

Alice Frost (1937-1998)

Alice Frost (nee Njootli), born in 1937, lived in a time of great change. Her parents, Joanne and Thomas Njootli, raised her and her siblings (Marion, Doris, Grafton, Margaret, Effie, and Stanley) primarily on the land. She grew up strong in her culture with a firm value of the importance of education. Alice married Donald Frost in 1954, and they had seven children: Shirlee, Glenna, Marvin, Winnie, Harold, Pauline, and Brenda. She has many grandchildren and had a special relationship with each one.

Alice was a great source of support for many people in Old Crow. She raised her family with pride and encouraged her kids to be physically and mentally fit, well versed in their Gwitchin culture, and independent. She offered this motivation to all young people in the community as well by encouraging them to get educated, volunteering with Father Mouchet with the TEST ski program, welcoming youth to watch her dry meat in her cache and supporting them every step of the way. As an avid sewer, Alice made her income mostly by sewing gloves, mittens, parkas, slippers, mukluks and other traditional garments and her work was well admired.

Alice's home was full of love. Family and friends would gather at her home often, and it was always full at special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. Many admired her unwavering faith that kept her going and Alice helped many in their spiritual healing. Alice was a fun-loving person and she was not shy to poke fun at herself. She loved to dance and encouraged the young people to hop onto the dance floor first. Gwitchin culture was at her core. She loved to speak her language, laugh hard, and work hard to balance the complex relationships that make a healthy people.

Never did Alice stop learning and bettering herself. In the 1970's, Alice eagerly attended the vocational school in Old Crow, understanding the importance of education. She became a fierce advocate for education and its necessity in the community's fight for self-determination. In the 1980's, she took a lead role in realizing a community college campus in Old Crow. Working with others in the community, Alice pushed very hard so that she was taken seriously and that the college building and programming was suitable for the community. She remained involved with the college as a member of the Campus Committee, a sewing instructor, a Gwitchin language instructor, and forever a student. A campus to serve everybody and anybody was her goal, and Alice made sure it was done in the right way.

Alice became the first woman chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin in 1985, and held the position until 1988. She had a clear vision of a healthy community. She advocated creating a safe, successful, and substance-free environment, particularly for the youth and young mothers. Having overcome struggles with alcohol, Alice advocated for the prohibition of alcohol to create safety for vulnerable members of the community. Recognizing that drinking was a symptom of larger systemic issues; she brought in land-based social wellness programming, life skills training and communications training. Old Crow was close to signing a self-government agreement with Canada, and Alice was working to make sure the community had the skills to run the government. Always involved in land claims negotiations, Alice consistently fought for the rights of Gwitchin people, protecting the land and the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Alice is remembered as a strong woman who consistently fought for the community. She had high expectations for everyone around her. However, Alice had the highest expectations of herself. Known as a hard-working perfectionist, she created exquisite beadwork that was sought after throughout the community and the Yukon. She worked hard for her children to have everything they needed to succeed in life. Her generosity also extended far beyond her home. She was not the type of person to wait for somebody else to get something done. Whether it was going out on the land, getting caribou, or building a college, Alice realized her dreams. Alice recognized that if she wanted to better her community, she had to better herself. Alice Frost is greatly missed by the community of Old Crow, but her strength and determination as a Gwitchin woman lives on through her tremendous impacts on our lives.