

# FOLK ARTS



Folk Arts Council of Winnipeg Inc.

## NEWS

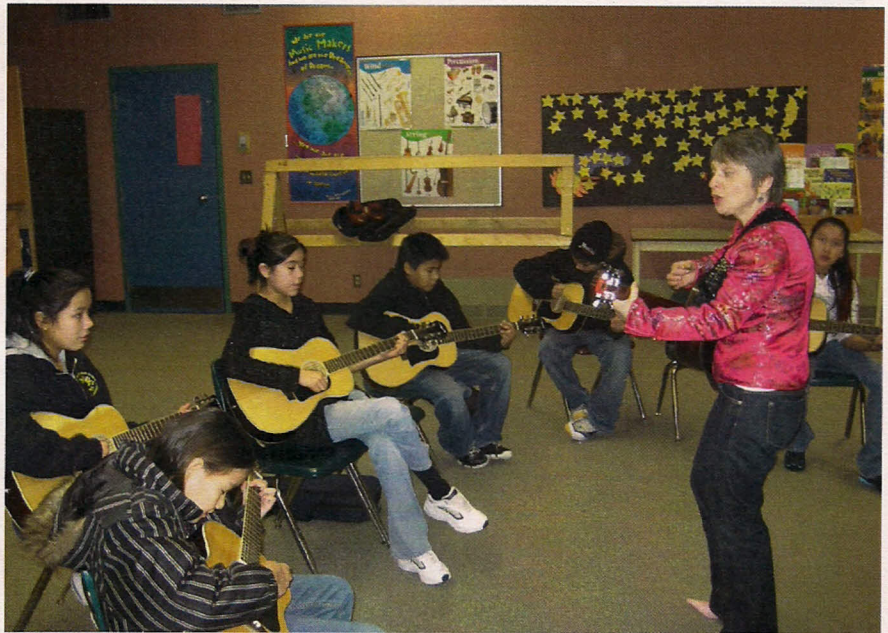
### Sister Dorothy Heads North

No, Sister Dorothy is not a nun, nor is she Catholic. Sister Dorothy is in fact a German Mennonite who has found herself learning Ojibwe, Cree, and much more from her many visits to Northern Manitoba.

For the last ten years, singer/songwriter Dorothy Penner, known as “Sister Dorothy”, has been travelling to Northern communities to teach music to students who may not have the opportunity to take lessons or even attend a concert.

Over the years she has taught music, song-writing and languages at about fifty schools in places like Norway House, Cross Lake and Duck Bay. More recently, she visited Southern Indian Lake, just south of Churchill and Island Lake, near the Ontario border. She uses whatever instruments they have on hand – guitar, fiddle, recorder and keyboards, to name a few. She spends at least one week at each school, and usually closes the week with a concert for the community so the families can see what their children have learned.

Sister Dorothy’s experiences began with collaborating with teachers at the Sagkeeng First Nation School, a place she has returned to many times throughout the years. She was approached to do song-writing workshops, and began working with the teachers to write songs that would help students learn the Ojibwe language. This has helped Sister Dorothy pick up the language herself, which has served her well as she recently performed with guitarist Billy Joe Green, delivering the workshop “Ojibwe for Beginners” at the Millenium Library. Interestingly, while Dorothy has embraced the Ojibwe language, and is also able to sing ‘O Canada’ in Cree, her first language is actually German.



Sister Dorothy teaches at South Indian Lake School

Teaching Ojibwe through song helps the children as they remember the catchy lyrics. In fact, Sister Dorothy’s most rewarding moments in teaching up north come from hearing the students sing the songs outside of the classroom on the playgrounds and for their parents. She often gets requests for songs when she returns.

In addition to being a Stage for Learning performer, Sister Dorothy also works with the program Artists in the Schools which funds her northern travels. She is conducting a workshop on teaching language through music for the Manitoba Arts Council in April.

She has enjoyed her experience tremendously, and keeps adding to her large collection of mukluks and beaded mittens purchased from the many talented artisans up north.

For advertising rates, article submissions, or comments please contact Kiery Drysdale at 982-6230 or email [drysdalek@folklorama.ca](mailto:drysdalek@folklorama.ca). Advertising and article deadline for the April 2009 issue is Monday, March 30.

