Alutiiq Museum Welcomes Alisha Drabek As New Director

Tuesday, 06 August 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

In June, former Alutiiq Museum Director Sven Haakanson said his goodbyes to the organization, and announced his plans to move to Washington with his family. Now, after more than two months, the museum will begin its next chapter of leadership with Alisha Drabek, who was recently hired as the archaeological repository’s new director.

Drabek is a Kodiak local, and has a rich family history within the archipelago.

“Well I am a tribal member from Afognak and my grandmother is from the Village of Afognak and my father is also the president of Natives of Kodiak for over 20 years.”

While she has cultural and family ties to Kodiak, Drabek has made a name for herself within the community since returning in 1999. She said she originally came back to work as a tribal administrator for the Native Village of Afognak, but her work expanded to language and cultural education programming throughout the region.

Drabek is already a familiar face at the museum, and has been collaborating with the organization on various projects since her return to Kodiak more than a dozen years ago. Those include various publications and Alutiiq language programs.

Her passion for Alutiiq dialect began as a language apprentice to various Kodiak Elders. Since then, she’s helped create the Alutiiq courses offered at Kodiak High School and Alutiiq studies program at Kodiak College, including writing the grant that funded the program.

“And right now I’ve been serving as the half time project manager supporting that program at Kodiak College. And when this opportunity came up, I was hesitant to leave the college and all the great work that I’m able to be involved in there, but I also felt that the full time opportunity to engage across the region and not be only focused on college age students was just too great to pass up. And after they chose me I’ve negotiated with the college to continue in that half time position until they have a replacement for me and at least see

them through the end of this grant year so that project transitions smoothly.”

Drabek joins the museum as it completes strategic planning discussions involving staff, the board of directors, and community input through surveys. She said she recognizes that the community and board have a clear vision of what they see for the museum, and she wants to pursue that shared vision.

“I feel that of course my background in Alutiiq language, movement, cultural revitalization, education movements, those will obviously come to play. I personally have long term goals for education of the language that I’m sure I will contribute. And ultimately they all contribute to community wellness. So I think that I bring a lot to the relationships that I have existing and the work that I’ve put in play elsewhere and through the museum because I’ve been involved here for years.”

In general, she said there are so many chances to collaborate across organizations and communities in the region and she’s looking forward to taking a more active leadership roll in facilitating those potential partnerships.

Drabek’s first day of work was Monday. She will be working half time at the museum as she wraps up her grant year with the Alutiiq studies program at the college.