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Yellowknife glitters during golden anniversary

The voyageurs, fur traders and British naval officers first passed through Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, a long time ago. This summer, however, they will be on hand as some 2 000 other former residents return to help what is now a thriving city celebrate its fiftieth anniversary.

To mark the milestone, Yellowknifers will be dressed as British Royal Navy officers, French-Canadian voyageurs, fur-traders and Indian guides. They will hold fish fries, craft shows, kindergarten reunions, community barbecues, pancake breakfasts and baseball tournaments.

As well, there will be square dancing, Dene Indian drumming, British- and French-Canadian songs and an old-fashioned northern feast of fish and caribou meat.

And, during a day-long ceremony on the banks of the Yellowknife River, residents will re-enact the 1820 Akaitcho-Franklin expedition during which Yellowknife Chief Akaitcho guided British naval officer Sir John Franklin and his party on an unsuccessful search for the Northwest Passage.

But the part that excites old-timers most is the promise of reminiscing with friends they have not seen since this community of 10 000 was a cluster of tiny, makeshift homes with honey-bucket toilets and no road or telephones to connect them with the rest of the country.

Folk music festival

The two-week homecoming celebration began in late June with Folk on the Rocks, the annual folk music festival, and a golf tournament under the midnight sun, another local tradition.

Most of the rooms in Yellowknife's four major hotels filled up fast. But the Chamber of Commerce says no visitor will be without accommodation — if necessary they will find someone who will let a visitor throw a sleeping bag on the living-room floor.

Yellowknife has been, and still is to a lesser degree, a town of transients.

"There was a mining-town mentality, where people planned on staying a couple of years, that has been replaced by a grow-



Yellowknife is now a thriving city of 10 000 people.

Mike Beedell



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