

March 15, 2019

Featuring Community Members: Tracey Harmon



As the Executive Director of the Haines Chamber of Commerce, Tracey Harmon is facing many of the same challenges small towns are dealing with across Alaska. Despite the unique beauty and the small-town appeal of Haines, this community of 2400 people is reeling from the negative realities of impending state budget cuts. City and Borough services, education and transportation are at the top of the list of concerns.

Recently, the school board met and even the best-case scenario wasn't good with the decreasing enrollment in school and with a proposed cut of 75% from the ferry system, Tracey Harmon is worried about the impacts not only to the community but also to her own family of four.

It was family after all, that brought Tracey to Haines. Soon after starting a family of her own, Tracey and her husband Gabe Thomas made one of the most important decisions a couple can make – where to raise their family. The decision was made - despite taking a significant cut in pay, they moved to Haines. Haines was new for Tracey, but for her husband Gabe, it was already home.

Tracey and Gabe both believed having grandparents nearby was important, but so was raising the children in their Tlingit culture. Though Tracey's only been in Haines about four years, Gabe's Tlingit lineage dates back countless generations.

Tracey has now been with the Chamber of Commerce for nearly two years, and she believes in its mission "...to promote economic growth and advocate for the business community". Tourism and retail make up the Chamber's two largest industries, at 19 and 18% respectfully. Non-profits account for 12% of the membership, followed by professional services at 11%.

Despite steady growth in the economy through tourism and retail, Tracey wants to support all industries and to ensure Haines is perceived as open and friendly to business. She was encouraged to learn through recent community surveys that **a majority of Haines residents support large economic drivers that can lift the economy** of the entire area and provide families with much needed income. The chamber was established in 1974 and has a long history of supporting responsible resource extraction along with retail and tourism.

The UA Land office believes in being a good neighbor and can understand the tireless work involved in bettering the lives of Alaskans and future generations of Alaskans. **We thank Tracey for her countless hours devoted to her community.**