



Sidney Huntington (1915–2015) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2015 Conservation Hero

Sidney Huntington built a deep attachment to the lands and waters of Alaska over the course of his 100-year life. As a trapper, fisherman, boat builder, business owner and subsistence user, he relied on the resources around him — often for his very survival. When he was five years old, he endured two weeks of isolation at his family's remote trading post on the Hogatza River, caring for his younger brother and sister after the untimely death of their mother. His formal education ended at the third grade, but his practical, wilderness education progressed for decades, rooted firmly in the stories and lessons of the Koyukon Athabaskan elders of the Koyukuk and Middle Yukon River area.

As an adult Sidney entered public service, serving two decades on the Alaska Board of Game. As a member of the board, he integrated Native conservation values and his reverence for nature into a new way of managing. He protected important subsistence species such as moose, which were declining in many areas due to increased hunting pressure from nonlocal hunters with “*use of expensive aircraft*”. He never tired in his drive to teach the local National Wildlife Refuge staffs and other wildlife managers about species habits and history in the Koyukon Athabaskan territory. While he at times disagreed with agency policies, he always treated managers and biologists with respect, and reached out a hand of friendship, even to the newcomers. He was a leader of great integrity. Just before he walked on at 100 years old, he testified to the Western Interior Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, “*You're the experts. I wanted to talk to you. I'm a champion of the resource all my life.*”

His legacy lives on through his numerous children and grandchildren, the wildlife professionals he befriended, the hardworking, practical, and self-sufficient lifestyle that he demonstrated, and his dedication to improving education of village youth. Thinking back, Sidney reminisced about his life-long appreciation and concern for wildlife resources:

“The change in life has been dramatic. For me to say that I have changed very much...I imagine I have, to quite a degree to keep up with the times. But my variety of food, and what I do, has not changed very dramatically, only I have adapted myself to the new methods of harvesting wildlife resources. And I have a deep respect — probably a deeper respect for wildlife resources than anybody in the country.” — Sidney Huntington, as told to the Raven's Story project in April 1996.

