

1955 – 1973

nwt history

1964



Northern Justice

- Judge Sissons and Michel Sikyeya's 'Duck Trial'.

In the 1960s the formal justice system of the NWT was identical with that of southern Canada. However, laws which made sense in the rest of Canada often failed to make sense of the reality of life in the NWT. One of the first judges to recognize the need for the justice system to evolve to a Northern reality was J.H. Sissons. In 1962, he dismissed a charge against Michel Sikyeya for shooting a duck out of season. Sikyeya, who had been at Fort Resolution as an interpreter at the signing of Treaty 11, had shot a duck to feed himself. Sikyeya had understood from the treaty days that the Aboriginal right to hunt and fish would not be extinguished by game laws. Sissons agreed.

photo provided by: GNWT

1968-70



Emerging Voices

- Formation of Northern Aboriginal Organizations.

Concerns that the Canadian Government had not fulfilled its duties and obligations (including those laid out in Treaties 8 & 11) led to the creation of the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT (IBNWT) in 1970. The IBNWT made a joint claim to 450,000 square miles of land and published the Dene Declaration claiming the Dene's right over their land and to self-government. The IBNWT became the Dene Nation in 1977. The rise of the Dene Nation is one example of the formation of powerful Aboriginal organizations in the 1970s.

photo provided by: Dene Nation

1973-1980's



Media comes North

- From bush radio to satellite dishes.

One of the most significant changes to life in the North was the coming of the media. Radio, and later television, brought the North in closer contact with southern culture. It also provided Northerners with an opportunity to use their own voice to talk to themselves and the world. After the ANIK satellite was launched in 1972, Northerners got their first taste of live broadcast television in 1973. By 1978, the NWT had its first television production facilities in Yellowknife.

photo provided by: CBC North

1955-57 The DEW Line defense system is built across the Arctic by governments of Canada and United States.

1955-57

1960 NWT Aboriginal people given right to vote in federal elections.

1960

1962 First "Skidoo" manufactured by Bombardier.

1962

1964

mid 1960s Drilling for oil begins in the Mackenzie Delta.

mid 1960s

1967 NWT government is transferred from Ottawa to Yellowknife/ Fort Smith; Yellowknife becomes capital of the NWT.

1967

1968-70

1970 First Arctic Winter Games bring northern people together through sports.

1970

1972 Wally Firth, from the NWT, becomes the first Aboriginal elected as a Member of Parliament.

1972

1973-1980s