



Northern Arts and Cultural Centre
Photo Credit: Ozgnr Oner

Storytelling

Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories have maintained their oral traditions and stories.

Legends and history are passed from generation to generation through the spoken word. These treasured stories are slowly

being recorded in print. However, storytelling continues to be celebrated in the territory. There are five storytelling festivals each year, held in Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River, Enterprise and Inuvik. These events bring Northern and national storytellers together and present a range of material from traditional to contemporary tales. Raconteurs of all ages and from all cultures are encouraged to participate.

NACC

The Northern Arts and Cultural Centre (NACC) is an award-winning performing arts centre located in Yellowknife. It is the only performing arts centre in the Northwest Territories hosting local, territorial, national and international performing artists in all of the performing arts sectors.

The centre also supports educational and community workshop programs throughout the Northwest Territories. NACC has an active performing artist mentorship designed to strengthen and encourage the professional development of select performing artists in the Northwest Territories. For more information about NACC and to see its performance calendar and upcoming events, visit www.naccnt.ca.



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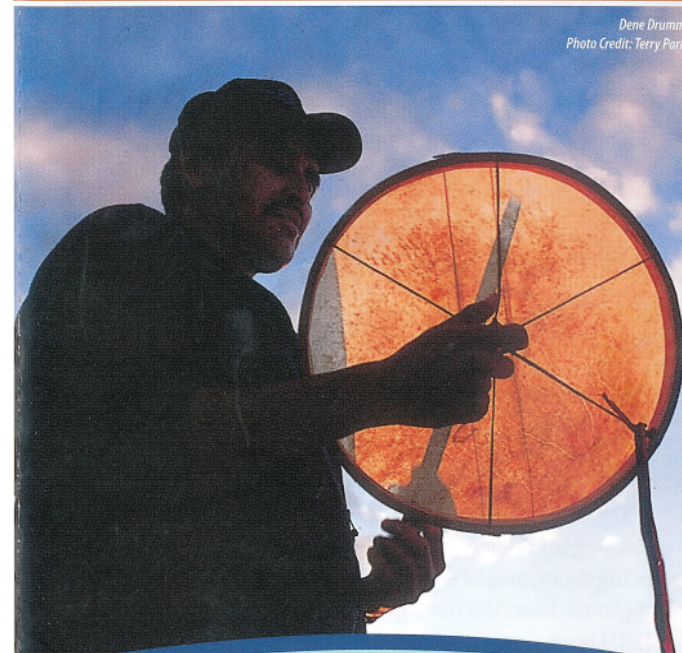
Photo Ribbon - Artist/Photo Credit: (L-R) E. Whane/Tessa Macintosh, Acho Dene Native Crafts/Pat Kane, Crazy Legs Contemporary Dance/Jeremy Childs, Inuvik Visitors Centre/Vicki Boudreau, Derrald Taylor/Roth and Ramburg Photography, Antoine Mountain/GNWT.



Performing Arts

From Canada's Northwest Territories

Dene Drummer
Photo Credit: Terry Parker



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Dene Drummers
Photo Credit: Tessa Macintosh

Traditional music, storytelling, and dancing are alive and well throughout the Northwest Territories.

Inuit, Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Dene and Métis carry on their longstanding traditions in every

community, and at festivals and events held across the territory. Newer traditions, from all parts of the world, encourage contemporary theatre, music, dance and storytelling.

Music

Traditional drumming surged in popularity in the 1980s, and many young people have since taken up this form of music.

In the Dene tradition, drum songs and prayers mark the opening and closing of special events. The instrument is the drum, played by a group of men, who sing to a rhythmic beat. The Dene drum is made from a 60 cm (24") birch frame covered by a stretched caribou hide attached with babiche (sinew). Three strands of babiche stretched across the face of the drum make a buzzing or rustling sound when the drum is struck with a 30 cm (12") drumstick of peeled birch.

Inuvialuit and Inuit drums and songs are quite different from the Dene tradition. Often there is a single drummer, singing his own song, accompanied by a chorus. Inuit caribou-hide drums are sometimes over a metre (39") in diameter. The drummer holds the drum high in the air by a handle and



Folk on the Rocks
Photo Credit: K. Magill

rotates it to bring alternate sides of the rim into contact with a wooden beater.

The fiddle is popular with all Northern peoples. Expert fiddlers are widely admired by old and young alike. Jigs and reels played on the fiddle were introduced in the early 19th and 20th centuries by American and European traders. Today, symphony musicians from southern Canada maintain the tradition with donations of fiddles and fiddling lessons for dozens of Northern youngsters.

Folk and country music are popular everywhere in the Northwest Territories. Every community has at least one aspiring rock or heavy metal band playing community halls or nightclubs year round. Music programs in schools across the territory are well attended. Northwest Territories is home to many musical styles inspired by its multicultural residents. From rap to gospel to jazz to fusion, the Northwest Territories has it all. Northern music really flourishes throughout the summer, when outdoor festivals are held under the midnight sun.

The largest and longest running music festival is Folk on the Rocks, held on the shore of Long Lake on the outskirts of Yellowknife the third weekend of July. Fort Simpson, Fort Smith and Fort McPherson also host art and music festivals. There's the Open Sky Festival, the South Slave Friendship Festival and the Midway Lake Festival throughout the summer. All four festivals feature local, territorial and Northern talent. Music encompasses a variety of tastes. CDs by Northern artists are available at festival sites and in Northern shops year-round. In the spring, music takes to the ice at an ice castle on Great Slave Lake. The SnowKing Festival in March showcases a variety of Northern artists. For more information on festivals and to find out the exact dates, visit www.nwtarts.com.

Dancing

Dene communities still hold traditional tea dances and drum dances to celebrate special occasions. In a tea dance, men and women stand side-by-side in a circle facing inward and move to the rhythm in a clockwise direction. At a drum dance, the dancers follow one another in a huge circle moving clockwise. The dance finishes when the lead

drummer performs a drum roll and sings louder in a final crescendo. Inuvialuit from the Mackenzie Delta have formed a troupe to perform traditional dances. Custom made dance costumes, decorated with fur, feathers and signature delta braid, are worn to help dancers act out traditional stories. The songs tell of hunting, of good times and hard times. This Inuvialuit tradition has gained international attention and recognition.

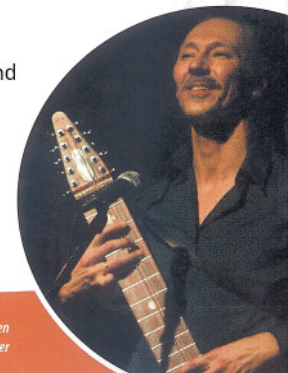


With the introduction of fiddle music came jigs, reels and square dances popular in the North. Métis dance troupes hold the floor with demonstrations of skill and dexterity. Northern jigs are variations of one of two dances: the Red River jig and the "Varandii", which is a version of the Scottish country dance called "Drops of Brandy", also known as "Le Brandy" in French-speaking Canada.

Today, the dance world in the Northwest Territories is rich and varied, and includes contemporary dance troupes and ballet schools as well as traditional dance groups, all performing throughout the year.

Theatre

Theatre has been an active community event in the Northwest Territories since the turn of the century. School plays, community theatre, dinner theatre, professional theatrical productions and theatre festivals have graced schools, community centres, rental halls and the stage of the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre. There is a strong workshop component. Playwriting, acting and directing workshops, and design and technical sessions support the growth of live theatre. For more information about Northwest Territories theatre groups, productions and training, visit www.nwtarts.com.



Musician - Pat Braden
Photo Credit: Ozgur Oner