Baranov Museum Hires Executive Director

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

For the past five months Tiffany Brunson has been serving as the interim executive director for the Baranov Museum, but now she can finally drop one of the words in her job title. Brunson has officially been hired as the executive director and began working in that capacity on May 1.

“I’m really actually honored to get this position, I think it’s a great opportunity and I really love the history of Kodiak. I think it’s got a really fantastic history.”

The museum, which is operated in part by the Kodiak Historical Society, began its search for a new director back in early December, when former director Katie Oliver left to take a similar role with the Kodiak Arts Council.

At the time, Brunson was working as a gallery host at the museum. She had the education and experience for the position, and knew it was something she wanted to pursue.

While the Erskine House, the building that houses the museum, has a rich history in Kodiak, Brunson is relatively new to the island. She moved here from Idaho a year ago and has spent majority of her time here with the museum. She said the past year has definitely been a great experience, and she has certainly learned a lot.

“Oh yeah, definitely learned tons and tons about the history. The book that the museum put out in 2008, ‘A Legacy Built to Last,’ by Sue Jeffrey, was really helpful, at least starting as a gallery host and then as the director in getting sort of a comprehensive overview of Kodiak’s history and the place of this building within it. But even so it’s been a lot of history to learn. Especially since there’s so many people in Kodiak who remember that history still, and who want to share that. So a lot of listening to people.”

Brunson said the museum is currently in the process of a permanent exhibit redesign, which was started by Oliver.

“She got the grant for that from the Institute of Museum and Library Services with funding from the Alaska State Museum and some, hopefully funding, from the city as well to support that. So that’s a major project in line for the museum at the moment that we’re sort of in the midst of getting community feedback and doing the design work for the permanent exhibit. So what I’m seeing with my role is to continue to sort of guide that project and then to find funding for the actual exhibit building. Because we have the funding for the design, but we don’t have the funding to make that design a reality."

In the meantime, the museum is gearing up for the summer tourism season. Brunson said it will switch to summer hours after Crab Festival on Memorial Day weekend.

Meanwhile, the Alutiiq Museum will begin its search for a new executive director soon. Current Director Sven Haakanson will say goodbye to the organization in June. Likewise, Discover Kodiak will also have a position to fill as current director Janet Buckingham will be leaving as well.