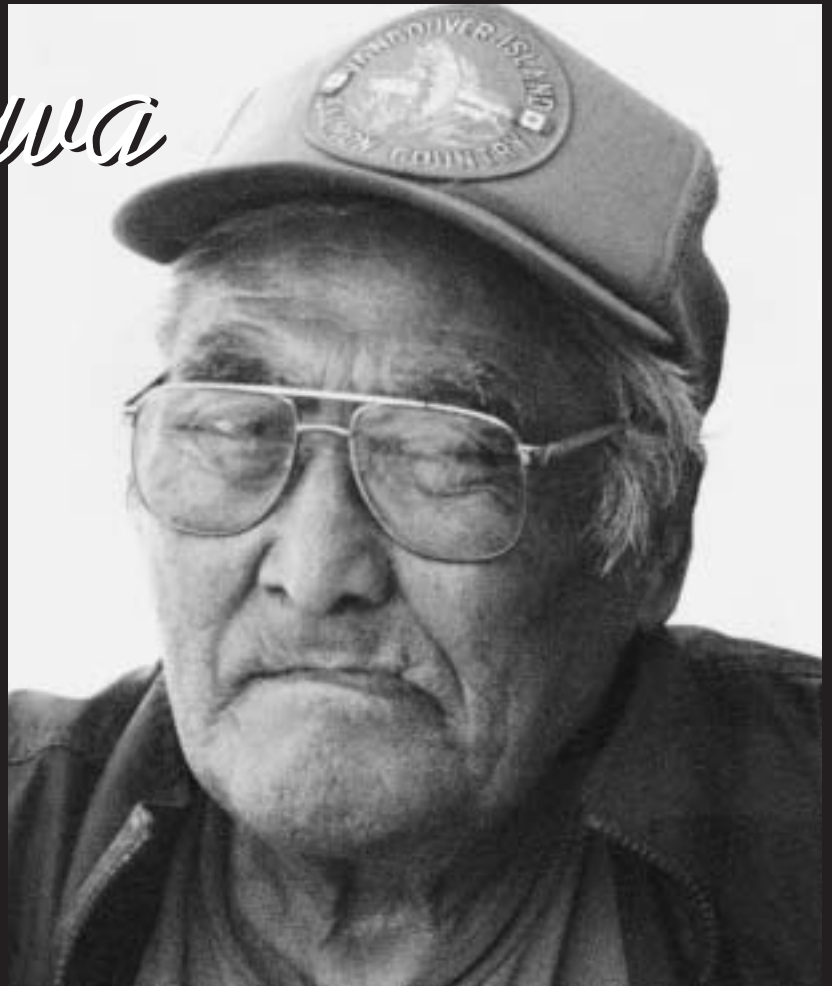


Jim Vittrekwa

Fort McPherson, NT

- Born:* January 24, 1924
- Birthplace:* Rock River, Yukon
- Parents:* Sarah Snowshoe & George Vittrekwa
- Gwich'in:* Teetl'it Gwich'in
- Married:* Ellen Wilson on July 3, 1944
- Children:* Joseph (d), Lillian (d), Rose, Roger (d), William George (d), Dorothy, Betty



Jim was born at Rock River in the Yukon in 1924, but was mainly raised in the Delta around the Middle Peel. Throughout his life he has made a living by hunting, trapping and fishing.

In 1928 at the age of four, Jim was sent to the Hay River mission school and remained there for three years, completing several grades. Upon his return home, he found that he had many things to learn. Jim had to relearn his language and also how to help his parents with hunting, fishing and trapping. It was his father who taught him how to make a living on the land.

Jim recalls that in his youth, they lived out on the land for most of the year, only coming into town (Fort McPherson) for holidays such as Christmas and Easter. In the winter, he and his parents moved along the mountains, travelling in such areas as Rock River, Caribou Mountain and the Blackstone River, following the caribou and making dry meat. In February/March, they trapped muskrat around the Neyook River.

When Easter arrived, they visited Fort McPherson, celebrated for about a week and then moved to their spring camp on the Middle Peel to hunt muskrat at a camp which people referred to as George Vittrekwa's camp. After the muskrat season closed in June, family members would gather at their fish camp at the mouth of the Peel for the summer and fall.

In 1944, Jim and Ellen Wilson were married in Fort McPherson by the Anglican minister Reverend Dudney. After their marriage, Jim started working at various jobs in the community to raise his family. He and Ellen raised seven children. Today, they also have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Jim is well known for his great sense of humour and welcoming manner. He enjoys meeting new people and makes a point of greeting them, welcoming them to the area and sharing stories and information about the community.

If Jim is not in town, he can be found at his camp at Eight Miles, outside of Fort McPherson, where he and Ellen fish during the fishing season, and dry caribou meat in the winter. It is said that they make the old style of dry meat, and it is much sought after because it is so delicious. Ellen still tans her own moose and caribou skins. They both love to go out on the land and spend as much time as they can at Eight Miles.

Jim believes strongly that in today's world, it is important for children to continue to practice their traditional values and culture but they also need a good education. "Education is the only way to go. It is good for the children. It would be difficult for anyone to live like they used to."