

The Uncommon Law

[JUDGE MORROW PRESIDES]

Justice William Morrow is the law north of the 60th parallel, the only representative of the Canadian judiciary in the Northwest Territories. He was a distinguished attorney in Edmonton, Alberta (he was among other things the last Canadian lawyer to argue a constitutional case before Great Britain's Privy Council), when he became concerned with the state of justice in the North. He found, for example, that when the native people went (or were brought) to court they were invariably without legal aid. So he became their volunteer lawyer, spending his summers flying the northern circuit without pay. When his prede-

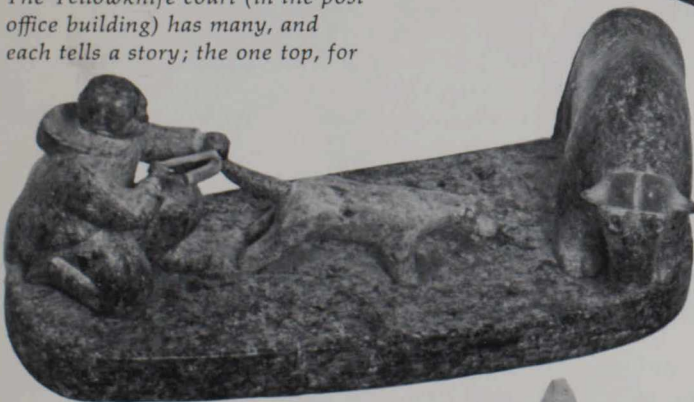
cessor, Justice Howard Sissons, retired in August, 1966, he took the job. The job is one fraught with difficulties, loneliness and hardship, but it has its interest for the legal scholar. Most recently, when doubt was cast on the authenticity of nineteenth and twentieth century treaties between the Canadian government and various Indian tribes, Justice Morrow toured Indian settlements and interviewed, among others, Julian Yendo, whose name appeared in the native syllabic writing on a treaty signed in 1921. Yendo told him that he has never been able — then or now — to write in syllabics. Below are excerpts from a paper written by Justice



An Eskimo trial is unique in that it often produces a work of art. The circumstance which led to the charge is reproduced as sculpture. The Yellowknife court (in the post office building) has many, and each tells a story; the one top, for



example, shows Michael Sikyey shooting a duck out of season, contrary to the Migratory Birds Act. Judge Morrow's predecessor dismissed the charge, but the Supreme Court of Canada overruled him. In the centre group, a



Cape Colborne man is shooting a musk ox on sea ice in Queen Maud Gulf. The charge was dismissed. Bottom, a chief at Cape Dorset tries to drag a sixteen-year-old girl into his tent, while the girl's father, at right, objects. The chief banished both girl and father and was sentenced to three months.

