

Constance Thomas (Eyolfson). (1936-2002)

Connie was the daughter of a commercial fisherman, Joseph (Josie) Thomas and Elizabeth Maud (Jennings). She was born at Traverse Bay, Manitoba in 1936. At sixteen she left school to earn a living as a housekeeper, first in Winnipeg, then at Pine Falls.

From 1954 on, she served for three years with the Royal Canadian Air Force as an aircraft-refinishing technician. At age 21, she married Gerald Eyolfson and they subsequently had nine children. When first married they moved to Pine Falls where she began working at the hospital. During 1967-70, she was employed at a clothing factory, then at Children's Home of Winnipeg at their summer camp at Hillside Beach. Later, when Children's Home closed this camp, Connie bought it to serve as the site for Strong Earth Woman's Lodge.

Connie was always a community activist. In February 1971, in response to the poor housing conditions of the Metis at Traverse Bay, she formed the Traverse Bay Metis Association, to serve as a non-profit housing corporation. She was then elected as Secretary-Treasurer of the Association. In June of the same year elected as Vice-President of the South-West Region of the MMF. She was re-elected by acclamation for two further terms in 1972 and 1973 (a two-year term).

Connie was appointed as Acting Provincial President of the MMF in May of 1973, to serve during the time that Angus Spence was granted a leave of absence. This appointment, initially made by the Board of Directors, was ratified at the following Annual General Assembly of MMF. She was also a founding member of the Traverse Bay (fisherman's) Co-op.

Until her retirement, Connie was a long-term employee of the Canada Secretary of State department. She was involved as a volunteer for many other community groups. She served on the Board of Directors of the Family Planning Association of Manitoba; the Executive Committee of the Pregnancy Distress Service; the Fisherman's License Appeal Board; and the Remote Housing Committee. After retirement she ran "Strong Earth Woman's Lodge," a healing center south of Grand Marais, at Hillside Beach Manitoba.



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