



CHAMPAGNE and AISHIHIK First Nations

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 26, 2014

CAFN Mourns the Passing of Eldest Citizen Alex VanBibber

Haines Junction – The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) is mourning the loss of its eldest citizen, Alex VanBibber (98), who passed away this morning surrounded by family and close friends in a Calgary hospital.

“We are truly saddened to lose our eldest citizen, Alex VanBibber,” said Chief Steve Smith. “For 98 years Alex has helped shape the history of the Yukon and enriched our community and all of Yukon with this experience and knowledge. The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations is very proud of Alex’s many achievements and feels his loss deeply. Our condolences go to his family and loved ones.”

Alexander “Alex” VanBibber was born April 4, 1916 in Pelly Crossing, Yukon and lived life to the fullest every day of his 98 years. One of 14 children born to Eliza and Ira VanBibber, Alex is best known for his skills on the land and prowess as a trapper and hunter, but is also known for many other accomplishments.

Alex’s service to his country is commendable and was recognized in 1992 when he received the Order of Canada. One of Yukon’s last surviving Aboriginal veterans, he served in the Canadian military during World War II, was an active member of the Canadian Rangers from 1947 to the present, and was a founding member of the Assembly of First Nations Veterans Roundtable. He was also honoured with the Queen’s Jubilee medals (both gold and silver).

Over a lifetime trapping and guiding, Alex shared his skills with countless students and trappers through his work as a trapping instructor for the Yukon Government for 37 years. Alex and his wife, Sue VanBibber, managed outfitting operations for decades and were founding members of the Yukon Outfitters Association and Yukon Fish and Game Association. He was known to say that he was proudest of receiving the Clay Pugh Memorial Award for Sportsman of the Year from the Yukon Fish and Game Association in recognition of his work with youth.

Over the years Alex crossed paths with well-known figures like the late U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy and his son Robert Kennedy Jr., Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary

Clinton. Alex was also featured in several movies including *Yukon Safari* (1954), *Arrow for a Grizzly Bear* (1956), *Challenge to be Free* (1975), and *The Last Trapper* (2004).

Alex's large family with his late wife, Sue VanBibber, is his greatest legacy. Alex and Sue celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary before she passed away at age 99 in 2011. Alex is survived by his brother Pat VanBibber, sisters Lynch Curry, Kathleen Thorpe and Lucy Fulton, daughter Kathy VanBibber, and more than 150 grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.

"When we heard Grampa Daddy (Alex's family nickname) wasn't going to recover, 17 members of our family got on a plane to be with him in Calgary, plus the five who were already with him," said Alex's granddaughter Denise Beattie. "We were fortunate to spend his last two days with him. He was surrounded by people who loved him."

-30-

For more information:

Amy McKinnon, Communications Manager

almckinnon@cafn.ca

(867) 634-4237

(867) 332-1973 cell

www.cafn.ca