



**A New Native Story by Tish McFadden**

**Cultural • Environmental • Bilingual • Educational**

# 25 Teachings Inspired by Agnes Baker Pilgrim

found in

## **Upriver to Morning**

Collected and Summarized by Tish McFadden

### **Chapter One: *Salmon's Quest Begins***

1. **YOUR GIFTS:** Everybody, from the time they were little, was given a gift. A gift of life, for one thing. But we all have our very own gifts. I don't believe that there's anybody that's ever told me that they don't have any. I got a lot of them. I bead. I make clothes. I have done a lot of stuff. I was a musician. I could play violin, piano, plucked a banjo, guitar. I sang all over the country. I was a race driver. I was a boxer. I did a lot of things. When the sun goes down, feel good about your accomplishments. Use your gifts for the good of you and others.
2. **LAUGHTER AND PLAY:** How do you use your time? Every day you need time to romp and play. Tickle the funny bone. Love to laugh – it's the best medicine! You know your immune system goes down if you don't put a little sunshine in it. When you are laughing, you are up in the sunshine belt, and your body heals, and your mind comes along. Laughter. Lightness of spirit. It's the cheapest medicine we've got. You owe it to your body to give it a good laugh at least once a day.
3. **CHORES:** Give children important tasks that matter and help the family, daily tasks such as taking out trash, feeding chickens, brushing the dog, helping with meals, washing the dishes, filling the water bottles.
4. **RESPECT:** It's a great thing to have respect for yourself. If you have respect for yourself, then you have complete control over your behavior and you're doing well with it. Learn to stop bias and prejudice; stop being judgmental about yourself and your neighbors.
5. **MUSIC:** Learn how to play music, because life is a beautiful thing if you can put some music to it. It will make you fit in and belong anywhere you go. If you can teach your children to sing, or if you can give them a musical instrument, you are creating good qualities inside of them.

## **Chapter Two: *In Six Directions***

6. BEHAVIOR: Never take something that does not belong to you. Learn how to wash and clean yourself. Know the value of cleanliness. Learn how to eat with good manners. Whatever you are doing, do it right or do it over. Learn how to sit and be quiet with a book, or a pencil and tablet, as there are times for quiet in a household.
7. KINDNESS: Kind people are treated with kindness. No one can give you kindness, laughter, smiles, joy, compassion, and all this inside stuff; that's your inside job. So, if you want any of these kinds of things, kindness and love, respect, and all this, you have to have it so can give it away to anybody you meet. Teach your children kindness, respect, love, and that life is sacred. If a child can understand kindness, and can grasp ahold of what kindness means, if you have kindness in you, you will always be treated kindly. Talk to your children about all the good things they need to have inside of them, because when you teach that to your children, others will treat them with kindness, love, and respect.
8. RECIPROCITY: Teach children how to give back. Allow opportunities for children to not only receive, but to also offer help, kindness, love, and service to others.
9. PARENTING: How you treat your child with love is one of the greatest gifts that they will pick up. Every child needs love, and that is why you bring them into this world. Hug your child as much as you can. Dads too. When you're a mom, it's like you are in a world that you have never been in before. You have that feeling. Every day a new experience, being a mother. You are always aware, because you are guarding, you're watching, you're listening to what is around your child. It is a simple thing to hold your child and say, I love you. Teach them that you love them. Show them that you love them. Your behavior is louder than words.
10. TEACHING: A teacher is a parent away from home. A parent is a teacher away from school. Take every opportunity to show love to children by teaching them something new, something fun, and something important. Every moment is a teaching moment.

## **Chapter Three: *Circle Five Times***

11. ANCESTORS: Listen to the stories of your grandparents and great-grandparents. They are the glue of your family. Listen to them. They know the stories, and they

have the knowledge. Honor your ancestors, because it took all of them to make who you are. It took all those old ones to make who I am, and I am grateful it took all of them. You think about all the Old Ones it took to make you, and you give thanks to them – mothers, fathers, grandmas, grandpas, great grandmas, and great grandpas – all the way back to your family’s beginnings – and give thanks for all those lives that are inside of you, not yet born.

12. HOME: You know, wherever my feet put me down, I am home. I am with family.
13. NUTRITION: Baby your stomach. It’s important what goes down your mouth. Make sure your system is getting enough of the good stuff. Eat organic. Teach your children to read the labels. Make sure you are putting good stuff into your mouth.
14. CAREGIVING: Even when you are very young, you can take care of something alive. Start with four plants. Watch them grow as you do. Add more plants with each birthday. Start a garden that grows in size as you grow in years. Then care for wild birds by throwing them seed. Then care for family animals, like chickens, cats, and dogs.
14. MOTHER EARTH: The greatest impact that we adults can have is to make a better path for the little ones coming after us. Take care of the garbage, and put it in a good place. You can’t throw garbage out the car window, because that is your Mother Earth out there. You would be throwing that on her face. There is always a proper place for garbage. It is our job as human beings to keep the balance and to watch out for the habitat of all life. We have to learn to do things in moderation and balance.

#### **Chapter Four: *The Great Animal***

16. THINKIN’ THING: It is not the adults that own the world, it’s the children. We have this “thinkin’ thing” on the top of our head, called our brain. How you run that brain is how you do your life every day. It’s a powerful tool.
17. CHOICES: You always have a choice, no matter who you are. Whatever you do, think of the consequences of the choices you make. Be grateful, for this life, and for your choices.

18. **LOSS:** Learn to deal with loss. Respect people and creatures when they die. There is life and there is death. Talk about it. Be gentle with those who are grieving.
19. **FORGIVENESS:** Practice forgiveness, because we can only change this moment, right now. We cannot change the past, even what happened one minute ago, or one hour ago, or one decade ago.
20. **LIFE:** Wake up; think about tomorrow. It isn't here yet, but if you run today right, tomorrow will come. Everything that has life can only do one day at a time. Stop getting mad. It's hard on your heart. You've got other things to do. You've only got from the time you get up in the morning to the time you lay your head down at night to do good. You just have to keep on moving. Take charge of your life; it's your job. The privileges we have are great and many. Use them wisely for your life and for your longevity.

### **Chapter Five: *Stories and Stars***

21. **YOUR NAME:** Your given name is important. Taowhywee means "morning star" which is my indigenous name. My great-grandmother Margaret, who was also called Morning Star, gave this name to me.
22. **LOVE:** Do the best you know how, with gratitude and love. Love is the whole thing behind everything. When I lie down, I know that all is well when I go to sleep, because I have that four-letter-word: LOVE. Simple. That is our job as parents, to teach our kids. What is love? Actions. Action for love is what you teach a kid. Hug. Say, "I love you."
23. **GRATITUDE:** Every day say, "Thank you for who I am." Be grateful to wake up in the morning and say, "Ah ha! One more day." Learn to be grateful for just one day at a time. That's all we can do.
24. **TRUTH:** "Walk your talk" means you are doing well in your world and you are working. You do not lie or deceive others. You speak your truth and walk your talk. From truth, we receive trust.
25. **WATER:** Guard your water. Love your water, because it's in your body. We are all water babies. We are all born in the amniotic sac in water. Water is our first medicine.

Whenever you use water, give it thanks. It's in your tears, your saliva, your blood, and it coats your cells inside you so they can do their work. No matter what river, no matter what well, no matter what ocean – anything that's water, talk to it and thank it. Water can hear. When you first drink water in the morning say, "Thank you for my life."