

# NWT tourism champion recognized

*Ted Grant receives lifetime achievement award*

by Roxanna Thompson  
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Hay River

A Fort Simpson business man and pilot has been honoured for the more than 30 years he has spent promoting and developing the territory's tourism industry.

Ted Grant was awarded the Mike Stilwell Lifetime Achievement Award from Northwest Territories Tourism during its annual gala dinner and awards ceremony held in Hay River on Nov. 7. The award is given annually to a tourism operator who has had a significant impact on the tourism industry, demonstrated leadership and integrity and gained the respect of those in the field.

Grant was unable to receive the award in person because he is currently travelling in Asia where he is promoting his businesses, Simpson Air and Nahanni Mountain Lodge, as well as the NWT as a whole as a tourist destination.

"This is tourism's highest award in the NWT and I am very honoured to have been nominated and, of course, to receive it," Grant wrote in an e-mail.

Grant said receiving the award has a special meaning for him because he knew Stilwell. The two met in 1977

while Stilwell was working for the territorial government. After he got into the private industry, Stilwell and Grant travelled throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe for several years promoting tourism for the territory.

Mayor Sean Whelley of Fort Simpson said it's great to see Grant receiving the recognition that he deserves.

"I think he's sort of single-handedly been the biggest promoter of the Nahanni National Park," Whelley said.

Because the village is a gateway to the park, the promotion Grant has done has benefited both the village and other local businesses, he said. Grant has also been a vocal advocate of the need for upgrades to the territory's highway system, including speaking to the prime minister about the subject on one occasion.

In addition to his work with tourism, Grant has also been a key employer in the village and regularly sponsors community activities, sports teams and events, said Whelley. Both the village and the Fort Simpson Chamber of Commerce wrote letters to support Grant's nomination for the award.

"He really, really promotes the region and he is tireless at it," said Angela Fiebelkorn,



**TED GRANT:** Honoured to be nominated for tourism lifetime award.

the chamber's president.

Fiebelkorn said she was personally impressed that after the Chinese government approved Canada as a destination, Grant quickly took the initiative to translate advertising and promotional materials into Mandarin and undertake trips to China to promote the Deh Cho and the NWT. Grant has been promoting the region for decades, she said.

When Grant purchased Simpson Air in 1981, there were no tourism operators based here, said Fiebelkorn. He convinced four Nahanni outfitters to move their bases from Watson Lake, Yukon, to Fort Simpson.

The number of trips going into the Nahanni is consistently growing and a lot of



photo courtesy of Northwest Territories Tourism

*On behalf of Ted Grant, Kristen Tanche, centre, Simpson Air's manager of finance and sales, and Dean Austin, a senior pilot with the company, accepted the Mike Stilwell Lifetime Achievement Award from Jenni Bruce, chair of the Northwest Territories Tourism board of directors, during a gala dinner and awards ceremony in Hay River on Nov. 7. Grant was unable to attend the ceremony because he is currently travelling and promoting NWT tourism in east Asia.*

local businesses benefit from that, she said.

Grant said he's seen a number of changes, not all good, in the tourism industry in the NWT. In the mid-1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, the tourism industry and the territorial government worked in unison to promote the NWT at consumer and travel trade shows throughout North America, the United Kingdom, Japan and western Europe, said Grant.

Unfortunately, a new regime in the territorial government reversed that co-operation and put the NWT

15 to 20 years behind places such as the Yukon, he said. More recently, the territory has gained some politicians and civil servants who have a better understanding of tourism, he said.

In order to bring tourism numbers back to what they were, however, the territorial and federal governments have to complete the paving of highways 1 and 7, said Grant. In the late 1980s and early 1990s almost 1,400 tourist per year canoed or visited the Nahanni National Park Reserve on day trips.

Many of those people came

on bus tours with the village averaging 16 to 18 tours a year, which Simpson Air marketed. Now, there is maybe one tour a year, he said.

Grant is still actively promoting the region.

He is currently in Asia, where he has met with the Canadian Tourism Commission in Beijing and a private supplier in Malaysia. He also has meetings planned in Malaysia and China. His main promotional work will begin in early 2014, with trade shows in major Canadian cities as well as in Germany, Switzerland and China.