

7 interesting facts about Sioux Lookout



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 *Sioux Lookout Museum*



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Northern communities are an important part of Canada's history and Sioux Lookout is no exception.

1. Sioux Lookout's prehistory dates back over 8000 years

10,000 years ago, most of continental North America was completely frozen over. When the glaciers started to melt circa 6000 B.C.E, the area that we know today as Sioux Lookout (http://siouxlookout.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=56) slowly melted and became free of ice. When this happened robust vegetation began growing from the thawed ground and attracted migrating animals such as caribou and moose. It is believed that early settlers and hunters followed soon after.

There is scientific evidence that supports the migration of early humans to the Sioux Lookout. Charcoal, culturally modified tools (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca/vex3/E3C3F0FB-18C2-4C63-A71F-487577957099.htm>) and early pottery (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca/vex3/F982B7EE-DC2B-4730-B9C4-982116179497.htm>) was discovered around the area during excavations. Using carbon dating researchers have found that the carbon places the coal around 8100 years. The pottery was also found to have cooked food residue, particularly corn, and is estimated to be around 800 - 1200 years old. This provides evidence that people have been travelling and living throughout the Sioux Lookout area for 8000 years.

After being closed for a number of years, the Sioux Lookout Museum has found a home at the Sioux Lookout Heritage Railway Station located at 53 Front Street. Visit the Sioux Lookout Museum website for a virtual tour of many of the exhibits. (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca/>)



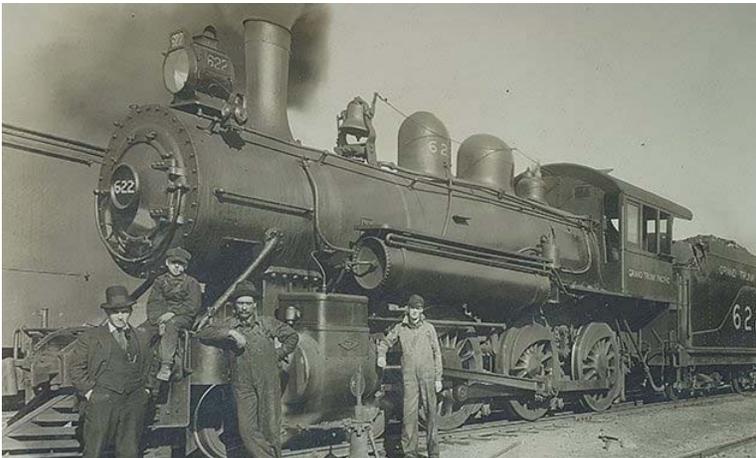
Ancient Pottery Courtesy of Sioux Lookout Museum

2. It's lakes converge from channels all over the world

It's believed that the reason early settlers chose the Sioux Lookout Area (<http://www.siouxlookout.ca/en/index.asp>) is because it's a natural water way that connects every corner of the western continent. People from the area could have travelled in any direction using the natural waterways using with the aid of only a few portages. The journey may have started from Lac Seul, travelling west to the Columbia River, east to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, south to the Gulf of Mexico or north to the arctic channel or Hudson's Bay.

It's recorded in Sioux Lookout's history (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca/vex1/index.htm>) that an early traveller by the name of Edward Umfreville went on a journey through Northwestern Ontario in search of a passage to the west. According to an entry in his log book dated 1784, Umfreville met three Native men travelling through one of the passages to Albany Fort. One of the Natives was a Chief from Lac Seul. This encounter illustrates the vast reach of the northern waterway. Lac Seul and Sioux Lookout acted as a natural hub for travellers as well as cultural interaction, making it a viable place to establish a solid footing in the northern wilderness.

3. A hub for the Canadian National Railway



Railroaders in Sioux Lookout

In the early 1900s, the main method of transportation through the northern backwoods was to travel via train. Constructed by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in 1911, the Sioux Lookout Heritage Railway Station (<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=8900>), formerly the Graham Station, was one of the largest built in Northwestern Ontario. Sioux Lookout was originally selected by the company because of it's location. It acted as a division point that fed rail lines throughout Ontario, transporting goods and people; it became one of the primary sources for economic growth in the northwest. The station was added to the C.N. Line and was a pivotal point for Sioux Lookout's infrastructure until the 1960s when permanent roads were built. Today, the station is undergoing an overhaul and is home to the Sioux Lookout Museum (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca>) where you can take an in-depth look and discover the history of this northern jewel.

Want to know more about the history of Sioux Lookout?

Take a Virtual Tour of the Sioux Lookout Museum Galleries (<http://www.siouxlookoutmuseum.ca>)

4. It fathered some of the first tourist fishing in Northern Ontario



A man with his catch Courtesy of Sioux Lookout Museum

Fishing has always played a major role in Northern Ontario's culture. In 1928, Mike Ament, also known as the "Father of Tourism" in Sioux Lookout, established Kenneally Lodge near Little Vermillion Lake and quickly became internationally renowned for his guiding and services. Guests would arrive in Hudson, Ontario on the C.N. Line and then travel via horse and buggy to the grounds. The cost of staying at the lodge in the early 50s was \$4.00 per day for four people (\$7.00 if the guests chose American Plan). Guided tours were available for \$8.00 per day in a Peterborough Speedster with a 10 H.P. motor.

The largest contribution to the tourism industry made by Mike Ament was his introduction of smallmouth bass into Little Vermillion Lake. In 1931 and 1932 he introduced 32 parent bass, 14 and 18 respectively, from his dock into the lake. Since the late 30s, these highly sought after game fish have been caught in lakes as far as the English River as well as Lac Seul. This is was integral to the fishing industry in the north and the smallmouth species continue to be caught near Sioux Lookout to this day.

5. Establishment of the Ministry of Natural Resources

In the 1840s, two departments existed in Northwestern Ontario. One was responsible for surveying and mapping lands while the other took care of allocating land for farming and road development. Following massive fires which destroyed over 2 million acres of forest in the early 1920s, the two departments set out an active plan to prevent forest fires and eventually converged into the Ministry of Natural Resources (<http://www.ontario.ca/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry>). Shortly following it's establishment, the MNR set up a base in Sioux Lookout as part of their fire fighting initiative.

On top of aiding in the prevention of forest fires in Ontario, the MNR has set out to educate people in both land and lake regulation and preservation. In the mid 1960's nearly 250,000 pounds of fish had been removed from northern lakes. The MNR worked to establish regulations for fishing which to this day helps preserve Ontario's ecosystem. The convergence of the Ministry has played a key role in maintaining the strength tourism in Ontario and wouldn't exist if not for their footings in Sioux Lookout.

6. It was one of the destinations for the North American Royal Visit



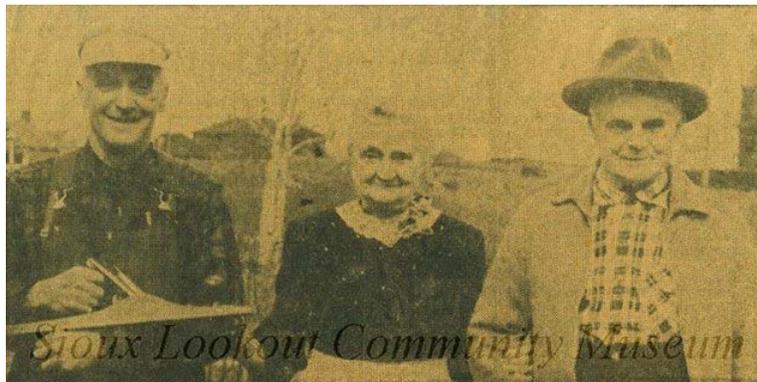
1939 Royal Visit

Two years after his ascension to the throne, King George VI and the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother embarked on a journey to visit the western continents. Apart from the expected stops in large cities such as Ottawa and Montreal, the King and Queen sought to place smaller, rural communities on their itinerary of sight seeing. They travelled on the C.N. line which took them from coast to coast. Canadians valued their fortune as thousands would head out in the darkness of the night just to be graced by a glimpse of the train that carried the King and Queen.

On June 4, 1939 the train carrying George VI and the Queen Mother arrived in Sioux Lookout as the nearly entire population gathered to greet their King. A historical moment was made that day when a young girl by the name of Shirrell Turner provided a rose to the King but quickly resent her gift as she had forgot to curtsy before greeting him. Many laughs were had and the event even made national news as the King and Queen continued their trip through Canada.

7. North American aviation has it's roots tied deeply in Sioux Lookout

Since the dawn of modern planes, bush flying and small airlines have been a northern necessity for transporting goods and people all across Ontario. One of the most common names in flights among northerners is Bearskin Airlines (<http://bearskinairlines.com/>). The company was founded in 1963 by John Heglund and is literally and figuratively a main vessel which connects northern communities. In 1977, Bearskin began flying regularly scheduled routes which took passengers between Sioux Lookout and Big Trout Lake. One year later a base was established in Sioux Lookout and began scheduling flights to Thunder Bay. Over the last 50 years Bearskin has narrowed the breach between communities, taking over 100 daily departures to 18 northern destinations. Earlier in history, the Elliot Brothers, who owned and operated an airplane part manufacturing company in the heart of Sioux Lookout, were responsible for crafting the skies that made Admiral Byrd's famous Polar Expedition possible.



Warner (left) and Carman Elliott with their 87-year-old mother.

Their Skis Helped Byrd in Antarctic

SIoux LOOKOUT, Ont. — Most people around this town are veritable authorities on the north country, but the Elliott brothers are two residents who know something of the south, too — the deep, deep south.

The south that Warner and Carman Elliott know something about is the Antarctic and they know about it through the man most people

know about — American Admiral Richard E. Byrd.

Their contact — though indirect — with Admiral Byrd, was airplane skis. The brothers began building a light, serviceable aircraft ski at their little Sioux Lookout factory in 1926 and the skis found favor with that famed Norwegian bush pilot, Bernt Balchan.

Balchan was chosen to fly for Byrd on his first Antarctic flight, and he insisted on using

Elliott skis for the trip. They served the purpose — Byrd ordered more for his second flight to the Antarctic.

The Elliott skis were not used for Byrd's third flight, the brothers explain, because the admiral had devised a combination wheel and ski which was more useful on the concrete-hard Antarctic snow.

The brothers are still making aircraft skis — 15 to 20 sets a year.

Elliott Brothers Courtesy of Sioux Lookout Museum

Sioux Lookout is a place where much of Canadian history was made. To this day, Sioux Lookout remains a place of cultural richness and is honoured by the hard work of devoted volunteers who continue to put together the pieces of it's lore so that all Canadians can remember the importance and value small northern communities.

Sioux Lookout's Website (<http://www.siouxlookout.ca/en/discover-the-hub/about-us.asp>)

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