



North American Festival of Wales

What is an Eisteddfod

An eisteddfod has been a notable feature of The North American Festival of Wales in recent years. Eisteddfod sounds like *eye /steth / vod* as in “*ode*”, it is a Welsh word that appears in English dictionaries! Its heritage stretches back to the 12th century. Literally eisteddfod means session or sitting and it is best described as a Welsh cultural tradition celebrating poetry, music, literature and performance competitions in these fields.

Nowadays eisteddfodau (Welsh plural) are held throughout Wales at local and regional levels, offering folk of all ages the chance to perform and compete in public. The pinnacle is the annual Welsh National Eisteddfod, considered the major heritage and cultural event in the country. It alternates between north and south Wales, traveling to different locations each year and encompasses a huge variety of Welsh cultural events.

Not surprisingly when the Welsh immigrants arrived in North America they brought the tradition too. Eisteddfodau have been held across North America, with records indicating an eisteddfod at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and at the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909. Many others are recorded at local and state level.

The eisteddfod tradition at NAFOW began in 1994 at the National Gymanfa Ganu in Bellevue WA. Though the competitions have changed over the years, an eisteddfod has been held at each Festival since. In general, the program of competitions appeals to singers and elocutionists. Thanks to generous sponsors, cash prizes are available. Certificates will be awarded at each competition.

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