

Nicholas G. Sibbeston, M.L.A., Senator. (b. 1943)

Nick Sibbeston is a Metis born in the rugged Northwest Territories at Fort Simpson where he was raised by his Dene grandmother. Bearing the scars of life in a northern residential school, Sibbeston set out to make a difference. He soon became the first Aboriginal lawyer in the history of the Northwest Territories having graduated from the University of Alberta with a B.A. and Law degree. Feeling anger that his people were unjustly governed he ran for election to the territories legislative assembly. By 1979, he was elected as an MLA and by 1974, he was a cabinet minister. Only two years later he was Premier; the second Aboriginal person to serve in that office.

As Premier, he fought to have Aboriginal languages as official languages along with English and French. To advance this goal, he rose in the assembly and during a historic filibuster filled the air with Slavey. He made his point and today there are nine Aboriginal languages spoken and translated in the assembly.

In 1999, the Prime Minister Jean Chrétien asked Nick to take a seat in the Senate of Canada. Senator Sibbeston has been a businessman, community justice specialist and cultural advisor to the CBC's popular *North of 60*. In 2001, he was recognized with a National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Public Service. (Written from notes produced for the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.)



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