



ROSS RIVER DENA DRUMMERS



Through a cultural exchange with Fort Norman in 1987, key community members in Ross River, YT were inspired to form the **Ross River Dena Drummers**. After seeing some young men's keen interest in drumming they purchased drums and helped form the drum group.

Establishing their first performance goal, they became part of the Arctic Winter Games in Yellowknife, N.W.T. They were captivated with performing and soon were touring the Yukon, N.W.T., and B.C. Being on the stage energized these young men and continues to be a motivating force. "After a good performance, when you walk off the stage, you feel light, like you're floating."

The Ross River Dena Drummers are traditional Dena Drummers who sing and play songs that a spiritual elder had received in a vision, where an angel of God visited him and taught him many songs. The Chant 'Ya ke gho dena,' meaning the man who came down from heaven, can be heard in the group's prayer songs.

Asked to describe their performance, they said, "Awesome! Our performance is emotional. Our songs move the spirit. People feel compelled to move – after a while the whole room will get up to dance." Their songs are prayer songs, celebrations songs, and special songs sung at gatherings.

Proud to share their drum songs, the Ross River Dena Drummers find it an honour to know and sing the traditional songs and to be positive role-models for the young people of their community.