**Living before Yukon: still feisty at 110**

By PETER STONE

Special to the Star

"Mom, Auntie, Gramma or Sister" are the common greetings people expect to hear from their mother. I was raised by mom Bella from Kaska custom and tradition.

Bella Lucy Abou; "Massitto" is her maiden name as she was registered for Catholic Baptism in late 1920s at McDiarmid Post.

She was born in 1904 and attended the local school at Fort Graham, which is now under the water of the man-made Williston Lake.

In 1930, Bella married Jack Davidson during early horse pack outfit conversion. Sadly, Jack died in 1949 leaving Bella to raise their son Abou in the mountains of the Liard Reserve.

Unfortunately, early government surveyors guided by Kaska Denaa mistookily interpreted Makika to Rechika, as they believed Makika (Kaska) to mean the Makika River at beaches and Wherein Lake. By simple error, government agents ignored and denied multi-century land-use place names that remain.

Bella is the original Kaska name for the currently known Kechika River. In the English language, Kaska refers to the Makika Tu-teh river) as Muddy River.

Momo Bella lived throughout Kaska land and travelled uncounted miles by foot trail. Coeys' shared food, offered emergency assistance, grandparent stories, Kaska legacies and traditional education work, many survival challenges by age 12.

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Many place names come to mind which Mom has fond memories of like Kaska Tu-teh (Liard River), Kaska Tu-teh (Liard River), Gacho (Teslin), Deavets, Wudzi-teh (Canoe), Wudzi-teh (Horse Range Mountain), Kwaydacha and Indini (Hogins). Her family travels were mostly by foot, dog sled and sometimes horses or moose skidoos.

Up until 1967, Bella's nursing income source from aboriginal medical as well as provided guidance, assistance and transported many people, traps, government agents and new comers with kindness.

**From SHOWNUSES TO SATELLITES**

Over the last 110 years, Bella Lucy Abou has witnessed tremendous global change. The southeast Yukon resident is a living testimony to the continuous occupation of the Kaska traditional territory.

Through continuous learning, training and traditional education work, Bella's spirituality and tradition continue to vary many survival challenges by age 12.

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In fear, Bella ran to her father and his white horse. She remembers being about as tall as a chin high. Scared and freezing, she was protected from the cold weather by a blanket and a tanned hide.

When all you needed was carried on your back, bear, moose and caribou often visit the river shore to drink water.

In her current condition, she always talks of the many beautiful dances she has attended. On her health, she always talks of the many beautiful dances she has attended. On her health, she always talks of the many beautiful dances she has attended. On her health, she always talks of the many beautiful dances she has attended.

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Bella and husband Jack took up a more permanent residence on Liard River at Lewis Post, B.C. in the 1950s. This was both because of the Liard's convenience and because of the Whitehorse Post Catholic Residential School.

This institution, forced off the village, would sometimes allow them visual sign of their children. In later years, weekend home visits were allowed.

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Bella Abou was raised by Bella and Jack because the Makika are relatives to Ah Tsaa (Old Stone), my true great grandfather, as my birth mother was coping with personal difficulties.

I can remember being at bush camp throughout the year living in canvas wall tents with fresh spruce branches overhead. There are good memories of sitting in a doglegg with Bella as we trav-elled Abenaki Tanna along the Rocky Mountain Trench.

We often took walks to hunt grouse, rabbit, duck and beaver. During the fall, she would make cranberry jam for ban-dees.

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