

Hyacinthe Andre

Tsiigehtchic, NT
(formerly called Arctic Red River)

Born: May 14, 1910

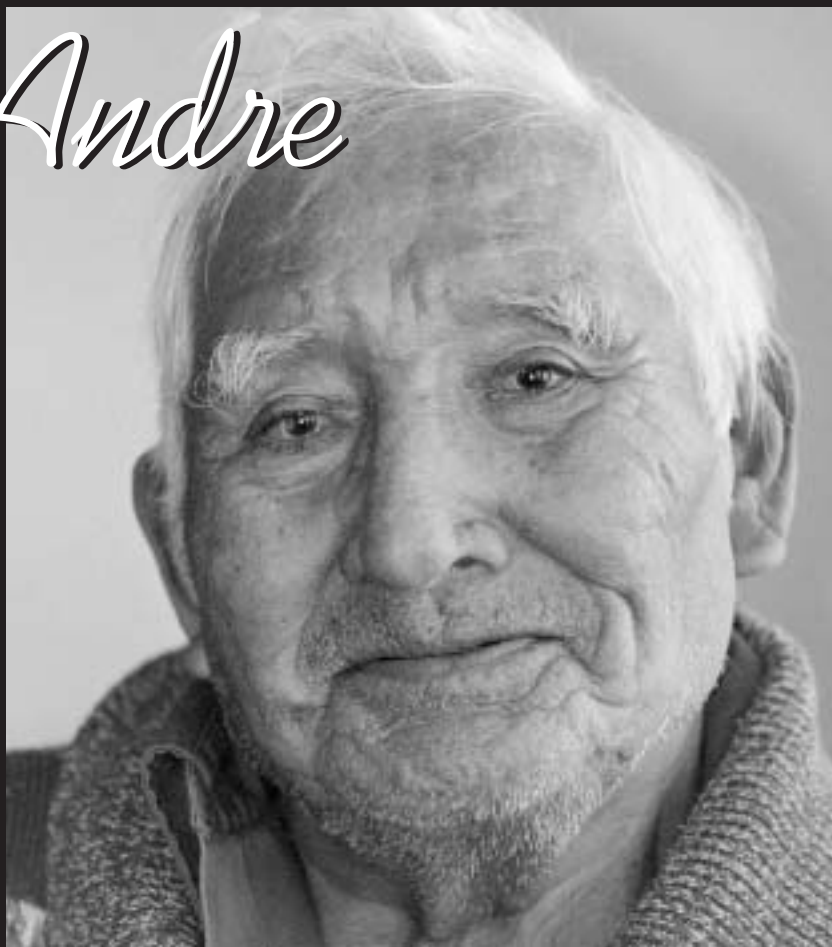
Birthplace: Hehnjuu deetlyah tshik
(Bernard Creek up the Arctic Red River)

Parents: John Tsal & Julienne Jerome

Gwich'in: Gwichya Gwich'in

Married: Eliza Sam (d. 1977)

Children: Noel, Robert (d), Barney (d), Lucy (d),
Cecil, Maria (d), Phillip (d), Winnie (d),
Robert (d), Adeline, Alestine, Agnes,
Lisa



Hyacinthe has spent most of his life on the land travelling extensively throughout the Gwichya Gwich'in area, living in such areas as Travaillant Lake, Tree River, the Delta and up the Arctic Red River. Some of Hyacinthe's earliest memories include living in a moss house, travelling down the Arctic Red River by moose skin boat and walking into the mountains with dogs, everyone laden down with packs. Hyacinthe recalls that in the summer of 1921, when he was 11 years old, a big meeting was held in a tent on the Flats in front of the present day community of Tsiigehtchic. The meeting was to discuss Treaty 11. Little did Hyacinthe realize at the time that he would be involved in opening up negotiations alongside the other Mackenzie Valley chiefs 48 years later, in 1969, to develop a new type of treaty with the Canadian government. These negotiations resulted in the signing of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement in 1992. In 1923, when Hyacinthe's brother Camelle contracted TB and had to go to the hospital in Fort Simpson, a 13-year old Hyacinthe

accompanied his brother on the Roman Catholic mission boat. He stayed there for two years working with the Roman Catholic sisters in the kitchen as a cook's assistant.

Although he regrets that he did not get the chance to attend school, he did have the opportunity to learn Slavey and French when he was young. Hyacinthe left Fort Simpson in 1925 after his brother died and returned to living on the land with his parents. Two years after he returned from Fort Simpson, his parents arranged his marriage to Eliza and he and his parents spent the winter of 1927 hunting in the mountains up the Arctic Red River, getting the finest meat and fat for his wedding feast the following summer. Hyacinthe and Eliza were married on July 2, 1928 in Arctic Red River and together they continued living on the land, establishing a permanent camp at Tree River in the early 1940s about 45 miles up the Mackenzie River from Tsiigehtchic. Upon Eliza's death in 1977, Hyacinthe moved permanently into town. Hyacinthe reflects upon their life together often, and

she is missed and remembered in his thoughts with love every day.

Hyacinthe is one of the longest-serving chiefs in the Gwich'in area. He served as Chief of Tsiigehtchic for thirty-eight years (1942-1980) and is well renowned and respected throughout the Mackenzie Valley. The community of Tsiigehtchic honoured Hyacinthe's long service to the community, his strong belief in education both in school and on the land, and his vast knowledge of the land and culture by designating a building in the community dedicated to education and culture, as the Chief Hyacinthe Andre Cultural Centre. This centre is currently the home of the Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute.

Today, after a lifetime on the land, Hyacinthe is taking life easy, but is always ready to share his extensive knowledge with those who show an interest, and welcomes everyone into his home with an open and inviting smile.