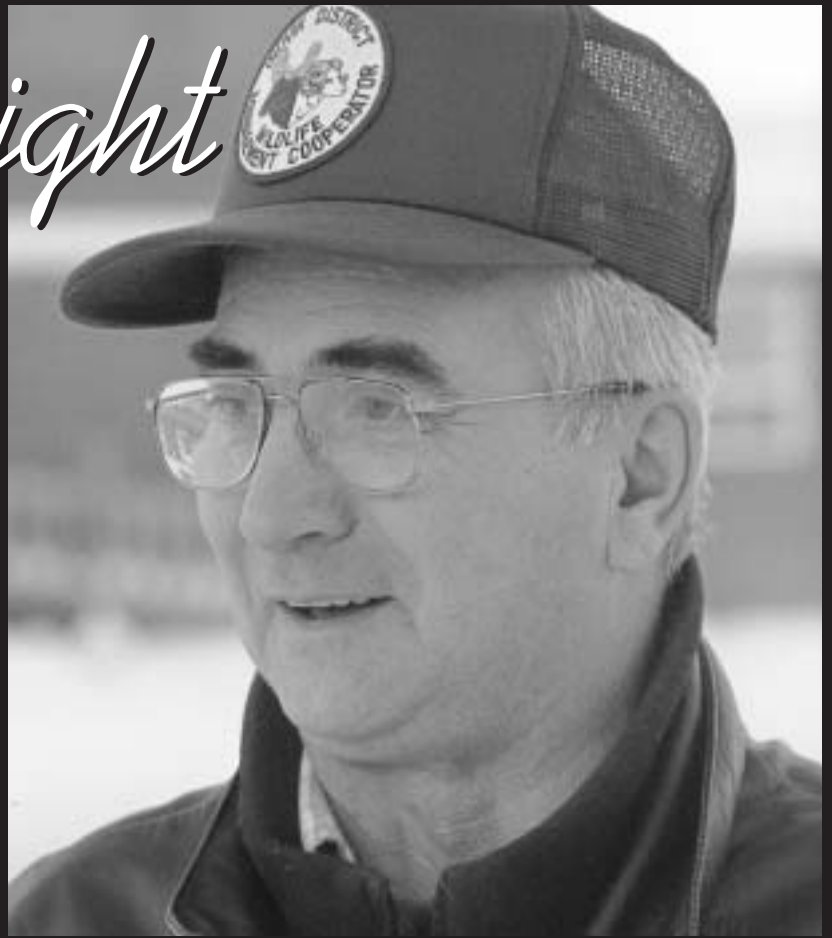


Tommy Wright

Inuvik, NWT

Born: May 16, 1941
Birthplace: Aklavik
Parents: Roy Wright and Gladys Leland
Gwich'in: Nihtat Gwich'in
Married: Lillian Wilson on March 30, 1964
Children: Charles, Billy, Trina, Cheryl, Christine, Ben



Tommy was born May 16, 1941 in Aklavik. He comes from a long line of well-known Gwich'in people: Enoch Moses is Tommy's great-grandfather. Enoch is the father of Jane Leland the mother of Tommy's mom Gladys. Annie Stewart is Tommy's great-grand-mother and her brothers were Old Charlie Stewart and Kenneth Stewart.

As a young boy, Tommy's family lived nine miles below the mouth of the Peel, on the Mackenzie River. Tommy used to trap with his dad. For a time around 1945 or 1946 his father had a mink ranch.

Tommy owned a lot of dogs and always had a bunch of puppies running behind his dog team. He would chop up fish for his dogs and pups. Dan McLeod used to fish for the RC mission here too. The trader, W.W. Ross lived five miles from them. Stan Peffer later bought the place from Ross and Tommy Clark ran the store for him.

In 1948, when Tommy was seven years old, he and his brother Leonard stayed at the RC hospital for nine months because they were suspected of having TB. After this time, Tommy and his brothers Harley, Leonard, and Wilbert all went to the RC school until the end of the school year. The RC hospital

was at one end, the school was at the other end and the church was located in the middle, upstairs. The next year, after his parents moved to town, Tommy attended the day school at the Moose Kerr School, which was later turned into the Aklavik Fur Shop. He attended school until he was 14 years old when he went home to help his dad. He worked at the sawmill sawing lumber all summer.

On March 30, 1964 Tommy married Lillian Wilson in Fort McPherson. After their wedding, Tommy and Lillian moved to various locations in the NWT. They stayed five months in Yellowknife then they moved to Wrigley where Tommy worked for about a year for the Ministry of Transportation. They moved back to Fort McPherson then to Inuvik, then to Aklavik for almost ten years. Today Tommy and Lillian live in Inuvik.

Tommy's best memories are from the time they lived on the Pokiak side in Aklavik. People made their own fun. Lazarus Firth and Herschel Hvatum used to play the fiddle for their dances. After his dad died, Tommy learned the importance of the many things that he learned from him. For

example, his father told him, "When you are on your own and if you don't lie or you don't steal, you will go a long ways in life. If you live that way, you will be able to meet anybody on the street. You don't have to hide. Also, try to be honest in your dealings. Treat people good. But most important of all, work hard!"

Tommy says it is really important for young people to realize that old people have a lot of knowledge about different things. "We need to respect them and do stuff for them. You will learn something from them. Some elders are jokers. A lot of elders have great values and if you have enough patience, you will learn from them." He goes on, "Life is great and we need rules for everything. Even old people had rules, especially get up early in the morning. They knew when it was time to fish, they knew when animals were at their prime." Tommy concludes with "Respect your fellow man and your neighbor. Do what you can for someone instead of what they can do for you. The secret of contentment is knowing how to enjoy what you have and be happy where you are. Believe in God with all your heart and by living for him."