

LONG BIO: Kathy Jessup

(word count: 529)

Edmonton children's writer and storyteller Kathy Jessup has been entertaining audiences since she first learned to talk. For over two decades she has devoted herself to storytelling as both a career and a passion. She's performed at schools, libraries, concerts and festivals in every corner of Canada. In recent years, Kathy has risen to the international stage, including trips to Scotland, Ireland, Iceland and Africa.

Her stories and articles have appeared in various literary venues, including the Alberta Centennial anthology *Under the Wide Blue Sky* and the advice book *How to be a Storyteller*. Kathy's CD *LISTEN UP! Tellable Tales for Hungry Ears* features a selection of her original stories for families, and is recommended by the *Canadian Children's Book Centre* as a top choice. You can also hear Kathy on CDs produced by TALES, (The Alberta League Encouraging Storytelling.)

When Kathy's not telling stories, she keeps busy with a number of different workshops including her very popular writing workshops for children, and storytelling/performance workshops for all ages. Kathy also presents at Teachers' Conventions, Professional Development days, literacy events, and enjoys speaking at engagements for a variety of organizations.

Growing up, Kathy never dreamed there was such an occupation as *Storyteller*. She was raised in Fort Nelson, (British Columbia, Canada), a remote northern village in the heart of the oilpatch. One fateful day, Kathy opened a brochure in her school counsellor's office, and discovered a career called Broadcasting. "You mean you can get PAID just for talking?" For a kid who never shut up, it was a dream come true! Kathy spent a decade with CBC Radio in Calgary, Alberta, and thoroughly enjoyed her work on various programs.

After a move to Edmonton, Kathy and her husband welcomed a third daughter and a dog in to their growing household. By this time Kathy had said goodbye to her broadcasting career and was enjoying the glamour, great salary and flexible working hours of full-time motherhood. However, she soon discovered that: once a performer - always a performer. Kathy connected with the local storytelling community and from that moment on, she knew she'd found her true calling. Looking back, Kathy now realizes she has *always* been a storyteller. She was the middle child in a family of eight. If you didn't speak up often ---and loudly---- you'd never be heard!

Humour plays a large part in Kathy's storytelling. She often draws upon childhood memories and real-life situations as the spark for creating new stories. During a performance Kathy shares the roots of each story with her listeners, revealing how the smallest ideas can grow into wonderful tales. Kathy also enjoys telling world folk tales and she's especially fond of stories that make people laugh.

For Kathy, one of the best things about storytelling is that it gives her the opportunity to travel and meet people. She's told stories in a tent on the banks of the Yukon river, to Irish school children in Connemara, at a conference of Nordic storytellers in Iceland, and to literacy leaders in South Africa. Whether relating an original story or a favourite folk tale, Kathy creates a welcome story circle that draws everyone in.

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