

Eunice Mitchell

Fort McPherson, NT

Born: August 6, 1920

Birthplace: Naghaili zhoo tshik (Nelson Fishery)

Parents: Sarah Stewart and Peter (Ga'ahdoh) Drymeat

Gwich'in: Teetl'it Gwich'in

Married: Simon Mitchell on July 2, 1942

Children: Jane (d), Helen, Angus (d), Rita, Arthur, Norma, Karen (adopted), Eleanor (adopted), Peter John (adopted)



Eunice was born on August 6, 1920 at Naghaili zhoo tshik (Nelson Fishery) on the Peel River. She was raised by her grandparents when she was younger but she moved back home to help her mother raise her brother and sister. She took over for her father after he passed away in the 1944 flu. When she was a child her family lived at Sruh niilii tshik. She worked very hard as a young girl and helped her mother to hunt, trap and do daily tasks around their camp. Her family travelled in the mountains to such places like chii deetak (Rock River), Juuk'an' and Caribou River. Juuk'an' is a range of mountains near Eagle Plains where the temperature is always warm. Eunice stayed in this area with Elijah Andrew, John Francis, and Mary Neyando one spring. When it was time to go, they walked with their dogs. They saw "blue mountains" and Eunice recalls her mom sitting on her sled singing to that Blue Mountain, "Nanh' aii ddhaa, is that you? Nanh' aii ddhaa, is that you? It is really sunny up that way and you can just see blue. Now we're going away from you. I really love you."

Eunice married Simon Mitchell on July 2, 1942 in the Aklavik Anglican Church, a marriage that was arranged by her grandfather. In those days, the father of the son will say, "This woman is going to be my son's wife" and it was a practice that was followed. Or the two sets of parents would say, "Our daughter and your son are going to marry one another" and it was done in this way also. Eunice and Simon moved to Fort McPherson after their wedding and set up a camp on the island above Nataiinlaili to make dryfish for the summer. Later in November, they travelled along with many other families from Rock River to Juuk'an' for the winter. Eunice said, "Even Old Julius was there." In the 1970s, Simon built a cabin at Nataiinlaili (Eight Miles). They made their living from here by hunting, fishing and trapping on the land. They spent the summer months and other times of the year at this camp. Simon died on September 17, 1997.

Eunice is very active and loves to travel and be involved in many things. In the 1970s, Eunice

participated in the Northern Games and especially loved the Good Woman Contests that included events like tea boiling, bannock and dryfish making, duck plucking, muskrat skinning and traditional dress contests.

Eunice has many close relatives that live in different communities across the north, from Fort Good Hope to Tsiigehtchic to Aklavik to Mayo to Old Crow and into Alaska. Even though Eunice is a pensioner, she still shares her stories and knowledge at different Gwich'in language workshops and meetings in the region. Even at 80 years of age, Eunice loves to have fun. When she can, she still enters talent shows with her mouth organ and she has even come in first place a few times in her life. Eunice can speak Gwich'in and English but she prefers to speak in Gwich'in. She speaks to all her children in the Gwich'in language. She says, "I wish our children could learn how to tan hides and beaver skins, make babiche, and learn bush survival skills."