

Leela Gilday Biography & CV

A passionate singer/songwriter and soulful performer, Leela Gilday has a voice that comes straight from the heart. Confessing her stories to her audiences with a gutsy voice and open stage presence, Gilday weaves her experiences as a northerner, a member of the Dene nation, and a traveler into a beautiful world that transports the listener.

If you're from the North, Leela's music is home. If you've never been, it will take you there. Born and raised in the Northwest Territories, she writes about the people and the land that created her. The power in her voice conveys the depth of her feelings of love and life in a rugged environment and vibrant culture, as if it comes straight from that earth. Leela's family is from Délı̄ne on the shore of Great Bear Lake and her rich vocals dance across the rhythmic beats of traditional Dene drumming as smoothly as a bass line onstage the largest venues in the country. And she has played them all.

Leela has toured festivals and concert halls with her four-piece band through every province and territory in Canada. She has played in the United States, Greenland, Australia, New Zealand and several countries in Europe. Her live shows are where she connects with fans who have followed her on a 20-year career and where new fans are born. She reaches into their hearts and feels the energy of every person in front of her as she guides them on a journey through song and experience. She believes music has an inexplicable effect on people. It is a place where she can share light and dark and the most vulnerable moments, with a clarity and genuine purpose that reassures her listeners through every word. She is a storyteller, and through this, reflects the world onto itself.

Five years after her last album was released—five years of growth, healing and head-down work—Leela's fifth album was released September 6 2019. It is more raw, more intimate and more Leela than anything you've heard from her before. Since then it has garnered a Canadian Folk Music Award, a SOCAN HER Music Award, two Juno award nominations and the 2021 Juno for Indigenous Artist of the Year.

Leela is currently working on her sixth record which is all in Dene language. She lives and works in Yellowknife, NT (Denendeh).

"Much like its title, North Star Calling is a guiding light, a beacon for those to find refuge. In times where many an uncertainty has no easy answer, this record finds beauty in the smallest of moments. "One heart can't hold everything," and much like the dedication of the title track, these songs will continue to help all those that need it." -JOSH WEINBERG, EXCLAIM MAGAZINE

***"Fresh, open and with a big, clear voice, she knocked our collective socks off."-
PATRICK LANGSTON, OTTAWA CITIZEN***

"It is a deeply spiritual album, her fifth since debuting with Spirit World, Solid Wood in 2002, invoking the experiences, the imagery, the faith and the powerful connection to the natural environment so imbued in her Dene heritage and culture. Gilday's amazing ability to meld these integral components of her life and upbringing with elements of pop, rock and blues music makes the album an expansive, inclusive and truly remarkable and endlessly accessible listening experience." -JIM BARBER, MUSIC LIFE MAGAZINE

***"Leela Gilday's voice comes straight from the heart. It's the voice of a winner; the song of a warrior. That's the call of Leela Gilday."
- DAVID NEWLAND, ROOTS MUSIC CANADA***

"Multiple award-winning Dene singer-songwriter Leela Gilday is the kind of performer who simply takes your breath away with the pure power and beauty of her voice. From passionate anthems to soulful ballads to rhythmic blues, Leela's songs reveal an extraordinary musicianship and a sheer joy in the art of music-making. Inspired by her deep connection to the North, Leela shares a very personal vision of life as a northern woman, and audiences from Tokyo to Toronto, from New Mexico to Haida Gwaii have thrilled at the experience of hearing a true talent at the height of her creative powers. "- Heather Moore, NAC.

Awards/Accolades

- 2021 Juno Award Winner- Indigenous Artist of the Year
- 2021 Juno Award Nominee- Indigenous Artist of the Year and Contemporary Roots Album of the Year
- 2021 Canadian Folk Music Award Winner- Indigenous songwriter of the Year
- 2021- Canadian Folk Music Award Nominee- Single of the Year (K'eintah Natse Ju)
- 2020- Recipient of the SOCAN Foundation "HER" Music Award
- 2019-2023 – Artistic Director, Arctic Inspiration Prize
- 2020- Artistic Director & composer- Indspire Finale performance
- 2019 Best Director- "Heart of the Sahtu" (collaborative 360 video of original song composed and performed with Deline Drummers
- 2015 Western Canadian Music Award Nominee- Aboriginal Recording of the Year
- 2015 Juno Nominee – Aboriginal Album of the Year
- 2012 Musical Director for the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Finale (Global, APTN)
- 2012- Artistic Director for "A Circumpolar Soundscape
- 2011- Aboriginal Female Entertainer of the Year - Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards

- 2010- Best Aboriginal Recording- Western Canadian Music Awards
- 2010- Best Female Artist - Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards
- 2010- Best Folk Album - Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards
- 2009- Best Music Video - Dreamspeakers Festival
- 2007 - Juno Award Winner- Aboriginal Recording of the Year
- 2007- Western Canadian Music Awards- Best Aboriginal Recording
- 2007- Indian Summer Music Award Winner- Best Folk
- 2007- "Northerner of the Year"- Up Here Magazine
- 2007- Nominee- 3 Aboriginal Peoples' Choice Music Awards
- 2007- Nominee- 2 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards
- 2007- Nominee-Best Songwriter Aboriginal Canadian Folk Music Awards
- 2003- Juno Award Nominee- Best Music of Aboriginal Canada
- 2002- Winner of 3 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards for Best Female Artist, Best Folk Album and Best Songwriter

Links:

<https://www.leelagilday.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/leelagildaymusic/>

<https://www.instagram.com/leelagildaymusic/?hl=en>

<https://soundcloud.com/leela-gilday>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bj8NFvztGCo>

Discography

"Giants"- (single) copyright 2020 Diva Sound Records Produced by Hill Kourkoutis

"North Star Calling"- full length album copyright 2019 Diva Sound Records
Produced by Hill Kourkoutis

"Falling Stars"- 2019 music video produced by Adze Studios

"K'eintah Natse Ju"- (single) Copyright May 2019

"Gho-Bah/Gombaa- First Light of Dawn"- Executive Producer/artist for
collaborative full length album released June 2019

"Heart of the Sahtu"- copyright 2019- Director VR music video, produced by
Western Artic Moving Pictures

"You Are Not Alone" -copyright 2015 music video Produced by Artless Collective

"Rescue" - copyright 2014 Music video Produced by Artless Collective

"Heart of the People" -full length record copyright 2014 Diva Sound Records
Produced by Murray Pulver

"Great Canadian Songquest- Road Songs"- copyright 2011 CBC Records
(compilation)

"Calling All Warriors"- full length record, copyright 2009/2010 Diva Sound
Records Produced by Adam Popowitz

"One Drum"- copyright 2007 Music Video produced by Big Soul Productions

"Sedzé" - full length record copyright 2006 Diva Sound. Produced by Teppei Kamei
and Leela Gilday

"Sweet Rebel Music"- one song on compilation by Spirit Magazine

"Dig Your Roots"- one song on nationally-distributed compilation CD

“spirit world, solid wood”- full length record copyright 2002 Diva Sound Records
Produced by John Switzer
“Indian Girl” – copyright 2001 demo at CBC studios
“Truly Something” –CBC records compilation

Education

Bachelor of Music (Vocal Performance) 1997

University of Alberta

Honours program

- Deans List placement 4 years
- Peace River Memorial Scholarship 4 years
- Received prestigious Alumni Horizon Award (2007)
- Paul D. Fleck Fellowship Recipient 2008 (Banff Centre for the Arts)

Freelance Artistic Director 2005-Present

- Executive Producer/Artistic Director for “Gho-Bah/Gombaa”- a 1.5 musical hour show mounted twice in Yellowknife featuring original music by 11 NWT artists on reconciliation. Also produced full-length album of the same songs.
- Artistic Director for Arctic Inspiration Prize 2019-2023— curated and produced all performances of northern artists for prestigious prize ceremony in Whitehorse, Ottawa, and now in an online virtual setting.
- Artistic Director for Indspire Awards Finale – composed 5 part vocal arrangement for youth and Eagle River drum group to perform “K’eintah Natse Ju” as the finale for the prestigious awards show.
- Artistic Director for “A Circumpolar Soundscape- March 2012- coordinating a 2 hour show of original compositions with 12 musicians from across the circumpolar north. Toured Yukon, NWT and Greenland from 2012-2013.
- Wrote, directed and produced a song & video for Mental Health Awareness (2015) involving 12 artists from NWT, BC and Manitoba including all administrative and contract details
- Project Coordinator, Muskoskwew Quartet 2014-15
- Producer/Director, Tsekwi Huya- a two hour circumpolar collaboration show for the gala evening at the Indigenous Women’s Conference held in 2014
- Musical Director for National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Finale 2012 involving arranging all vocal parts and directing rehearsals with 8 high profile Indigenous singers

Workshop Leader/Mentor 1997-Present

Worked with various demographics and groups across Canada sharing vocal empowerment, singing and songwriting workshops including being Faculty at the Banff Centre for the Arts for both the Indigenous Singer/Songwriter Intensiv and the Opera Workshop 2008, 2016,2018, 2019; Indigenous Music Residency Program in

Manitoba in 2009, 2013, 2017; Listen Up Project; ImagineNATIVE, Finding Your Voice project, Native Women in the Arts, and schools both on and off reserve
Worked in partnership with Rick Fines over 4 years to bring the Blues in the Schools program to several NWT communities

Board Member, Music Managers Forum of Canada- 2020-present (2x2 year terms) Working with a national board as a self-managed artist on the interests of managers and artists in the arts.

Board Member, Vice President, Music NWT 2010-2017

Volunteered for the Music Industry Association in the NWT seeking to expand industry capacity for music and musicians. Organized yearly "Great Northern Music Conference" gathering. Wrote and reported on all grants including core funding, activity and market development grants. Advocated for NWT artist development, export opportunities and Indigenous musicians. Participated in governance workshops, helped to develop organizational mandate.

Board Member, NWT Arts Council 2010-2012

Became the North Slave representative on the Arts Council for two years, evaluating over 300 grant applications. Made funding recommendations based on knowledge and expertise in multi-disciplinary fields

Peer Evaluator Canada Council for the Arts, FACTOR 2008- present Made funding recommendations in arts competitions based on knowledge and expertise.