

Shirley Backstrom
Athabasca Native Friendship Centre Society

Shirley daughter of Isaiah and Velma Coleman. She was born in Amber Valley Alta. July 7, 1934. She has five siblings three sisters and two brothers. All of my family are deceased but one brother Ronald who resides in Ft Smith N.W.T.

I was married in Amber Valley and moved to Edmonton in 1950 I have five children two girls + three boys I moved to Fort Smith N.W.T September 7 1957 was there until 1968 then I moved to Pine Point N.W.T in 1968 then to Hay River 1980. When I was in Ft Smith I got two foster children Wilbert 2 1/2 years Shawnee 6 weeks old. Their mother was Elizabeth Baucher from Ft Resolution N.W.T. I raised seven children in my home enjoyed every one of them. I have been affiliated in many women's groups over the years Native Women's Group in Ft Smith volunteered when ask in children's clubs and schools. Sanavisaak Guild in Pine Point teaching craft and Ceramics Mothers Auxiliary for Hockey Mothers, Legion - a Royal Purple which were all volunteer groups. I learn lots as we exchanged knowledge with each other. Next year I'll have 50 years as a Royal Purple Member. I've volunteered with Youth Groups for 40 years. I joined the Athabasca Native Friendship Centre Society in 1991 was on the board

I was Vice President for 3 years as
 Mary Ann Swan was President then
 I was President for one year and
 I became ill & had to stop down I still
 volunteer when ask. It was a busy time
 when Slave Lake had their fire I was
 cooking every day at the Centre for
 three weeks my most memorable time
 was working with Carmella McAdam
 & the Youth Group she worked so
 well with the Youth and Elders We
 only had one lesson in Cree when
 they let her go. In August 2011 Peace
 river cancelled the Youth Elders Gathering
 In one week Carmella organized one
 here in Athabasca. Youth & Elders Gathering
 Aug 16, 17 & 18 and August 23, 24, 25, 2011
 I am very grateful I have had a chance
 to learn more about the Traditional Teachings
 Pipe Ceremony, Traditional Medicine & Herbs
 Attending Quarterly Meetings, Jasper Youth
 & Elders Gatherings each time I go is
 a learning experience for me. I hope
 the Elders Wisdom Circle will continue
 for many more years. I'm proud
 to be part of the Friendship Centre
 movement. I had the Elks Royal Purple
 Drug awareness Program in Athabasca
 Rochester & Calgary Schools for 13 years
 I continue to enjoy working with youth
 trying to get them to understand you have
 to be respectful to your Elders honest
 and continue to learn about your culture
 and history and achievements of aboriginal people.