

88-49-121

Eliza Winfrey, Mary Moses, Sharon Sunnyboy and Anna Frank remember the 1967 flood in Minto, Fairbanks and Nenana.

Jeff Kennedy, interviewer

Series: Potlatch series

1977

Jeff Kennedy said ten years ago the Chena and Tanana Rivers flooded Minto, Fairbanks, and Nenana. At Minto Eliza Winfrey was eleven years old. Kennedy asked her if she took precautions the night the Tanana River overflowed. Eliza Winfrey said her mom did and she helped her. She said they first moved to higher ground behind their house, but the water got higher. They were taken out to the airport. At that time the Army took all the young kids and their mothers to Fairbanks. They flew them in helicopters. She remembers sleeping in a tent on the higher ground behind their house. The water was really swift at Old Minto. Kennedy asked about new Minto. Winfrey said it is safer. Kennedy asked what she did for the three days they were in a tent. Winfrey said she helped her mom put things away. They stayed near the village. She talked about cleaning up their house. They had to throw a lot of things away. They had Indian food for those three days. It took them two days to scrub their floor after the flood and to sterilize everything. They stayed in Fairbanks for a week. They stayed at Barnette School. She talked about the move to the new town site. She worried about her parents having to move because that is where they had grown up. She'll always remember Old Minto. Dogs were moved to higher ground when it flooded.

Song by Gordon Lightfoot

Mary Moses said she was living in Fairbanks at the time of the 1967 flood. She was working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She lived on Front Street. Many of them expected water to come into their house. They had moved things up on top of dressers. She went to work that morning. Before noon she was called by Edward Mayo because their dogs were in the water. By the time she got her dogs into the truck she couldn't get back home to Front Street. She picked up her child. Friends in Fairview Manor invited her to stay at their place. Her truck was borrowed by some of the social services BIA staff and they began to evacuate people from Hamilton Acres and other areas. The water got so high that they couldn't go over the University Avenue bridge. They began to evacuate people from the downtown area. Soon they couldn't travel and they didn't have any communication. Her truck was parked on higher ground. They were concerned about the water rising up to the height where they were staying and they were concerned about running out of groceries. They were comfortable but there was a lot of anxiety. They began to seek out people that had been brought in from the villages and staying in schools and local BIA clients who were staying in schools. They began to help people locate family members. People had been separated during the flood. They offered assistance to people needing medication and doctor's visits. As the waters receded they were able to get back into their office building. She returned to her office and began resurrecting the office and drying out records. She was able to

return to her home. The water had risen to a few inches from the ceiling. The water had rotted most of her possessions. She didn't really have a home for a while. The BIA assigned her to go to Nenana and do an inventory of the flood damage to Native's homes. She spend about a week and a half in Nenana. She took photos of the damage and talked to home owners. From this inventory the Bureau of Indian Affairs made an extensive report. The outcome of her report was an appropriation of money for housing. Up to that time there were no places to live in Fairbanks and now there were no places to live in the flooded villages.

Song by Zuni Tribe

Sharon Sunnyboy said they had a small flood in Nenana a couple of months before the big one hit and she thought that was it for the year. The evening before the flood her uncle asked her to move over to his house on a hill. She said she'd move the next morning, but her uncle said she should move now. She did move that evening. The next morning the water was up about four feet in her house. All of her pictures were gone. They didn't get much out of their house. Martial law was imposed. The American Red Cross came in quickly. They made a trip into Fairbanks and went up to the university and got some food. Right after the flood she moved to Fairbanks because their house was ruined.

Old Man River by Howard Teal

Anna Frank talks about everyone leaving work early when it was flooding. While she was at work she had her kids and the babysitter pack up everything they had. She was living on College Road. They put everything on top of the bunk beds and packed everything they wanted to save up high. She packed nine people into her car when she was told to evacuate. She headed up to the university and stayed there. It was sad and frightening at the same time. She said she had been used to floods. She stayed at Bartlett Hall. There were people sleeping all over the floors. She returned to Minto to attend meetings. It was the people's decision to move from Old Minto. There were floods every year when the ice went out. Some people stayed in Old Minto during the flood. They put their dogs in boats and stayed with them. Sometimes it is hard to get people to evacuate. They knew what it was like to have to live in other places. It was not like home. She said the new village of Minto is much safer from the flooding. It is located up on a ridge. She liked the move. They have running water and a sewage system. She misses the old place. There was a cemetery at the old village and out in the flats where they spent their springs and summers. There is also a cemetery near the new village.