsburg. This was unfortunately postponed until further notice due to inclement weather.

As St. Maarten gets ready to celebrate Saint Martin-Sint Maarten Day and the traditions, history and identity that bind its people, the passing of Narcisco-Williams provides an opportunity to reflect on the importance of those who work to protect the island's cultural heritage.

The work of Narcisco-Williams and her Our Creations group was rooted in the understanding that traditions can disappear if they are not practised, documented and passed on. Through its projects and activities, the foundation sought to give local culture a visible place in everyday life and encourage residents, particularly younger generations, to take pride in their heritage.

Esther Narcisco-Williams devoted herself to that purpose. Her legacy can be seen in the traditions she helped bring to the forefront, the local artisans she supported, the creative opportunities she helped establish and the stories she helped bring to the stage.

Her work leaves an important message for the generations that follow: St. Maarten's culture is not only something inherited from the past. It is something each generation has a responsibility to value, celebrate and pass on.

THE PERFECT PIT STOP



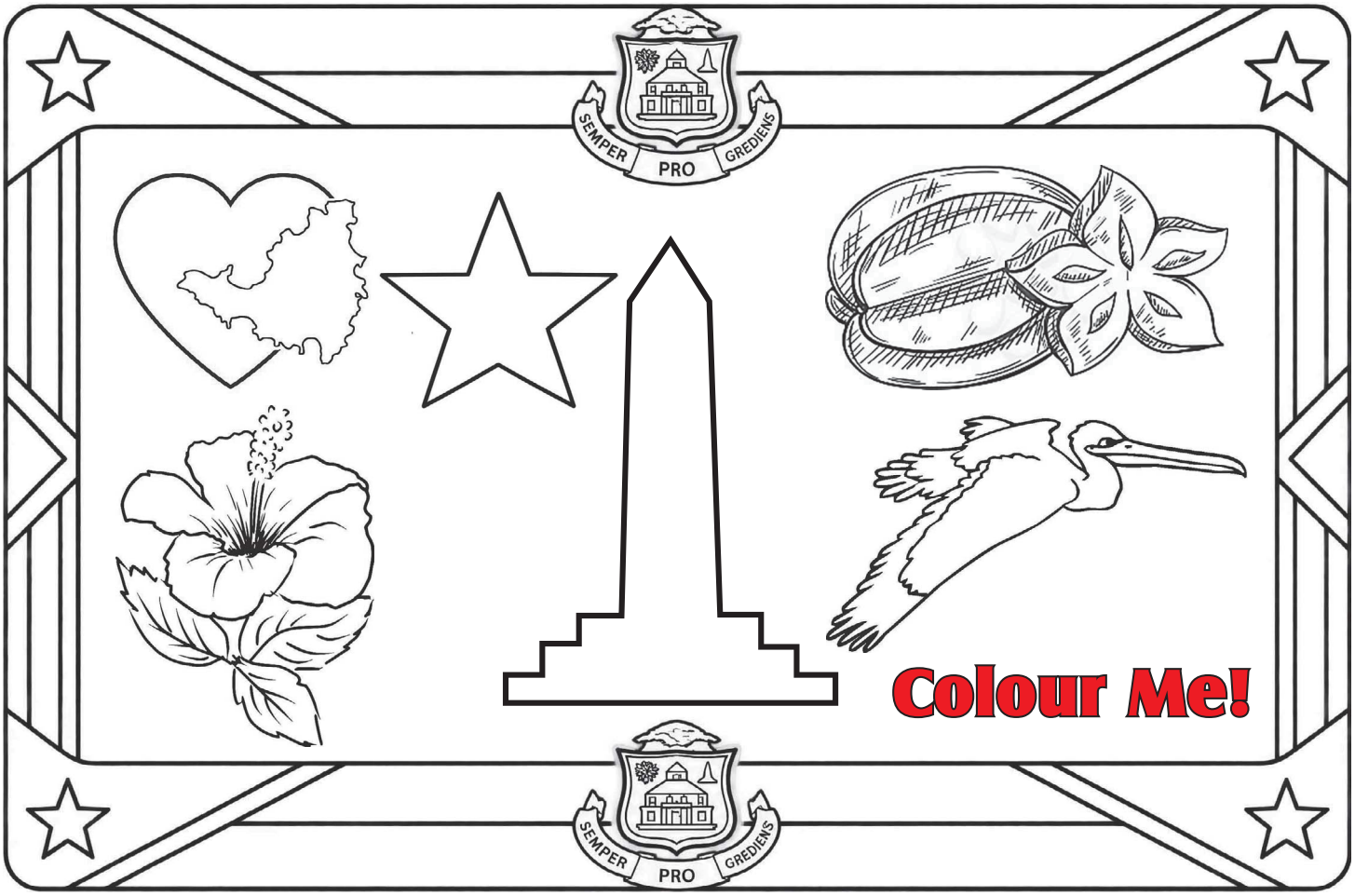
YOUR COLLECTIBLE FOR

8,90 $

~~12,90 $~~

Sint Maarten's Day offer

Offer valid through November 30th, 2026, at McDonald's locations in Marigot, Belvedere and Simpson Bay.



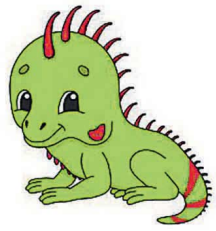


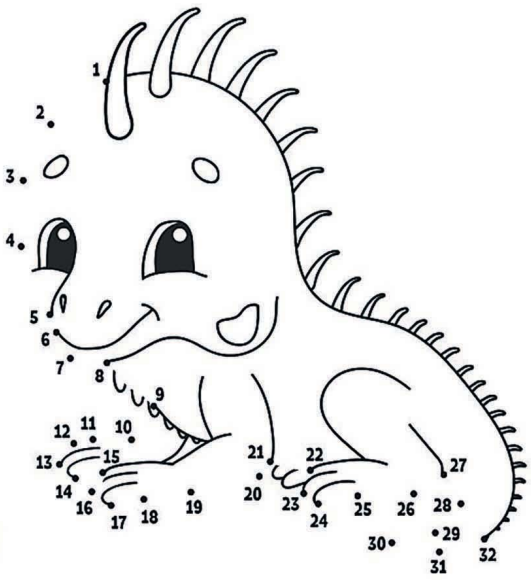
SXM DAY Wordsearch

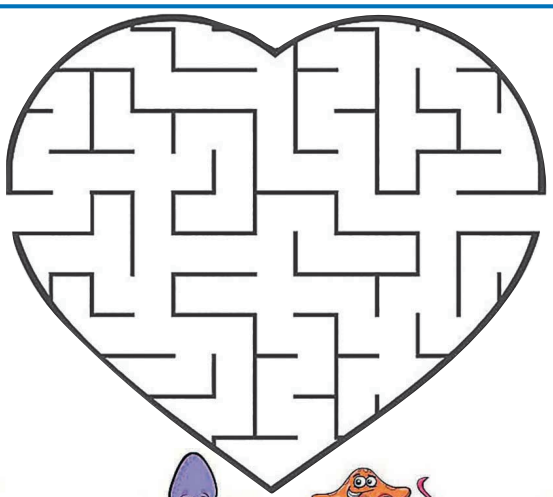
Find these keywords in the puzzle!

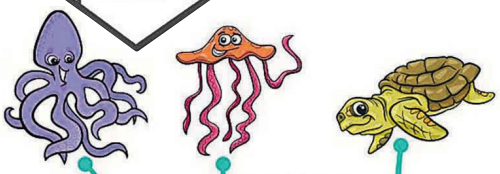
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UNIFIED	SHARED	NOVEMBER	PEACE
KINSHIP	FREEDOM	PRIDE	HOME
TREATY	SYMBOL	BELONG	HARMONY

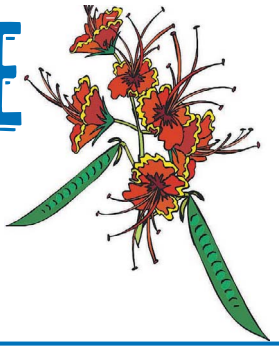
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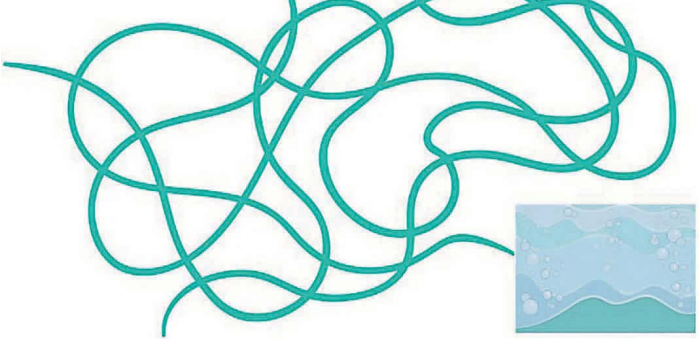




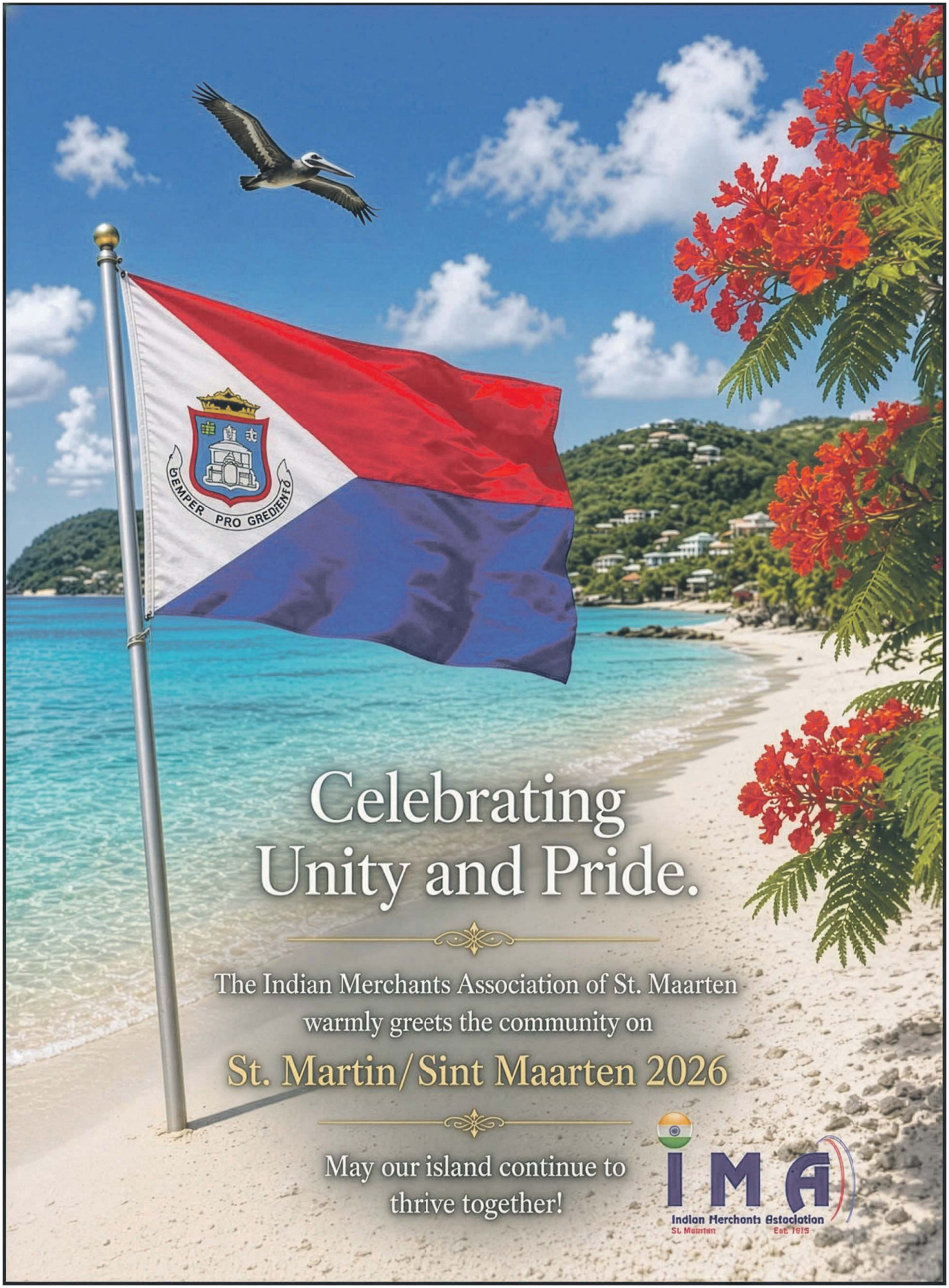








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The Indian Merchants Association of St. Maarten
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