

Recognition of Minister's Culture and Heritage Circle Award Recipients

Mr. Speaker, every year we honour the efforts of individuals, groups and organizations who strengthen the arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages of the Northwest Territories. Today, I am proud to announce the 2022 Minister's Culture and Heritage Circle Award recipients.

The Individual Award recipient is Karen Wasicuna of Yellowknife. As the co-founder of Crazy Legs Contemporary Dance, her passion and support for dance and performing arts has had a lasting impact on many of her students who are now sharing their culture through dance in various professional capacities.

The Elders Award recipient is Peter Paulette of Fort Smith. He has been influential in promoting his culture and language by teaching and promoting hand games and drumming. Peter's passion for sharing his language, culture and heritage has helped keep history, culture and language thriving in his community.

Shawna McLeod and Lois Phillip are the recipients of the Group Award. They developed the Fort Providence Arts and Crafts Development Program to help local artists expand their creative abilities. This has provided support for unemployed artists to expand their craft and knowledge in their ancestral traditions while tailoring it for a modern market.

Betty Harnum of Yellowknife dedicated her life to the revitalization of Indigenous language, and for this, she is receiving the Indigenous Language Revitalization Award in memoriam. Betty loved languages and culture; and served as the territory's first language commissioner from 1992 to 1996. In her nearly 50 years in the North, Betty helped to establish the Goyatikq Language Society, led the CBC Indigenous Language Archive Project, and developed a Dëne Dédliné dictionary and Inuinnaqtun dictionary.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the pleasure of selecting the recipient of the Minister's Choice Award. This year, I am honoured to present this award to Linda Duford of Hay River. Linda is an avid supporter of reviving the North's rich cultural heritage of fiddling, as a veteran instructor with the Kole Crook Fiddle Association and while operating a music studio. Linda has taught and inspired countless youth all over the territories by enthusiastically sharing her love of music.

Our award recipients come from different communities and backgrounds, but the one thing they have in common is that their actions create ripples, inspiring others to get involved in strengthening the territory's arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages.

Mr. Speaker, I invite everyone to join me in not just honouring this year's Culture and Heritage Circle Award recipients, but in thanking everyone who is committed to promoting and preserving the NWT's arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages. The work of these champions helps to ground us, brings us inspiration, contributes to the wellness of our communities, and benefits all residents of the NWT.

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