

Whitney White
Dr. Carolyn Anderson

1. Purpose

To record oral histories of the Prairie Island community. It is important to record the history of the community tribal elders' life experiences before this knowledge is lost.

2. History of Prairie Island

1884-Eliza Wells, a community member, was a resident by this time.

1886-120 acres of land was put into trust by the Secretary of the Interior.

June 30, 1936-Prairie Island Community recognized and approved by federal government.

Late 1930s-construction of Lock and Dam #3.

Late 1960s-construction of Northern States Power (NSP) nuclear reactor.

1984-Treasure Island Bingo was established.

1988-Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) allowed Treasure Island Bingo to expand. Slot machines and blackjack tables added.

2008-Currently the casino is undergoing another expansion project to include another hotel wing, convention center, and bowling alley.

3. Tribal Elders' Quotes of Experiences Living at Prairie Island



Albert White

"Prairie Island was a small satellite community. We were called the eastern or Mississippi Sioux. We still had our own language and culture in all households; still a vibrant community. We are called Tinta Wita. Large families lived here, and there was large interaction with others."

"We would have a lot of big gatherings for any occasion -- birthdays, weddings, funerals, anniversaries -- and [we] played games in the old community center or outside; they were big celebrations."

"There's a lot of memories of the old times. Families took care of each other, they were sharing and caring, and looked out for each other back then."

4. Acknowledgements

Thanks to these participants for sharing their stories: Albert White and Vivian Mireau. Without their help, this project would be incomplete.



Vivian Mireau

"Things were hard for us, but then like I said as Native Americans we laughed a lot, and we were always happy. We were happy and satisfied with what we had. Especially at our meals, it wasn't much but we were always happy and gave thanks for what we had."

"I encourage the young ones to go the traditional ways. It is a hard road, but in the long run if you stay with it, you're going to live a good life."

"As a young girl, we would go to the State Fair to dance, and people would throw money at us; we split what was collected among the dancers."

5. References Cited

- Prairie Island Indian Community
2004 Transformation Of An Island. PIIC Publication.
- White, Whitney
2008 Oral History Interview with Vivian Mireau, Elder, PIIC. June 30, 2008.
- White, Whitney
2008 Oral History Interview with Albert White, Elder, PIIC. June 25, 2008.