

University of the West Indies St. Augustine Captures Top Honors at CTO's Regional Nex-Gen Tourism Showcase Final

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Innovation, cultural pride and next-level creativity took center stage as the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) concluded its 2025 Regional Nex-Gen Tourism Showcase 2025, crowning the University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine Campus as the winning team during the finals held during Caribbean Week in New York (CWNy 2025).

Launched to foster bold thinking and cross-sector collaboration in tourism, the Showcase challenged student teams from across the region to develop sustainable business proposals under the theme: "Innovative Tourism: Bridging Sectors for Sustainable Growth."

Finalists explored cutting-edge concepts in Agri-Edu Tourism, Medical Cannabis, and Dark Tourism, aiming to connect tourism with agriculture, health and heritage in ways that support resilience and regional development.

Hosted by Nicolas Scott, Technical Assistant in CTO's Resource Mobilization & Development



University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine students (l-r) Irshad Mohammed, Angelina Hosein and Sydney Henry react to the exciting news of their win.



department, the final round featured presentations from three exceptional university teams representing Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Cayman Islands:

University of the West Indies, Mona

University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

University College of the Cayman Islands

The winning proposal, Healing Roots, developed by UWI St. Augustine, captivated the audience and judges with a high-energy, theatrical presentation that blended music, spoken word, and immersive storytelling. The concept centered on an agri-wellness tourism model rooted in the hills of Paramin, Trinidad, showcasing how bush medicine, ancestral knowledge, and community empowerment can transform tourism into a tool for economic growth, cultural preservation, and wellness tourism. With its engaging performance and interactive approach, the team delivered an experience that was both moving and memorable — earning them top honors and thunderous applause.

“This was more than a competition — it was a demonstration of vision, courage and Caribbean ingenuity,” said Dona Regis-Prosper, Secretary-General and CEO of CTO. “Our region’s future is in capable hands. These students are not just dreamers — they are builders of a more innovative and sustainable Caribbean.”

Owen Darrell, Minister of Tourism for Bermuda, delivered the opening remarks, calling the Showcase “a launching pad for innovation and opportunity,” and commended the participating students for their bold ideas and commitment to regional progress.

Words of inspiration were delivered by Jameel Rochester, Director of Tourism for Anguilla, who shared his compelling journey “from barbecue grills to boardrooms”. Reflecting on his early days cleaning grills after school to becoming the youngest person to lead Anguilla’s tourism board, Rochester encouraged young people to embrace their purpose, seek mentorship, and remain open to new opportunities.

A distinguished panel of judges evaluated the finalists, including:

Claudine Pohl, CEO, Lemoneight

Jacqueline Johnson, President & CEO, Global Bridal Group / MarryCaribbean.com; Chairman, CTO Foundation

Louis Lewis, CEO, Saint Lucia Tourism Authority

Muryad de Bruin, Director of Tourism, Curaçao

Maya Nottage, Regional Marketing Director, Nassau Cruise Port Ltd.

The top team was awarded a US \$5,000 prize, generously provided by the Inter-American

Development Bank (IDB). In a welcome message, Carina Cockburn, IDB's Country Representative for Barbados, said: "At the IDB, we believe that investing in young talent and supporting platforms like this competition is critical to shaping a tourism sector that is more resilient, inclusive and sustainable. That's why we were proud to collaborate with the CTO in offering this year's winning prize because we don't just see you as the leaders of tomorrow, but as leaders of today, bringing fresh ideas and energy to the future of Caribbean tourism."

CTO extended its thanks to event partners and contributors, including Breeze Travel Solutions, Caribbean Airlines, Lemoneight, Travel Unity, New York City Tourism + Conventions, RWS Global, and SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, whose support was instrumental in making the Showcase and the group's activities a success.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Nex-Gen winners pictured with the panel of judges and members of the CTO team. At bottom left are CTO Secretary-General Dona Regis-Prosper and CTO Chairman Ian Gooding-Edghill. At top left are Grenada's Minister of Tourism Adrian Thomas, and Junior Minister of Tourism for the British Virgin Islands, Luce Hodge Smith.

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