

Folklife Today

May 2019: Agnes Vanderburg's Outdoor School for Traditional Indian Ways

Announcer:	00:00	From the Library of Congress in Washington DC.
Mary Trotchie:	00:08	[Fiddle Music from Mary Trotchie]
John Fenn:	00:51	Welcome to the Folklife Today podcast. I'm John Fenn and I'm here with my colleague Stephen Winick.
Stephen Winick:		Hello, listeners.
John Fenn:		We're both folklorists that the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. I'm the head of research and programs and Steve is the Center's writer and editor. He's also the creator of our blog Folklife Today, from which we've developed our podcast series. In this episode we'll be talking about the transmission of traditional knowledge, drawing on a fantastic example that one of our colleagues here, Stephanie Hall, discussed in a blog post.
Stephen Winick:	01:18	<p>Tradition, as we know, is saved by passing it on. Today, that process of passing it on often occurs through media: books, television, radio, and even podcasts. Historically, though, transmission of tradition was mostly done on a more person to person level. Folklorists often say "face to face." We might think of this process as a form of community preservation, a way to pass along knowledge and culture that nurtures individuals and communities.</p> <p>Agnes Vanderburg, whom we'll be discussing today, put into practice a deep investment in tradition and intergenerational transmission. She had been frustrated that she carried knowledge that was disappearing as Native Americans adapted to dominant Anglo American culture. Agnes was the keeper of a wealth of knowledge, "in my chest" as she put it, that was meant to be passed on, and her primary way of sharing that knowledge was through her outdoor school on the Flathead Indian reservation near Arlee, Montana. She started the school in 1971 and ran it until she passed away in 1989. And the school still exists.</p>
John Fenn:	02:19	Indeed. And the American Folklife Center helped document Agnes's work during our Montana Folklife Survey. What I really appreciate about Agnes sharing the ways of her people was that she didn't limit her teaching to them. According to Agnes, if what she knew was going to live on, then she had to share it

with anyone who was willing to listen, and she did just that. Let's hear what she had to say about her reasons for starting a school to pass on her knowledge of Salish Indian traditions.

- Kay Young: 02:43 You teach someone plant medicine, um, could, could this be done? Um, for example, could you, would this be good thing to do through the school or is this some kind of special knowledge that should only be taught to certain people? Or how do you feel about that? About plant medicine?
- Agnes Vanderburg: 03:10 Well, I thought I'd pass it on to anybody. White or whatever. I just want to get rid of it, off my chest. Sometimes I think about it, you know. It stays here. Why I'm not telling nobody about what I know. So a lot of things, if it comes out of my chest, I think it'll be OK.
- Kay Young: 03:39 Okay. Have you used the plant medicines...medicines to heal yourself or other people?
- Agnes Vanderburg: 03:46 Oh yeah. Uh-huh. There's lot of mine we used...my kids use a lot of our Indian medicine.
- Stephen Winick: 04:01 That was Agnes Vanderburg talking about the importance of passing on traditions. Before we talk in depth about her and the school, we should mention that the American Folklife Center has a wealth of resources relating to indigenous or Native American languages and traditions. And since it's the first time we've featured any of these traditions on the Folklife Today podcast, we wanted a member of our staff to give us an overview. Judith Gray has been working with Native communities for a long time and is our go to person for most inquiries in this area, and in 2016 she received the prestigious "Honored One" award from the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums, otherwise known as ATALM, although she's always been an "honored one" to us. Judith, welcome.
- Judith Gray: Hello.
- John Fenn: So Judith, can you tell us briefly about the range of Native American materials we have in the collections?
- Judith Gray: 04:49 Well, I think we have over 2000 hours of Native American field recordings, most of which are unique, although some are duplicates of recordings also held in sister institutions. At one point I counted, and found that we have recordings from at least 120 North American tribes and over 160 different communities in the U.S. and Canada. To be sure, we also have

some recordings from Central and South American indigenous communities. The recordings date from March, 1890 almost to the present, although most are pre 1980s, and most of the early recordings in particular are of tribal songs rather than spoken word, since ethnographers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries tended to take down narratives by phonetic transcription rather than to use sound recorders for that purpose.

Stephen Winick: 05:38 I know that working with these materials can raise certain issues for researchers and communities regarding tribal or national sovereignty. What do people need to be sensitive to if they're interested in working with collections from indigenous communities?

Judith Gray: 05:51 What we need to remember is that recordings located in archives are the intellectual property of the communities of origin, so appropriate people in those communities must be consulted as to any uses. A complicating factor, however, is that many of the early recordings were of sacred songs, songs meant to be sung by culturally designated people, songs meant to be sung only in ceremonial context. Community members may therefore have very strong feelings about any requests to hear and to copy such songs and their wishes must be respected.

John Fenn: Judith, can you tell us about some of the repatriation efforts that AFC has been involved with over the years?

Judith Gray: One of the earliest activities of the American Folklife Center in the late 1970s was the creation of the Federal Cylinder Project, designed to preserve, document, and to make copies of the recordings for the communities of origin. Those of us in the following years, when invited, made visits to more than 100 tribal communities returning copies of the recordings from that location and offering technical assistance or whatever other resources we could to assist people in working with early recordings. We've collaborated with the Omaha tribe in creating a published sampler album of their traditional songs for use within the community. We've also hosted many tribal delegations as they came to Washington in search of their cultural heritage documentation, helping train some of the participants in techniques for implementing their very own documentation projects. Every year now, we continue to make copies of recordings available to communities and we're now collaborating with the Passamaquoddy people of Maine as they teach us so much more about the recordings than was ever known or conveyed to us by the original recordist.

Stephen Winick: Yeah, this is a really vital part of what the American Folklife Center does. So how do the Agnes Vanderburg interviews fit in with this range of folklife materials from Native American communities that we have in the archive?

Judith Gray: I think the Vanderburg interviews are quite unique. As I mentioned earlier, many of the recordings here are of songs, though there are also two large collections of narratives, but actual interviews with individuals and oral histories are not a prominent part of the Folklife Center's Native American holdings. So these interviews are special and contribute to our understanding of how people like Agnes Vanderburg value and promote cultural continuity from generation to generation.

John Fenn: Yeah, they're very special. I'm excited to explore them in this episode. Thanks so much for being with us, Judith, and for sharing your information.

Judith Gray: You're very welcome.

Mary Trotchie: 08:22 [Fiddle tune played by Mary Trotchie]

Stephen Winick: 08:56 Once again, that was Judith Gray on the Folklife Today podcast. She was giving us background on Native American collections here, so we'd have some context for our story about Agnes Vanderburg. Now we'll have a visit with Carl Fleischhauer. Carl is a longtime staff member of the American Folklife Center. Carl was actually there and met Agnes Vanderburg and so we're going to talk to him about that experience. So Carl, explain to us a little about that Montana project that you were working on.

Carl Fleischhauer: 09:22 The American Folklife Center field projects were mostly done cooperatively with organizations in states or other regions as we proceeded. The one in Montana was done with the Montana Arts Council. The leader was Barre Toelken. His background is relevant. He's a person who has done considerable ethnographic work with Native American people, especially the Navajo. And so it made a good fit for the parts of the project that visited Native Americans in Montana. The other fieldworker who was central to the visit to Agnes Vanderburg is Kay Young. And her particular specialty is what sometimes gets called ethnobotany, which is city talk for looking at the wild plants and other botanical items that people use. And that's a big part of the Native American experience, and was a central element in the Agnes Vanderburg visits.

The Flathead reservation is about 30 miles north of Missoula, so it's quite handy. And somebody must have clued people in as to Agnes Vanderburg's activity. And we trekked up to Arlee two or three times. The central topographic feature of the Flathead reservation is a large lake, Flathead Lake. And Agnes's camp was in high ground. I mean, I'd call it a low mountain or something, south of Flathead Lake, but it was a very pretty spot. And I went there with Kay, I think on either the first visit or one of the first visits. And we drove up, hit the turnoff for Agnes's camp, and the marker was so striking I took photographs. There was this piece of fabric, it was sort of a big triangle of fabric that had been roughly kind of cut out and affixed to a frame that held up to rural mailboxes, and handwritten on this piece of fabric, it says "Agnes Vanderburg Camp" with an arrow. Her name is misspelled, so I don't suppose she made it herself.

And at that point you turned up a dirt road and went up into a higher terrain. And there was this camp, it was an open meadow near a creek. There was a tipi in the center of it, a sort of an appropriate symbol, but there was also a sort of a kind of camping camp tent that had cots for three or four people and a pickup truck and a camp trailer and so on. And a perfectly ordinary picnic table set up. But it was very modest and, like the sign, you got this sense of appropriately homemade.

We met Agnes and I noticed that for example, her shoes, she's wearing the sort of shoes that you would buy inexpensively at a common shopping mall store or you know, these days at Walmart. And there were no elaborate trappings that we outsiders think of as Indian, you know, or "Indian-ness." It's a, again, a nice reminder of the ways in which these important traditions in concept sort of carry forward into the present day. You know, it's not this business about building an antique thing one way or another.

And so, there were these interviews but in addition, Kay young wrote some superb field notes. They're really quite good and she reports a couple of incidents again that she felt, and I agree, are characteristic of what was going on. One of them, she sort of self-deprecatingly presents as a faux pas that...Agnes and, and one or two of the other adults had left the picnic table. And one of the children—and these were kids, I think sort of almost elementary school age who attended—one of the boys came up, he'd caught a fish in the creek and he was having difficulty trying to figure out how to clean the fish, what to do. So Kay jumped in and said, well look, we can do this, we'll clean the fish this way. And later Agnes, she says, in a very friendly way, chastised her for explaining it...that the idea was that this lad

was supposed to figure out himself and really try to self-solve the problem of preparing or cleaning the fish. And it was part of the way the lessons would be taught.

There was another incident she describes in which all the children had been warned to be careful. The camp had, among other things, reportedly a grizzly bear in the woods, not too far. So there were some risks from that, but there were other risks including what were called ground bees, which I take to be yellow jackets or something like that. And the children were all warned to steer clear of them. And one of the girls just couldn't resist according to Kay. So she kept poking at this hive of bees and then got stung and she was given an ointment after that. But the adults used the occasion as sort of a teaching moment and told the girl, "Now you were warned not to bother those bees, or you'd get stung," to convey to her that she had to take responsibility. The girl had to take her own responsibility for being stung.

And incidents like that led Kay, I think wisely, to say that in part the school was about how to live, you know, and how to survive in the world, you know, as much as it was explicitly about particular traditions. It really left us all with the impression when we met Agnes that, you know, she had a superior intellect and superior insights one way or another.

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| John Fenn: | 15:50 | Thanks for sharing with us Carl. That was great recollections of Agnes in your time on the project. |
| Stephen Winick: | | And I'll say a couple of things in response to what Carl said. First of all, Barre Toelken passed away earlier this year and we all miss him within the field and we're very sad at his passing and we're really proud that he took part in this project and that he directed this project so beautifully. And the other thing is that much of the material that we've discussed about, in particular the photographs and the tape recordings of interviews, are on the Library of Congress website at loc.gov |
| Mary Trotchie: | 16:22 | [Fiddle Tune played by Mary Trotchie] |
| Stephen Winick: | 16:58 | We have another guest with us, Stephanie Hall, a folklorist at the American Folklife Center who wrote a great blog post over at the blog Folklife Today about Agnes and her outdoor school. So Stephanie, what was some of Agnes's special knowledge? |
| Stephanie Hall: | 17:12 | Agnes Vanderburg taught about everything from ABC's to plant medicine to making tipis to using wild foods and so much more. |

What was particularly powerful about the school too is that it was intergenerational: once you learned, you taught regardless of your age. So you'd have nine year olds showing 40 year olds how to do quill work.

John Fenn: As in porcupine quills?

Stephanie Hall: Yes. As a matter of fact, that's one of my favorite parts of the interview. Hearing Agnes explain how they collected the quills

John Fenn: Great, let's hear it.

Agnes Vanderburg: 17:46 The old-timers, they used to, see, they used to ride lots. They'd take their saddle blanket, they'd go around following this porcupine and just beat him up with their saddle blanket, and they'd get just the big tall quills. That's the way they'd pick out the quills. They don't kill the animal. First they take that hair, cause they got long hair. That's what they'd make a roach [traditional headgear] with. Then they started hitting the porcupine with their saddle blanket, and they sit down and take all the quills off from the saddle blanket. Then they let the porcupine go.

Stephen Winick: 18:26 "Like quills upon the fretful porpentine," as Shakespeare said. That is amazing, especially considering that the little fellow is released afterwards, so we can say "don't fret porpentine!"

Stephanie Hall: Well, the animal is certainly annoyed [but] it's not injured in the process, it's then free to go on its way and grow more quills.

John Fenn: Trelani Duncan, one of our first round of Bartis interns here at the American Folklife Center, did some research on how those quills are dyed. Trelani, welcome to the podcast.

Trelani Duncan: Hey Y'all.

John Fenn: So how exactly are the quills dyed and why did you find that concept so compelling?

Trelani Duncan: 18:57 Well, Agnes explains how, although the traditional way to dye quills was to use berries and vegetation for dye, her preferred way was boiling them with crepe paper. So you have, once again, this intergenerational element, this blending of old and new in a very practical way. Another example of that is the making of tipis. Agnes discusses how her mother sewed by hand but how she cheated and used a sewing machine.

John Fenn: Can we play that part?

Agnes Vanderburg: 19:21 I make them make tipis.

Kay Young: 19:24 When you say make a tipi, do you mean you actually put the, cut the canvas and put it together?

Agnes Vanderburg: Yeah.

Kay Young: How does one learn to do that? Is there a pattern or do you know measurements or how do you do it?

Agnes Vanderburg: 19:39 No, I just did...I just ask the person how big a tipi you want...10 foot or 11, 12, it goes up higher. So I just laid the canvas and measured how many feet. So I kept going. I've got no pattern. It just goes in here. That's all.

Kay Young: 20:04 And how do you sew the canvas, do you do this by hand or machine or,

Agnes Vanderburg: 20:08 well, my mother used to sew by hand. She used to invite two, three women, to sit on each end of canvas...they sewed by hand. But I don't do that. I sew it by sewing machine! Cheating!

Trelani Duncan: 20:26 I think we sometimes—I do, certainly—romanticize the old ways. I'm part of what's called the "microwave generation," expecting instant results and gratification. And while newer technologies like using crepe paper in place of berries are definitely convenient, they're also blamed for stuff like lack of concentration, ingenuity, attention to detail, reflection, and so on. So, far more value and sacredness tends to be reserved for the old ways, but Agnes showed us how the two can be so beautifully coexisting. So My grandmother made everything from scratch! I, on the other hand, don't mind buying my stock instead of making it. And boxed brownies aren't that bad to me (laughs). But I still draw the line. My greens gotta be fresh! Gravy and roux from scratch. And that circles back to Agnes too. She used modern technologies, true, but she still had her limits.

Stephen Winick: What do you mean?

Trelani Duncan: Well, there was no electricity or running water at the outdoor school for instance, while she had the means to acquire it, she just didn't want it. I read an LA Times article where she explained that if they got electricity then pretty soon houses would follow and then more houses. So she preferred to keep it the way it was. And I found that so fascinating!

John Fenn: 21:37 Whether sewing by hand or machine, this school sounds amazing. Nothing like the schools I grew up in.

Trelani Duncan: Same!

John Fenn: Well Trelani, thank you so much for joining us.

Stephen Winick: I want to mention the Trelani was a big part of developing and scripting this podcast series as well and did a fantastic job, so thank you Trelani

Trelani Duncan: You're so welcome. Thanks for inviting me to be part of the magic.

Mary Trotchie: 21:58 [Fiddle Tune Played by Mary Trotchie]

Stephen Winick: 22:32 Trelani was talking about the intergenerational nature of the school and Stephanie mentioned that too. We have another example of that in the story of Rachel Bowers, who was first a student in the school and then became a teacher. Let's hear some of what she said about her experiences.

Rachel Bowers: 22:48 When we taught Indian studies in school, we found that we didn't have the time to teach them the way they should have it correctly, like starting and staying with the project until it's done, like Agnes was saying just a little while ago. In the half an hour's time that they gave us in school, we didn't have the time to teach. So this classroom we have up here is out in the open. When they decide to start something, we show them how long it's gonna take before they start in. If they're really determined enough, they go ahead and they do it. If they're not then they just, they don't attempt it at all. But most of the things they want to learn is, I think, basically how to survive out here.

John Fenn: 23:33 That was Rachel Bowers talking about her experiences as a student in the camp. So Stephanie, tell us a bit more about the structure of Agnes's outdoor school.

Stephanie Hall: 23:42 It was a unique experience. There were plenty of hands on activities teaching practical knowledge. There were no fees, no principals or directors, no lines to stand in or any of that. However, as Trelani mentioned, there was also no electricity or running water

Stephen Winick: 23:57 And all of it reminds me of place-based education. The idea of immersing students in not only the culture of a place but the physical environment of it too. Except with Agnes, they weren't

just learning about the place or focusing on the place, they were experiencing it full time.

- Stephanie Hall: 24:11 Indeed! And Agnes was an expert on the plants of her region, both for herbal medicine and for food. Camas root, for instance, is an historically important food in Montana and in some other parts of the far northwest. In the next audio clip, Agnes continues to be interviewed by Kay young about the process of preparing camas.
- Kay Young: 24:32 Now that you've removed the camas...the camas from the pit, what will you do with that large sack of camas bulbs?
- Agnes Vanderburg: 24:43 Well, whatever they want to do. Me, I'm going to grind it and dry it.
- Kay Young: 24:46 Grind it and dry it. And then how will you fix it when you go to prepare it?
- Agnes Vanderburg: 24:52 Well, I put them in, whatever, put them in little baggies, and when winter comes I'll cook, 'bout a handful...come out like Brown gravy.
- Kay Young: 25:10 Will you boil it in water?
- Agnes Vanderburg: Mmm-hmm.
- Kay Young: And then is there any particular thing that you eat this with or do you just eat it alone?
- Agnes Vanderburg: 25:19 Oh, it's not that...just eat it anytime...it's no special thing.
- Stephanie Hall: 25:26 Camas became known to European Americans as the expedition led by Merriweather Lewis and William Clark explored what is now Montana and Idaho. Clark detailed in his journal how he first was introduced to camas in the fall of 1805. He described the bulbs as being like onions, sweet when dried and tolerably good in bread. He noted that he ate a lot of it and then would fall ill in the evening. But the expedition was in trouble all that winter because there was little game. So they did eat this foreign food and it is thought that camas may have saved the expedition.
- Speaker 1: 26:01 So how do we know that the root Clark described is actually camas? Especially since he didn't name it?

Stephanie Hall: 26:07 There may have been a few types of roots that members of the expedition ate as they traded for food in this region, but this description by Clark is clearly the camas and is likely the principal root that they traded for, too, as the Indians roasted it and dried it as a winter staple. The discomfort Clark felt after eating camas the first time was experienced by others in the expedition as well. But apparently they became accustomed to it as they continued to eat it. They didn't know what the plant looked like, so they couldn't hunt for it themselves and were dependent on the Indians. It is a good thing that they did not find wild bulbs themselves because there's a similar plant that is poisonous and potentially deadly that they did not know about.

John Fenn: 26:51 Given everything that we've heard about the outdoor camp, I guess it's safe to say that Agnes accomplished her goal of delivering the wisdom she held in her chest.

Stephanie Hall: 27:00 That she did. Agnes Vanderburg's legacy of Montana Salish knowledge and language was passed on to many people who learned from her those skills and topics that they were most interested in.

Stephen Winick: And of course this collection is rich in photographs too, right?

Stephanie Hall: That's right. In addition to the interview, we also have a photographic series of the camas preparation process in our Montana Folklife Survey collection. These are all digitized and available for online viewing or download.

Stephen Winick: 27:28 You can find all of that material at loc.gov/folklife.

John Fenn: Well, Stephanie, we appreciate your time and your research on the transformative work of Agnes Vanderburg.

Stephen Winick: Yes, thank you.

Stephanie Hall: 27:39 You're so welcome. Thank you for having me.

Mary Trotchie: 27:41 [Fiddle tune played by Mary Trotchie]

John Fenn: 28:02 You know Steve, something that I learned by reading Kay Young's field notes about her work with Agnes at the outdoor camp was that the pedagogical ethos of the school was very much experiential, in the sense that Agnes believed the best way for people to learn what is to do with themselves. Sure, there was guidance from Agnes and other tradition bearers, but those who wanted to learn were supposed to problem-solve on

their own as they took in traditional knowledge. And you'll remember that story that Carl told us about the boy who caught a fish and then didn't know how to clean it and then Kay stepped in. But Agnes gently reminded her later that part of learning to fish is figuring out how to clean the fish that you catch.

Stephen Winick:

Right. Agnes's position was that if you're going to fish, you have to master the entire process. And it sounds like she was invested in passing along self-reliance as well as traditional knowledge. And you know, I'm a proverb guy, I did my doctoral dissertation on proverbs and this reminds me of that famous proverb that if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. But if you teach him to fish, you can feed him for a lifetime. And Agnes realized that you also had to know how to get or make fishing equipment, how to clean fish and prepare fish and which fish are even edible, and the whole Matrix of cultural information that goes along with fish and fishing.

John Fenn:

Exactly. Let's listen to a bit of audio from one of Kay's interviews with Agnes where you can hear an interaction with one of the young boys who was fishing on that day. Kay and Agnes are discussing traditional beliefs concerning dental care and strong teeth when the boy comes up with a question. They then move into talking about Agnes experience as a child with learning by mimicking adults. Here we go.

Kay Young:

29:35

Were there any beliefs about the teeth, about having good teeth there?

Agnes Vanderburg:

29:42

Yeah. In my time they tell you to give it to dogs. Put in something, give it to dogs. Yeah, give it to dogs. You'll have good teeth? Or else, bury it under a Rose Bush. So that's the way we took care of our teeth.

Kay Young:

But people aren't doing that...

Boy:

Agnes! Do you know where my, um, fishing box is?

Agnes Vanderburg:

Go look around where you've been.

Boy:

Well. Um, it was sitting right there, wasn't it? Did you see it?

Kay Young:

Well...go ask at the tipi.

How old were little girls when they started to help with cooking and doing the things that women did? Did they start when they were pretty young?

- Agnes Vanderburg: 30:48 Hmm. Maybe about his age they started, not really small. There's a lot of things, you know, too close to the fire. But...one thing I couldn't do it right away, was make fry bread. My mother say "you'll burn." I might just drop it from high, and splash and get it all over myself.
- Stephen Winick: 31:17 That was a clip from Agnes Vanderburg in the Montana Folklife Survey collection here on the Folklife Today podcast. In Agnes's response to the boy, you can hear her philosophy of teaching. She's not going to find the tackle box for him but pushes him to find it on his own by retracing his steps
- John Fenn: And in her reminiscing about childhood and the dangers of cooking fry bread for example, we get a sense of the self-preservation ethos embedded in her approach to passing along traditional knowledge. While kids should learn by doing, there are some practices too dangerous to learn before a certain age.
- Mary Trotchie: 31:48 [Fiddle tune played by Mary Trotchie]
- Stephen Winick: 32:30 We have another guest with us, and in fact it's a person who knew Agnes Vanderburg. This is Marjorie Hunt, who's a folklorist at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. And like many folklorists, Marjorie has an abundance of skills and talent, and we are proud to say that she is the first Oscar-winning filmmaker to appear on the Folklife Today podcast. Welcome Marjorie.
- Marjorie Hunt: Thank you Steve, and hello.
- Stephen Winick: So in 1984, which was the same year in which you produced your Oscar-winning documentary *The Stone Carvers*, you also coordinated a program for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival called "The Grand Generation." So explain what that was all about.
- Marjorie Hunt 33:08 It actually begins back in 1981, uh, when folklorist Steve Zeitlin and I were working together at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage on a folklife project in connection with the 1981 White House Conference on Aging. And of course as folklorists, we were keenly aware of the vital role that elders play in their families and communities as creators and preservers and key people who pass down knowledge and skills,

memories and stories from generation to generation. So we thought, well, the Folklife festival, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival would be a great national platform to shine a spotlight on this and show to a broad, general public the important role that elders play as tradition bearers and the legacies that they give to all of us.

Stephen Winick: 34:09

And how did you specifically become aware of Agnes Vanderburg and invite her to participate?

Marjorie Hunt: 34:15

So I was working with a wonderful folklorist Mary Hufford, who at the time was a folklife specialist here at the American Folklife Center. And she had heard about the 1981 Montana Folklife Survey and about Agnes Vanderburg. So I went down, I came down to meet with her here at the Center and I also met with Carl Fleischhauer, a folklorist at the Center, and they started telling me all about Agnes Vanderburg and her incredible school. And they showed me photographs from your collection and some transcriptions of interviews that had been done with Agnes. And we thought, oh my, my goodness, Agnes would be perfect for the program.

And we called the program The Grand Generation. In fact, I believe if memory serves me correctly, that Mary Hufford came up with that name, The Grand Generation. And it was really focusing on intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skill and art, and traditional art. And Agnes just seemed like the perfect person to take part. And we also found out about one of her former students, Rachel Bowers. So we invited Rachel as well. So we had Agnes and Rachel together at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 1984.

Stephen Winick: 35:39

Uh Huh. And what were your first impressions when you finally did meet her?

Marjorie Hunt: 35:43

Her incredible energy, uh, her generosity of spirit, the sparkle in her eyes, um, and that depth of knowledge that she had and her passion for sharing it.

Stephen Winick: 35:55

And what was her role in the festival? What did she actually do on the Mall?

Marjorie Hunt 35:58

They demonstrated their craft of dying and working with porcupine quills. They brought some plants and talked about foodways and traditional medicine, they had...their area was a beehive of activity. They had a lot of hands-on activities for kids and she, she brought a tipi, not a gigantic one, but she actually

put up a tipi. So in this demonstration area, she would talk one on one or with small groups and, as I say, do hands on activities with kids and was wonderful at engaging people and sharing her knowledge and wisdom.

And then the other forum was a small intimate narrative stage where she and Rachel would talk in an informal way with audiences that came to the festival. And we would ask her questions about why she started this school and what she was doing, what our vision for it was. And then Rachel as a former student, would talk about what she had learned and why it was important, how Agnes was working to keep the Montana Salish language alive and pass on traditional knowledge of plants and...working with porcupine quills...everything you could imagine from soup to nuts.

The festival was in 1984 and I believe she passed away not too many years after that. So we were so fortunate to get to know her and to have her participate. The intergenerational transmission of knowledge...it's incredibly vital that this is recognized and continues. I'm just so thrilled that you're doing the podcast and can't think of a better person than Agnes Vanderburg to focus on.

Stephen Winick:

Thank you so much.

Marjorie Hunt:

Thank you

Stephen Winick:

37:51

And thank you, John, for producing this podcast with me. We'd also like to thank Agnes Vanderburg for sharing her wisdom and knowledge with Kay Young and all the other fieldworkers for the Montana Folklife Survey.

John Fenn:

And thanks to Judith Gray, Stephanie Hall, Marjorie Hunt, Carl Fleischhauer and Trelani Duncan for joining us in the studio. Thanks to Jon Gold, our audio engineer at the American Folklife Center and Mike Turpin of the music division for studio space and other technical help. This podcast heavily depends on his expertise and input.

Stephen Winick:

Bye for now, listeners. We'll see you next time on Folklife Today.

Mary Trotchie:

38:22

[Fiddle tune played by Mary Trotchie]

Announcer:

39:22

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