

Everyday Women of Sitka: Louise Brady



- Can you please tell me a little about yourself? How long have you lived in Sitka? What types of things are you involved in here?

Yaayeetaawdulgeín yoo xát duwasáakw. Kiks.ádi áyá xát. Kaagwaantaan dachxán áyá xát. Ka xát Jaa Sháa nax xatsitee. I was born and raised here, but my family has been here since time and memorial. The Tlinget people's migration stories date back to the last ice age. I'm involved with family. I try to spend every Sunday with two of my granddaughters, Valerie and Lala. We do all kinds of things. On sunny days we try to hit all the downtown playgrounds, Totem Park, and spend as much time outside as possible. I'm part of the Sheet'ka Kwaan dance group.

Throughout my life I have been involved in working on empowering our Tlinget community to fully participate in today's society. I have worked for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska most of the last 20 years in one capacity or another. I have dabbled in Raven's Tail weaving. I'm getting ready to take a red cedar weaving class.

- What is your biggest struggle right now?

Right now my biggest struggle is being an aging woman of color because I think western society is focused on youth. I think most of all it is a challenge in my professional life and just trying to figure out what the next few years will be—it is kind of clear in Tlinget society but not in western society. In western society, women almost have to fight to get a place once you are past a certain age.

- What makes you proud to be a woman?

We are life givers. I think that gives us (I don't want to speak for everyone) but it should be an example of our strength. We are essential. I also think that the struggle of being a woman of color has really strengthened me because I used to see both of those: being a woman and a person of color to be challenges or weaknesses. And so I think learning who I am in the Tlinget culture has turned those around to be strengths.

- Who was/is a female role model for you? Why?

My mother because she overcame so much having come from a home where there was alcoholism and domestic violence and having joined the Navy during World War II and using that to go to college in the 1940s when she had to take a steamship and a train to North Dakota and stay there for four years. She talked about getting physically sick from being homesick and she couldn't come home. When she did come back home, she mentored I think really hundreds of young men and women and Mount Edgumbe High School and the Sitka Native Education Program. She was the hardest worker I have ever known.

- Why do you think you were nominated to be featured on our Facebook?

Cause I know Vicki ☺. I put myself out there in the community. I am totally an introvert, but somehow I manage to get involved despite that. I say yes to a lot of things and then feel responsible to go.

- What does a normal "day in the life" look like for you?

Right now I am staying with family which includes my two granddaughters. I set my alarm. I put the hot water on for the organic gluten free mush I make for my two granddaughters and I, then I fix the mush and wake them up. They come running out. Then we eat breakfast. I put my yaktraks on and walk to the bus stop at 7:20am. I catch the bus in. I work 7.5 hours a day. I try when it is not icy to get 5000-7000 steps in. I go home, ask Lala and Valerie about their school days. We think about dinner and have dinner. We watch some kid shows. Then homework. Then a shower, and then brush teeth. We all brush our teeth together.

- Do you have something you'd like to say to other women in Sitka?

We really need to treat each other as sisters, as relatives and support each other through our challenges and also acknowledge each other's successes. But also celebrate each other's successes because I think sometimes we have a tendency to stand on the sidelines and criticize. It makes a difference. I think about my granddaughters and when they finish their homework and I say good job, or they have a conflict and I have them fist bump. It makes life better.

- What does being a strong woman mean to you?

I was with a group of women elders way back when and one of the women made a statement "we need to be strong enough within ourselves to be gentle with each other". So there is always a balance.