



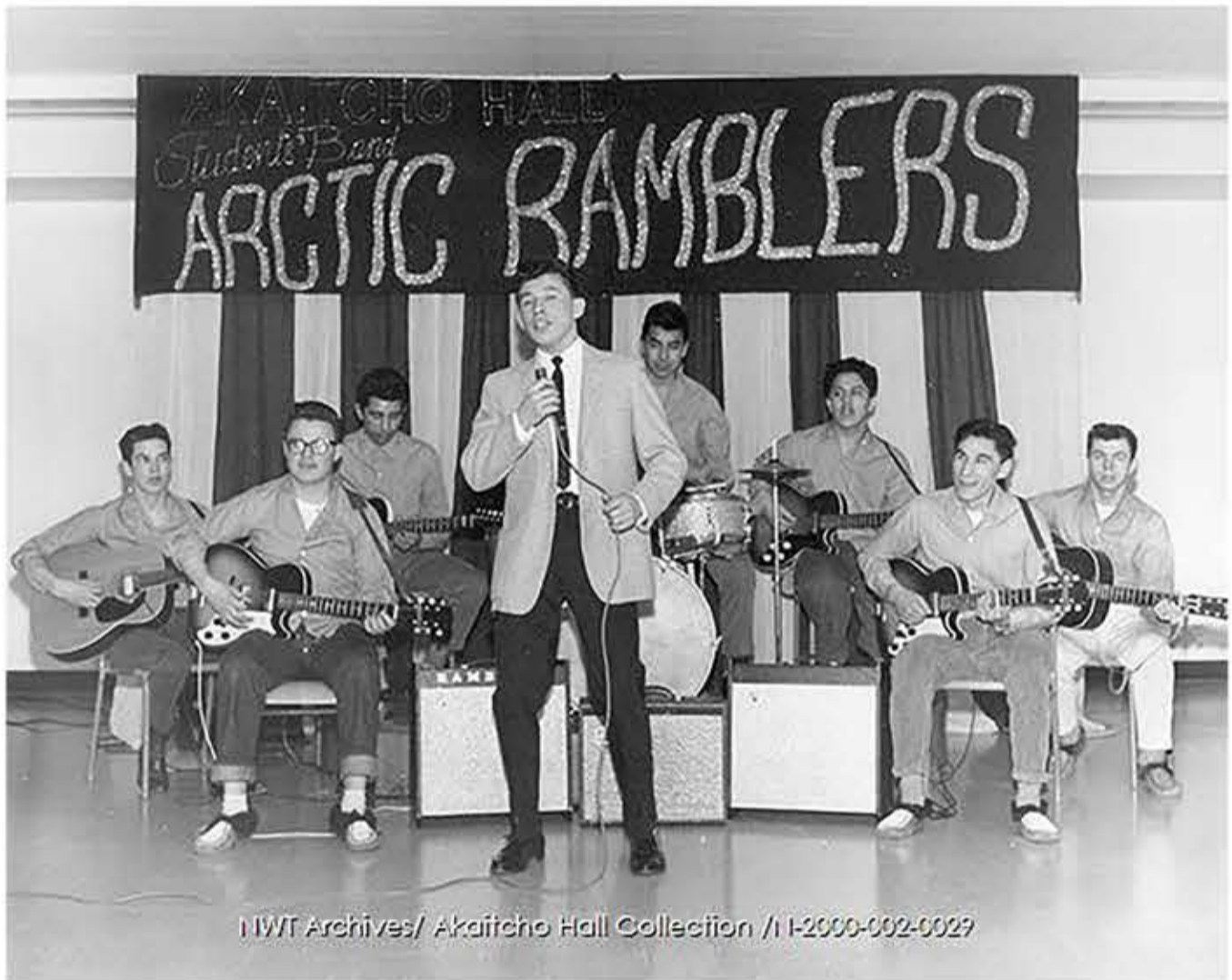
# Musicians of the Midnight Sun

Thank you for visiting the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website. Even though these blogs are being posted many weeks after the launch of the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website, my hope is that they will remain as a document along with the website itself with the intention to give a little bit more of a personal story of my relationships with these featured artists.

## Nick Sibbeston

Many, many young men and women growing up in the north played music. As *Angus Beaulieu* once said, “if you didn’t play the fiddle, you played guitar”. There were no other entertainment options in remote northern communities available back then other than what they created themselves.

*Nick Sibbeston* grew up in Łııdłı Kųę, Fort Simpson, surrounded by the traditional Metis fiddle music and the old timey country music on the local café jukebox or bouncing off the stratosphere from the Grand Ole Opry. He would listen to the *Lafferty* family playing at the community hall; “Always square dance tunes, square dance music, waltzes and schottisches and dances like that. And then, *Peter (Lafferty)* would sing some of the songs, *Hank Snow* and *Johnny Cash* and other singers that were current at the time.”



Akaitcho Hall Students' Band “Arctic Ramblers”. L-R Harvey McLure, Richard Lafferty, Bill Bourque, Gordy Cardinal (singer), Alfred Lockhart (drummer), Danny Macdonald, Isadore Tourangeau, Nick Sibbeston

(NWT Archives, Akaitcho Hall collection, accession number N-2000-002, item number 0029.)

As *Tony Buggins* from Deninu Kųę, Fort Resolution said, “I don’t know how but everyone managed to buy guitars, you know. Some families were having it pretty rough, single parent families with about 5 kids. Somehow those parents would get their kids guitars, somehow.” *Nick* lived with his grandmother, “living pretty humbly and we were pretty poor... so there wasn't much cash to spare. So getting \$14.95 or so out of there was quite... it took a long time to put the money together and order it. But when it came, I think it was the nicest instrument and wow, you could play a chord on it and do a run on it and so that was a big... and I just spent hours and hours, that's all I... I spent a lot of time.”

When he was older, *Nick* attended residential schools in Inuvik, Fort Smith and Yellowknife where he played guitar with the other students from all over the north. In Yellowknife, *Nick* was a member of “The Arctic Ramblers”. This was where I first realized that *Nick* was a participant and witness to those early years of the northern music scene. While I was working on this project, I got to hear some early tape recordings, made by *Peter Lafferty* in Fort Simpson from the mid 1960s. In those recordings, there is a young *Nick Sibbeston* burning up the fretboard with *Peter*. I was blown away by their technique, playing some very challenging material and just having a lot of fun along the way.



Senator Nick Sibbeston and Métis Elder Oliver Boulette performing at Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations (photo © Metis National Council)

*Nick* went on to study, returned to the north and served the Metis people and northerners as our member of parliament and our senator for many years. *Nick* is retired now, living back in Łııdłı Kųę, Fort Simpson, still playing his guitar for his family and for his church.