

Bois Forte Tribal Court

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Bois Forte Tribal Court History Dates of Significant Events

- -August 15, 1953, Congress passes Public Law 280, resulting in Minnesota assuming criminal jurisdiction over crimes on the Bois Forte Reservation.
- **-Prior to 1971,** Bois Forte Member Ira Isham serves as St. Louis County Sherriff's Deputy and is assigned to police the reservation.
- -1971, Ira Isham passes away. The St. Louis County Sherrif's Department and the Koochiching Sherriff's Department refuse to hire another deputy to police the reservation. Community dissatisfaction of state law enforcement had been brewing. Concerns over lack of prosecution of crimes, lack of policing, as well as racist attitudes from state law enforcement.
- **1971,** 52 Community members petition the RBC to assume law enforcement and reassume criminal jurisdiction.
- **-October 28, 1971,** a meeting takes place in Nett Lake. The St. Louis County Sherriff, Koochiching County Sherriff, County Commissioners, social workers, the Superintendent and Field Officer from the B.I.A. Field Office, as well as 20 community members attend. The RBC is presented with the signed petition requesting retrocession. The RBC decided to declare a referendum vote on December 10, 1971 for community members to vote on pursuing retrocession.
- -March and April 1972, St. Louis County Sherriff and Koochiching County Sherriff express their support for retrocession in writing.
- -July 7, 1972, the RBC meets and passes Resolution #2-73 to start the criminal court.
- January 12, 1973, Bois Forte RBC passes resolution 17-73 requesting that the State of Mn begin the process of retroceding criminal jurisdiction back to the Tribe and the United States.
- **-January 27, 1973,** MN Chippewa Tribe TEC passes Resolution 66-73 expressing unanimous support for Bois Forte reassuming criminal jurisdiction on the reservation.
- -May 23, 1973 MN Legislature passes statute retroceding criminal jurisdiction back to US gov.
- -August 13, 1973, the Dept. of Interior writes stating that they have no objection to retrocession.
- -May 30, 1974, MN Chippewa Tribe TEC unanimously passes Resolution 195-74 authorizing the Bois Forte RBC to proceed with retrocession process/assuming criminal jurisdiction and adopts the model criminal code set forth in 25 C.F.R. Part 11, "Law and Order on Indian Reservations," until the Band is able to draft and enact a long lasting Band specific Law and Order Code.
- **-January 23, 1975,** the Commissioner of Indian Affairs officially accepts Minnesota's retrocession of criminal jurisdiction back to the United States. Bois Forte begins law enforcement within its territory, and it is entered into the Federal Register.

- January 30-31, 1975 MN Chippewa Tribe TEC unanimously passes resolution 109-75 authorizing Bois Forte to proceed with establishing the criminal court. This includes authorization to operate a police department, enact ordinances and enforce a criminal code.
- -1975, Bois Forte RTC passes resolution 26-75 approving code establishing court
- -April 18, 1975 Bois Forte RBC passes Resolution 47-75, which selects the BIA operated law enforcement program rather than an independently run police department operated by the tribe
- **January 28, 1977**, Bois Forte RBC passes resolution 32-77 to enter contract with the BIA to implement a judicial services program (i.e. the Court).
- **-1977,** Bois Forte receives initial funding for law enforcement and Court operations from February 1, 1977- September 20, 1977.
- -April 1976, filing of charges begins at the Bois Forte Court. Harry Boness Sr. serves as the Bands first magistrate.
- -January 30, 1980, Bois Forte RBC enacts criminal, traffic and juvenile codes.
- **-October 22-23, 1980**, MN Chippewa Tribe TEC issues tribal constitution interpretation 2-1980 that the individual bands are authorized to establish courts on each reservation as they have broad authority over home rule.
- -Prior to 1983, Harry Boness Sr, Chairman, serves as Magistrate and signs orders, warrants etc.
- **-1983,** Harold "Skip" Finn serves as Chief Magistrate, Kim Mattson is Associate Magistrate, Kent Tupper is prosecutor, David Morrison is Probation Officer and Lucielle Morrison is the Court Clerk.
- -1989, Deanna Fairbanks serves as Chief Judge
- -April 6, 1989, Bois Forte RBD passes Resolution 95-89 establishing a policy of "non-interference," prohibiting the tribal council from interfering in tribal court cases.
- **-1991,** the RBC appoints Margaret Seelye Treuer as Chief Judge. She serves as Chief Judge until January 1, 2016.
- **-May 1995,** following the opening of Fortune Bay, tribal attorney Mark Anderson begins working on charging non-Indians for offenses committed against native victims and/or property. He writes to the U.S. Office of Tribal Justice. This effort continues today.
- 1996, Chief Judge Margaret Seelye Treuer works to create the Tribal Court State Court Judges Forum.
- -2021, the Band passes an updated code that includes prosecuting non-Indians for certain serious offenses, as well as adopting enhanced sentencing authority (3 years vs. 1 year max sentence). 2024, the Band updates its extended jurisdiction laws to be more expansive, adding additional offenses and classifications of "Indian victims" for which "non-Indian" offenders can be held accountable for abusing/harming. I.e. "Indian children", other "Indian family" members, etc. -2025, the Band passes elder/vulnerable adult protection code and case management services.