



*Jumping-up in a Carnival band.*  
Photograph courtesy of Trinidad & Tobago Embassy, Washington, D.C.

formed the parade of costumed, elite individuals content to ride in carriages into a roadmarch of dancing, jumping revelers. During World War II, musicians created an original musical instrument out of discarded oil drums, replacing the skin drum with the new steel drum. Thus steel-band music was born. And so the Trinidad Carnival, whose particular character had been forged in a history of community conflict and fusion, continued to develop its own distinctly "new world" musical sound.

Community conflicts exist today: costume bands still reflect societal cleavages based on wealth, status, and color. And the Carnival Queen Competition was dropped recently because of black resentment that white and light-skinned entrants usually won. Yet the majority of Trinidadians, rich and poor, willingly "play mas," many at great economic expense and personal sacrifice, and many travel great distances each year to get home for Carnival. Carnival has seemingly imbedded itself in the very soul of the Trinidadian people.

Carnival is an intrinsic part of community life in many other Caribbean countries and it continues to flourish and to adapt to changing circumstances. Not wanting to be overshadowed by Trinidad's celebration, many other islands have shifted their Carnival

dates from the traditional pre-Lenten season to other times when their own attention, and that of the tourists who have become increasingly important to their economies, can be focused specifically on their own festival. In North America, Caribbean communities organize their Carnivals to take advantage of summer weather and to avoid conflicting with any neighboring community's carnival.

Caribbean peoples continue to engage in the rites of Carnival. For in the world of Carnival everyday social realities recede, at least for the duration of the rite, as each participant connects with another reality — a collective inner world of community from which each returns with a new strength.

#### **Suggested Reading**

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## Caribbean Carnivals in North America

Katherine Williams

Migrating West Indians have brought their traditions and culture to North America. There is a rich culture compounded of elements from Africa, the Middle East, China and the Far East, North and South America, and Europe.

One expression of West Indian culture — Carnival — is practiced from Brooklyn and other eastern seaboard cities, to the Canadian cities of Montreal and Toronto, and across the continent to Los Angeles. The largest and oldest Carnival in North America began in Harlem in the mid-1940s. The Festival was later moved to Brooklyn in 1967 and is run by the West Indian-American Day Carnival Association, Inc.

Carnival has become a commonly shared and much-anticipated activity among West Indians who live in North America. It is a time for coming together, a time to greet old friends with a "What's happenin', man?," accompanied by much hugging, kissing, and back slapping. People travel to all parts of the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean; the flow of people is continuous. Carnival is a reason to enjoy oneself in the traditional ways, a reason to be with friends and family.

Carnival has many names: it is "Mas" in Brooklyn, "Caribana" in Toronto, and Carnival in Montreal. It is enjoyed by native-born North Americans, by immigrants other than West Indians, by recent

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arrivals from the Caribbean who remember Carnival at home, and most importantly, by second-and third-generation West Indian-Americans who have never been to the West Indies but who have been regaled with stories of what it is like back home.

Sights, sounds, and movement are elements of Carnival. These are embodied in the cultural forms of pageantry, calypso music, and dance.

Costume designs may reflect historical and scientific research or they may be highly fanciful and imaginative. Themes portray history, comedy, fashion, or science. The designer arrays his or her band of followers in materials that carry out his fancy or fantasy: silks, satins, velvets, chiffons. There is much glitter of sequins and rhinestones and elegance of beadwork, flowing capes, magnificent trains, bare legs, high floats designed to accommodate wind resistance, feathers, waving pennants. The color and spectacle are breathtaking!

Millions of dollars are spent annually in making costumes. Uncounted millions more account for the man-hours lovingly expended in the planning and execution of Carnival. In North American society, where stresses are greater than those in the Caribbean and free time is consequently a luxury, only the very committed engage in the actual making of a band, the making of a Carnival.

Beautiful costumes without music is like Christmas without Santa Claus, for music is an integral part of the festivities. Calypsonians and music bands are imported from the West Indies to provide this essential ingredient. Some Calypsonians and musical groups come from North America;



*Young Mas Player amidst the crowd in Brooklyn, New York. Photograph by Roy S. Bryce Laporte*

some play in the community throughout the year. Still others form only at Carnival time. Some brass bands accompany the "Mas" players at the street parade. Their amplified sound comes from flatbed trucks as they inch their way slowly along the crowded parade route. Steel bands that go around on mobile platforms also add to the musical ambience. Not all costumed band leaders can afford to retain a live band, however. Out of this need the mobile unit evolved: tape recordings of a steel or brass orchestra playing the current calypsoes from loudspeakers mounted on cars.

North American parades travel along predetermined routes; on Caribbean islands, pleasure seekers roam from one street to another, selecting bands with which to "jump up" (that is, dance joyously). But North Americans have improvised small booths that offer a variety of recorded sound along and at the end of the parade route. The choices are calypso, soul, or reggae, and people gather to dance in front of these booths.

The mood is one of spontaneous participation. Carnival is, in fact, one huge, open-air fete.

Children are encouraged to participate in the preparation and celebration of Carnival; special Carnival parades and shows are organized for their benefit. Immigrant parents feel the need for their children to recognize and appreciate their heritage and culture. An opportunity to identify with other members of a cultural group through participation in a special event can be important for one's social well-being. Carnival is the principal social activity through which West Indians from the widest range of generations, classes, countries, and hues are able to identify, interact with, and enjoy one another.

Indeed Carnival has provided a new cultural focus and has created an economy of its own in the communities of many North American cities where people of West Indian descent are concentrated. Its continuity will be the product of the infusion of talent of new immigrants, the participation of children of West Indian parentage, and the appeal that it holds for the North American public as a whole.



# Energy Conservation and Native American Architecture

Peter Nabokov

## Glossary

**Band:** *Music Band:* may be either steel or brass; provides music for costumed individuals and for other participants. *Costume band:* costumed group of individuals coming together to play as a unit. The band theme determines the costume's design.

**Calypso** (also called "Kaiso"): Popular folk music, the lyrics of which are generally social commentaries expressed in West Indian creole and that rhyme in a catchy tune and danceable rhythm.

**Calypsonian:** One who composes and sings calypsoes.

**Fête:** Activity in which people gather to dance and enjoy themselves. Held in the open or in a dance hall, usually lasting four-six hours.

**Jump Up:** Rhythmic movement ranging from slow shuffle of tired feet to spirited, continuous jumps 12-18" off the ground. This is done to the beat of the calypso.

**Mas** (Abbreviation for "masquerade"): Refers to the collective festivities of carnival. An individual is called a "Mas" or "Mas Player."

**(To) Play Mas:** The act of wearing a costume and parading either individually or in bands during Carnival celebrations.

**Road March:** The tune played by the greatest number of music bands at carnival.

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In off-the-freeway pockets of rural America, pre-Columbian customs for beating the heat and fighting the cold are still practiced. In the 1870s American Indian house life was investigated by Lewis Henry Morgan, the "father of American anthropology," principally to discover what it revealed of social life. But new interest in native American dwellings has begun to focus on its energy efficient features as well as the symbolism of traditional Indian structures.

This fall, outside of McLoud, Okla., Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Cuppawhe will be among the Kickapoo families moving large cattail roofing mats from the peaked frames of their summer houses to their haystack-shaped winter houses. During summer, mats are laid on the roof allowing cooling breezes to waft through the wide openings left by loosely tied side boards and beneath raised sleeping benches. In winter, however, the "wikiup" is shrouded to the ground with layers of mats. The Kickapoo believe they were taught this pattern of dual residence by Wisaka, a culture hero, who also showed them how to transfer the sacred central fire with each move.

Many Indian peoples traditionally enjoyed more than one residence; these dwellings were farther apart than the two minute walk between the Cuppawhes' summer and winter homes. On the precontact Great Plains, fortified villages of immense, semi-subterranean earth lodges kept people cool during the summer farming season,

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while fall and winter saw the community move west in pursuit of buffalo. On the Northwest coast that pattern was reversed: there the cherished townsites were the coastal winter towns with their impressive communal houses expertly carpentered and carved from cedar. In summertime the wall boards of these great houses were taken down, lashed between canoes for a trip upriver to the salmon fishing stretches, then used to roof the more lightly constructed shelters.

To both the plains and coastal peoples, however, lodges were considered sacred earthly representations of the tribal universe. During sacred periods in the tribal calendar they became temples of the community.

The confinement of reservation life, however, limited such customs and seasonal movements. Still, on the third weekend of August one can find Plains Indian tribes reliving the heyday of the horse riding and tipi-dwelling era at Crow Agency, Mont. More than 300 tipis lift their proud, green-tufted poles to the sky as the old sacred circle of lodges is restored. During the Crow Fair the middays are often broiling, and an occasional hem of a canvas tipi cover is raised and propped on sticks to allow air flow. During cool nights they are pegged to the ground. Inside, a liner, or "dew cloth," is fastened from the base of the tipi poles to about six feet up, creating a draft to lift smoke through the top hole. During a sudden downpour the women hastily cross over the smokeflaps at the top of the tipi with the aid of long poles.

Tipis no longer protect Indians from harsh high plains winters, but in the past, tribes like the Crow, Blackfoot, Sioux, and Cree were inventive at adapting them to