

Joan Nazon

Tsiigehtchic, NT
(formerly called Arctic Red River)

Born: October 26, 1913

Birthplace: Near Fort McPherson

Parents: Mary Kyikavichik & Jimmy Husky

Gwich'in: Gwichya Gwich'in

Married: 1st Philip Ross in 1936 (d. 1938)
2nd Edward Nazon in 1940 (d. 1983)

Children: 1st - Richard, Peter
2nd Emily, Bella Jane (d), Maurice, Margaret, James (d), Gilbert (d), Tommy (d), Louise (adopted)



Joan spent most of her young life on the land travelling in the mountains with her parents. Later she lived and moved around in the Delta with her first husband, Philip. She and her second husband, Edward lived in the Caribou Lake area, the Travaillant Lake area and up the Arctic Red River before settling down in Tsiigehtchic.

Joan married her first husband Philip Ross (son of Arthur and Elizabeth Blake who custom adopted him to Albert and Sarah Ross) in Aklavik in 1936. Joan and Philip lived in the Delta with their sons, Richard and Peter.

Joan talked about one spring flood along the Middle Channel of the Mackenzie River in 1938. This was when she and Philip and their son Peter were staying with Albert Ross and his family. One day they heard someone shooting from down the river. When they went to check they found the trader, Ernie Lacombe, sitting on top of his store roof with his dogs in a canoe floating nearby. He said he had been living on top of his roof for about a week and had lost everything in his store. Albert Ross' place was also flooded out and he and his family

and Joan and Philip had to stay in their boats with their belongings for a week until the water level dropped. Joan said that even though everything was covered with mud, people were happy to see the ground again. Philip died by drowning in 1938.

Joan moved to the Tsiigehtchic area after she married her second husband, Edward Nazon (son of Emily and Old Modeste) on August 3, 1940. The year after they got married, Joan and Edward travelled up to Tsiigehtchic for August fifteenth. There were people already there from Aklavik, Fort McPherson, the Delta and even from Fort Good Hope. Even while the midnight mass was being held, more people were coming in from all over. A big feast and drum dance were held the next night. They had tea dances, stick gambling, and feasted for many days. Afterwards, Joan and Edward moved back to Loche Creek and later they lived at Lenaidlau (Earl's Place) on the East Channel where Edward built a large house. Their daughter Emily was born and baptized here in 1941. Over the next three years, they lived around the area and travelled by dog team to Caribou Lake,

Sunny Lake, Odizen Lake, Jackfish Lake, Burnt Lake, back to Caribou Lake and Earl's Place. Edward would set traps and set net for fish on the lakes and Joan recalls how loche, rabbits, and ptarmigan were plentiful. Joan loved living on the land and especially travelling early in the morning or by moonlight, like the time they were travelling from Caribou Lake to Loche Creek with two dog teams. They finally camped overnight at Loche Creek with Marceline Coyen then continued on to Albert Ross' place.

In the summer, Joan and Edward fished at places like Pierre's Creek, Sryuh chihvyah chihvyah k'it (Coney Bay), Chidaltau, and Chii t'iet. In the late 1960s, Joan and Edward established a camp across the river from Tsiigehtchic at a place known as Chii echeu near what is today the ferry landing on the Inuvik side. Joan was widowed a second time in 1983 when Edward drowned.

Joan now lives in Tsiigehtchic but when she has a chance, she still goes with her daughter Margaret to her fish camp. "I just love the bush life," she says.