

Willie Thrasher is an Inuk singer songwriter from a Aklavik, Inuvik, born in 1948 into a traditional Inuit hunting culture of the Western Arctic. His father was a whaler and hunter, and at the age of five, Willie was taken from his family and sent to a residential school, where he was forbidden to practice Inuvialuit culture. In the mid 1960s, he drummed for a band called the Cordell's, one of the first Inuit rock bands.

One evening, an elderly fan recommended that the group tap into their Inuk culture and language, instead of the rock charts of the day. This prompted Willie to write songs about his life, his people, and the environment, which soon connected him to other artists, like Willie Dunn, in writing about Indigenous realities in the mid 1970s and speaking out on political issues.

In the early 1980s, Willie made two recordings with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Northern Service, *Spirit Child*, a full-length studio album of original songs and *Sweet Grass*, a live recording in Val d'Or, Quebec, with fellow First Nations musicians Willie Mitchell, Morley Loon and Roger House. His other album is entitled *Asumatak-the Great Land* from 2009. Willie currently performs and tours with his partner, Linda Saddleback on drums, and is featured on the 2015 Grammy nominated recording *Native North America (Volume 1 ): Aboriginal Folk, Rock, and Country 1966-1985*. Willie Thrasher, a voice to be recognized in the Speak Up Exhibition.