

## Everyday Women of Sitka: Breanne Pearson



- 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?

I have lived in Sitka off and on since I was 10. I am Alaska Native. I am married and have two kids. My ancestors are from Southeast Alaska. I have worked in the Social Services field for 4-5 years in the capacity of the shelter, the Tribe, and OCS. I worked for Volunteers of America, the Women's shelter in Colorado. I am a part of a writer's group called "The Blue Canoe." I just participated in the Women's March with my husband, two kids, and my service dog. My kids are in flag football and my husband coaches; my kids are in SNEP. I try to be aware of or involved in Tribal events so my family can stay connected as much as possible.

- What is your biggest struggle?

My biggest struggle is balancing out work and home, work and family. Being a mom, but also working. Kind of, I don't really know how to explain it. Working in general can have an impact on your kids, but working this job in particular is hard because I have long hours. When my kids tell me they miss me or want me to pick them up... I want to be home with my kids, but I also want to work. I make my home life and my off time very family-oriented.

- What makes you proud to be a woman?

I don't really know how to explain it. Women give birth to males and females. When I found out that I was having a boy, I thought about how amazing it is to give birth to the next generation, and how women can reproduce both genders. Your body carries another human being and that is a pretty powerful thing.

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

My mom, Vivian Prescott, is one of my female role models. She is a strong female who is very open-minded. She is aware of a lot of things that are happening with women and is very active in discussing them with her children and the generations to come. She is very caring, loving, and supportive. My mom is open-minded; she has a very open heart to a lot of people, cultures, backgrounds, and life situations.

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

I was honestly shocked. I have held several different positions at different agencies in town, all in the social services line of work. I love what I do. I love helping children, families and our community.

- What does a normal "Day in the Life" look like for you?

I get my kids off to school and come to work. I work with different agencies in town... families from parents to grandparents, counselors, GALs (guardian ad litem), and attorneys, all to try and work for reunification of families. I do home visits with each child I work with, every month. Some days I don't get home until seven at night. Every evening when I get home, it is important for me to check in with my kids about how their day was and how school was. We have dinner, do homework, and then do some kind of family time with them, like play a board game. When I'm home late, it can be just dinner, homework, and bed. I spend time with my husband. My personal time is so important to me to continue to remember I do what I do because of my children. They are my work and I hope to guide them and encourage them to be the best human beings they can be. Our daily lives are fairly routine.

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

I think women are very strong and powerful. They have a voice that should be heard. They should never feel like they are not safe and know that there is support and lots of resources in different situations. It can be hard in smaller communities, but there is support. Women should be there for each other and not tear each other down, support each other, strengthen each other, hold each other up.

- What does being a strong woman mean to you?

I think it means being a protector, family. I think being confident is part of it, and that is hard for me right now. A lot of people tell me about my job "I don't know how you do that." I don't know how to respond to that. I just do it. I have always known that I wanted to work with kids. I just did not know in what capacity. I originally wanted to be a teacher, but now I want to work with kids in more of the psychological aspect, which led me to the shelter, then to the Tribe, and then OCS. I want to help at-risk kids. I think that's how a lot of women feel when they are doing something they are passionate about. It feels natural. It feels like something they should do, want to do, and need to do.

## Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
But when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.  
I say,  
It's in the reach of my arms  
The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

-Maya Angelou



## **Mother Bear**

**By: Kristina Cranston**

Mother Bear is made from alder wood, human hair, acrylic paint, abalone inlay, with bear blood painted on the back.

She is a human/bear portrait mask inspired by Breanne Pearson, and the sow bear and her female cub that were killed at Starrigaven during the summer of 2015.

This mask is an attempt to honor and recognize the difficult job that Breanne has as a family social worker in a small community. Mother bears are gentle, they are teachers, they are wise. They are also fierce protectors of their cubs. They are to be respected.

The mask also have two little faces painted in the ears, representing Breanne's two children, and the many children she has helped during times of family crisis.

Mother Bear carries much DNA... mine as the carver, Breanne's hair as the muse, and the blood of the female cub, whose life was cut short. Many tears were shed during the creation of this mask, and she has shown me much forgiveness.

She is meant to be a reminder of Breanne's strength and courage, especially during those times of feeling exhausted and discouraged while doing a difficult, but important job.