

Title:

Inuit Drum Dancing Of The Arctic

Word Count:

302

Summary:

Explores this ancient custom from the Inuit who live in the Arctic region of Canada.

Keywords:

inuit, eskimo , art, drum, dancing, canada, arctic

Article Body:

Like many other aboriginal cultures around the world, the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic have made use of drums in some of their traditional music for centuries. Inuit drum dancing played a part in many special occasions such as births, marriages, an Inuit boy's first hunt, changing of seasons, greetings for visitors or to honor someone who had passed away. News of these special events was spread by word of mouth and many Inuit traveled great distances to attend.

The Inuit drum called a qilaut was traditionally made from caribou skin with seal or walrus skin around the handle. Before, Inuit drum dancing was most commonly done by men but eventually both men and women performed it. There were various Inuit songs called ajaaja that were sung while drum dancing. In the past, many individuals had their own ajaaja songs that were unique to them and about their own personal life experiences. There were also many songs that were passed down through many generations of Inuit.

Like Inuit throat singing, the practice of Inuit drum dancing was banned by Christian missionaries for many years. Eventually, the Inuit regained their right to perform their drum dances. However, Inuit drum dancing is not as important today to Inuit life as it once was since western lifestyles have become such a big part of the northern Arctic. Inuit drum dancing is still sometimes performed at symbolic celebrations such as opening ceremonies for conferences, festivals, graduations and shows for tourists. Watching an Inuit drum dancer perform his or her music can be almost hypnotic and is one of the special treats from Inuit culture to be enjoyed by all. Inuit drum dancers are a common subject for Inuit art carvings and drawings. Inuit artists have even outfitted some of their animal subjects with Inuit drums.