



A New Native Story by Tish McFadden

Cultural • Environmental • Bilingual • Educational

Taowhywee Agnes Baker Pilgrim

September 11, 1924 • November 27, 2019

“I’m everybody’s Grandma,” she’d say with a broad smile. This was Agnes Baker Pilgrim’s way of expressing her deep appreciation, acceptance, and love of all people. In her 95 remarkable years, Grandma Aggie demonstrated her reverence for all living things through music, teaching, environmental activism, and ultimately, serving as the spiritual elder of her Takelma tribe.

She believed in the power of kindness and reciprocity, and she recognized the biological interconnectedness of all living things.

Whether addressing a small child or speaking with the Dalai Lama, Grandma Aggie treated everyone she met with respect. She was adept in knowing how to listen to the needs of others – including wild rivers, salmon, and trees.

My initial interest in knowing Grandma Aggie began in the 1980s when I arrived in southwest Oregon, into the heart of the Takelma homeland, as an anthropologist for the US Forest Service. However, it wasn’t until her March, 2016 book signing in Ashland, Oregon that we reconnected. I bought and read her book, and was immediately inspired to write a story to deliver her indigenous teachings to our next and future generations. To “ripple it out.”

In her own words, I’ve had Aggie’s blessing, support, and gratitude for my book and education program, *Upriver to Morning: A Journey to Wisdom*, “from the get-go!”

She continues, “I really am pleased; it’s like having a buddy spitting out the same words as I do, which everybody needs to hear. Thank you, Tish, for putting it together in book form, so everyone can get a good start about thinking about life, and themselves.”

Grandma Aggie’s words, wisdom, advice, and teachings are eternal and universal. They are here to guide us toward a balanced world, once again.

You will be forever missed, Grandma Aggie, but you will never disappear. Your name, Taowhywee, which means Morning Star, will rise upriver at dawn. Today. Tomorrow. Forever.

Tish McFadden

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