



Summer in Fort St. John



There are all sorts of different activities going on during the summer weekends in Fort St. John. (Bottom Right) Scott Smith traveled from Dawson Creek to get some instruction from Jason Butler at the Blues Guitar Workshop held at The Rabbit Hole last weekend. (Bottom Left) Charlie Ward from Grande Prairie was one of the many participants at a Horseshoe tournament. (Top) Sixty nine dancers competed at the second annual North Peace Highland Dance Society Competition.





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Sixty-nine dancers competed at the second annual North Peace Highland Dance Society Competition held at Centennial Park on Saturday.

Highland dancers take over Centennial Park

HIEDI IRVINE

ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Half an hour of highland dancing is equivalent to two hours of intense soccer. Sixty-nine dancers got quite the workout at the Second Annual North Peace Highland Dance Society (NPHDS) Competition on Saturday.

Christa Powers, who won the premier 16 years and over, category plans on becoming an instructor next April, and said getting to compete at home is the best way to go.

"I've been envying a lot of people going 'yeah I can't wait to go home and walk three blocks and go to bed' when we have like a 14-hour drive to go everywhere, so rolling out of bed in the morning and driving down to the

local park is a lot nicer," said Powers of the competition held in Centennial Park.

Dancers mainly came from northern B.C. and Alberta, but some travelled from as far as Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Calgary.

Competition secretary Heather McCracken was impressed by the calibre of dancing at the competition.

"I think it's wonderful the way that the dancers are dancing. Our judge had mentioned that there was some great dancers up here, it's nice to know that we can keep up with some of the people down in Vancouver," she said.

Christine Henderson came from Vancouver to judge, it was her first time in Fort St. John and she hoped it

wouldn't be her last.

"You never know what to expect coming out of the big cities, but I enjoyed myself and there's a lot of great dancers out here," she said.

"At the end of the day, with Highland, you hope that people can enjoy dancing and not just enjoy placing well, so you hope the dancers have a good time out there, regardless of how they do."

Community support shined through the event, from donated tables to Shannon Butler pottery, and the NPHDS members hope to feature a local artist every year at the event.

Twelve-year-old Katie Penner has been dancing since she could talk and won the premiere 15 and younger event as well as the dancer of the day

award.

"It was a little bit hard. I was very nervous, but yeah it was pretty fun. I saw that big trophy and I thought 'oh no, I get it,' I was really excited," said Penner.

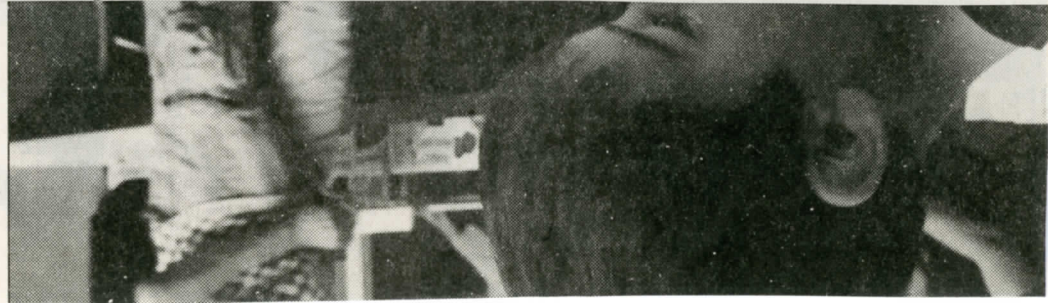
Kayla Mohler won the beginner, seven to eight year old trophy. Erin Courchene won the beginner nine to 11 year old category. Allison Dettling won the beginner 12 years or older category.

Riley Spencer took first place in the novice 13 year or older category. Melynda Bergen won the novice 14 years or older category.

Bergen and Spencer won the dancer of the day during the morning events.

Linnea Rodersma won first place in the intermediate category.

charge scare
for Alan
Jackson fans



Highland dancers kick into high gear for conference

KELLY LAPOINTE
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Three local highland dancers just returned from a competition in 100 Mile House and now they're setting their sights on the B.A.T.D. eighth annual North American Highland Weekend this October.

Christa Powers took two first places and three second place finishes in the aggregate category, Melynda Bergen got two first places and a second place and Makayla Bergen took a third place finish at the South Cariboo Highland Dance over the weekend.

Melynda and Makayla just moved up into the intermediate level and found the competition more difficult than novice.

"It's definitely harder now that we moved up...the dances are a lot more serious about," said Melynda.

But Makayla said moving up a category has also been a good push to improve her dancing.

"It makes you work harder, getting better competition, we've already been practicing way more," she said.

The three dancers from the Heather



Kelly Lapointe/AHN

Melynda Bergen, Makayla Bergen, Christa Powers and Heather McCracken instructor will be heading to Toronto for the B.A.T.D. eighth annual North American Highland Weekend Oct. 8 to 11 and are trying to fundraise to get there.

McCracken School of Highland Dance will be heading to Toronto Oct. 8 to 11 for the B.A.T.D. Eighth Annual North American Highland Weekend where Powers is a nominee for the Sadie Simpson Scholarship.

Powers has been before, but this is a first for the Bergens, who have already been practicing for the conference, where they will be dancing long hours.

They said it's important to them, especially being from a small town,

that they get this type of exposure.

The instructors at the conference are some of the best dancers in the world, Powers said she's excited to learn from their knowledge and experience.

"If dancers are getting instruction from other teachers, they tend to learn things a little bit better as well just because there's different ways of saying things and different ways of putting things," she said. "I've been twice before and every time I come back I'm just like a hundred times better at dancing."

With less than a month before taking off for Toronto, the girls are scrambling to find sponsors for their trip, which will cost over \$1,100 each, including airfare and hotels.

Powers said she has gotten a lot of 'maybes' so far, but no concrete numbers. They plan on making T-shirts with all the sponsors' names on them.

"We're going to wear them while we're dancing and then, obviously, when we come back. We're not just going to throw them in our closets," she said.

For more information contact Powers at 250-793-6492.