



A New Native Story by Tish McFadden

Cultural • Environmental • Bilingual • Educational

Upriver to Morning: A Journey to Wisdom
A Rare Opportunity to Learn from an Indigenous Source

Book and Education Program

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In Southwest Oregon, we are in an exceptional situation having a living indigenous Takelma elder in our midst. She is Taowhywee, also known as Agnes Baker Pilgrim. Not only is she a local resident of the Rogue Valley, she is also recognized throughout Oregon, across the United States, and globally, as a member of the Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. Grandma Aggie, as she is fondly known, travels the world blessing water, promoting healthy environmental practices, and meeting with influential leaders, including the Dalai Lama, who, in their collective hearts, share a desire to make the world a better place.

Years ago, when I was an archaeologist working in southern Utah, it was unimaginable to have a conversation with a living Anasazi elder – to ask, for example, how did you survive living in the stark and arid climate of your desert homeland, how did you make your medicine, how did you teach your children, how did you feed each other and find clean water? It was utterly unthinkable to expect that these cultural particulars could be delivered from a direct source, first hand.

Instead, we learned about Utah's earliest inhabitants by examining their long-abandoned dwelling sites, tool-making sites, rock writings and sacred sites, in order to piece together a best-case scenario of prehistory.

Yet here, in Southwest Oregon, we have Agnes Baker Pilgrim, going on 95 years old, with four living generations growing up behind her. Aggie's ancestors, the Takelma, lived along the Rogue River for well over 15,000 years. Not only does she remain a vibrant and active advocator, educator, and "voice for the voiceless", Aggie passionately wants her teachings to be rippled out to our next and future generations.

This is the essence of Upriver to Morning: Grandma Aggie's teachings and her durable native wisdom delivered through story and song; truly the best ways for humans, of any age, to learn anything.

My fundamental purpose for creating this work is to honor Agnes Baker Pilgrim's plea to share her universal teachings with every generation, now and yet to come, and to help preserve the sustainability of our planet.

How to evaluate the project? To date, evaluation has been based on direct feedback from teachers, students, libraries, historical societies, and my Upriver to Morning advisory team. Response from all sources is consistently inspiring and positive.

Why now? Initially and purposefully, the project was conceived in response to Agnes Baker Pilgrim's heartfelt plea to "ripple out" to future generations the cultural teachings of her ancestors, the Takelma of Southwest Oregon.

Coincidentally, in 2017, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 13, mandating that Indigenous culture be taught in Oregon classrooms. It "calls upon the Oregon Department of Education to develop a statewide curriculum relating to the Native American experience in Oregon" in collaboration with the federally recognized tribes in Oregon. The time is now.

What will your donation and grant directly support? Upriver to Morning not only enhances educational content for our children and future generations by teaching about indigenous cultures, it also serves as an environmental model for living sustainably in order to preserve the delicate ecosystems on our planet. Directly, and especially during the development stages, the grant supports an array of artists, including: writers, editors, scriptwriters, songwriters, illustrators, filmmakers, book designers, audio engineers, musicians, storytellers, and webmasters.

How will I sustain the program? Our budget is evolving as the project grows. Grants and donations will be sought to fund, in part, ongoing operations. Additionally, income will be generated from the sale of books, audio books, music downloads, art prints of illustrations, product merchandise, teacher guides, school visits, public presentations, and more.