

# Elizabeth Greenland

*Inuvik, NT*

*Born:* February 10, 1920

*Birthplace:* Truh tshi' (Otter Rock)

*Parents:* Alfred and Annie Bonnetplume

*Gwich'in:* Nihtat Gwich'in

*Married:* Alex Greenland in July 1944

*Children:* Sarah, Ruth, Georgina, Peter, Shirley, Alfred, Sonny, Georgie, William, Barry (adopted), Larry (adopted), Lori (adopted), Cheryl (adopted).



Elizabeth was born in the mountains in the Yukon Territory on February 10, 1920 at a place called Truh tshi' (Otter Rock). Elizabeth was the eldest child in her family. When Elizabeth was two, her grandmother's daughter died in Hay River, so her father gave her to her mourning grandmother. From that time Elizabeth was raised by her grandparents and when she was five years old, they came over this way from Dawson. Together, Elizabeth and her grandmother travelled with their dogs up the Peel River and around the mountains with other people. She helped cut up meat and prepare it for storing and did a lot of work outdoors. When she got a little older, she and her five dogs followed the people wherever they travelled in the mountains. Elizabeth got to know the country very well and she used to watch her grandmother set traps. Elizabeth remembers Chief Julius was the chief in those days and the people followed him. "Chief Julius used to holler at the people whenever he was going to make a speech."

Elizabeth did not go to the Carcross school with her siblings. Along with Effie McDonald and two other girls, she worked in the kitchen

at the Anglican school after it opened in the 1920s. They learned how to bake bread and work as cooks, but Elizabeth did not stay in the kitchen or at the school long. She taught herself how to read, and by attending church services conducted in Loucheux, she learned a little bit more. She was always involved with the church.

Elizabeth attended church services when they were conducted by Gwich'in ministers like Christopher Colin, Reverend James Simon and a man by the name of Simon Diindzik.

In 1944, when Elizabeth was twenty-three years old, she married Alex Greenland. Alex went to see Abraham Alexie and he was the one that gave her away. Elizabeth said "That is what my parents tell me and I have to do it." Elizabeth made a pair of old-style wrap-around shoes for herself. She sewed porcupine quills and embroidered silk on the uppers. Elizabeth has a wedding picture of herself standing beside her husband Alex, with Effie Emma Thompson standing beside her and Frederick Blake Sr. standing beside Alex. They lived in Aklavik and moved to Inuvik soon after it was constructed in the

late 1950s.

Elizabeth lived at a time when there was no such thing as a pension. "If you wanted money to buy something, you had to set traps and sell the fur that you caught. They used to give out rations in those days. They would give out such things as bacon and beans, flour, baking powder, lard, shells and tea - that's about it. Today, people and especially our elders live in luxury."

Elizabeth says people used to work hard in those days. When caribou was plentiful, people would give each other meat. They would work with it and prepare it for storing. They had dogs to take care of and they could not let them go hungry. Elizabeth speaks strongly against alcohol since it causes a lot of problems. When there is no alcohol, everyone has a good time. Today Elizabeth lives a quiet life at home sewing and taking care of her grandchildren.