

Donna Cole

I was born and raised in Alaska. First residing in Circle City, then Fairbanks, and then Manley Hot Springs as a youngster. Manley Hot Springs is the place, in my heart, that I call my hometown, although I and my husband and our two youngest currently live in the hills outside of Fairbanks.

My Maternal Grandmother, Stephanita Carter, was born near Dillingham, in the Yupik territory, although her mother was actually a full blooded Unangan. She and my Grandfather, Harry Carter, eventually settled in Fort Yukon and ran first the Northern Commercial, and then their own store there while raising their family of twelve.

My mother's name is Vera Strack, and my father was Bill Strack. They are/were both very hardworking people, who taught me to work hard and to be innovative and independent. My mother especially loved gathering from the land and taught all seven of us children how to manage ourselves in the wild. I, in turn, have hopefully passed enough of those skills and values to my own four children.

Since the age of nine, when I received as a Christmas gift a book about the native american's of the contiguous United States, I have been interested in Native American culture. I had the advantage of learning from my mother and grandmother, a very little about Yupik and a little more about Gwich'in culture. From my time in Manley, I was able to pick up a little knowledge of the Koyukon. I have been able to travel twice to Southeast Alaska and experienced the richness of the Tlingit/Haida culture. I do a lot of research for each of the projects we present, and am a lifelong learner. I hope to be able to travel to more places in Alaska in the future.