

Museum at Warm Springs staff profile ~

A question-and-answer with Angela Anne Smith, Museum Curator and Exhibits Coordinator.

from the Museum at Warm Springs

Angela Anne Smith is the Curator and Exhibits Coordinator for the Museum at Warm Springs. Angela appreciates all forms of art and has studied multiple methods of creating Indigenous cultural arts and crafts.

With this appreciation and knowledge, Angela has taken the opportunity to apply this to exhibits in the Museum's Changing Exhibit Gallery. Her own professional museum journey began as a volunteer in the Museum Gift Shop.

As other opportunities became available, she eventually gained experience as Gift Shop manager and development assistant.

Angela successfully acquired a certificate in Museum Studies through the renowned Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

With a diverse and rich background and a deep appreciation of the arts, Angela is consistently finding ways to continue to learn about different cultures and Indigenous languages.

With this ever expanding knowledge, she finds ways to shine an Indigenous perspective on The Museum's exhibits and arts, so visitors can experience the same feeling and appreciation for the beauty of Indigenous arts, history and cultures that she



Angela Smith

has experienced over the years.

Question: What interests you about Indigenous arts and cultures? What is special about it?

Angela: I am an enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, consisting of the Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute Tribes. I'm not only a descendant of the Warm Springs, but also the Nez Perce, Yakama and Umatilla-Walla Walla tribes too. Naturally, I want to learn everything there is to know about all of my tribes.

Why did you decide to make museum work your career path?

I figure museum work was a great field for me to get into, since I'm interested in history and always want to be involved in art in some way. I'm still learning as I go, but there is so much to know about caretaking of our collections and artifacts. It has been my lifestyle to always be growing and learning and I'm happy to do this work for my tribe.

How long have you worked at the Museum at Warm Springs? What initially drew you to it?

Angela: I have worked at the museum for 9-plus years. I've always loved taking cultural art classes ever since I would go to Culture Camp Naomi Tamánwit as a child.

When I grew into adulthood this was the place I could count on to hold culture classes to learn sewing, weaving or making tule mats. I also knew that I could visit the Gift Shop and pick up some great gifts.

What excites you most about your work at The Museum at Warm Springs?

I'm most excited about learning about my people. Every once in a while, an elder tribal member will come in to visit the museum. They find out who I am and then they tell me stories about my grandparents or great grandparents.

Every time that happens, it feels good, because it feels like I am getting to know them more and more. When we realize we are related, I try to ask about their family tree to see if I can make a connection that way, too.

What's special about the Museum at Warm Springs, in general?

Angel: The Museum at Warm Springs has many weavings and beadwork displayed throughout the building.

They show how unique we are as compared to other tribes. It is as beautiful as the

building and landscape of the entire reservation. In fact, if you look closely, the building's brick is patterned after patterns you might see woven in a basket. Or mountains, rivers and animals are beaded onto large beaded regalia and bags.

So far, do you have a favorite exhibit that you've worked on? Why?

Yes, by a miracle, I made the right contact to have the *Portraits In Red: Missing and Murdered Indigenous People* Painting Project exhibited here in the summer of 2024. This show was to be exhibited at five Pacific Northwest museums. Their last showing was to be at Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Mission, Oregon.

I felt strongly that it should come here, because the topic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives was hap-

pening on our own reservation.

My father went missing on March 16, 2022. There are several others that went missing from our community, too. We really needed to have this exhibit here.

The portraits were painted by artist Nayana LaFond. There were red ribbons that visitors could write on to share their thoughts about the exhibit or the artist. The staff pinned those to a banner. The banner was completely full by the end our exhibit. There was a resource table that had pamphlets about what to do if their loved one goes missing, helplines to call, suicide prevention information, and as well as the Missing Poster flyers for our families. I believe it had an impact and got word out.

What's your newest project?

The next show in the Changing Exhibit Gallery is *Saddle Up! Ranchers and Rodeo Life of The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs*, June 26 to September 27. We'll round up stories from earlier days on the reservation and show through archival photos how people lived in earlier days.

We'll exhibit old saddles, beaded vests and buckskin gloves from our collections. I'd like to also showcase the young people that are highly involved in horse races, rodeo, caring for livestock, or are rodeo royalty today.

What advice would you give to young Native people who are interested in museum work?

I would advise young Native people to attend the Institute of American Indian Arts and enroll in the Museum Studies program.



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