

OUR STORY...Over the past three decades Centrum has gathered hundreds of thousands of individuals—great artists, creative thinkers, ardent students, and passionate fans— to transform Fort Worden State Park into a legendary site of creative learning. The secret to our workshops is simple. Our faculty are not only world class artists, but extraordinary teachers committed to creative and cultural experiences that change lives.

In 2018, hoping to add the tradition of Oral Storytelling to our list of important cultural arts to preserve and share, Centrum staff searched for faculty to lead a workshop in a genre we had more fascination with than knowledge of. We found Donna Washington, whose passion and experience resonated clearly with our mission. With Donna's participation and guidance our first annual Oral Storytelling workshop seemed so much bigger than the sum of its parts.

Donna Washington's school visits to our elementary school and high school were nothing short of amazing.

The high school class, with their wonderful mix of attitudes and attention spans, took me right back to those "too cool for school" days. Donna captured their attention and held it for an hour that felt like 30 minutes, and in the process opened their minds to some life changing possibilities.

She held the elementary school children in the palm of her hand. A gym full of youngsters participating in call outs and hand gestures, captivated by the words of a single person standing before them with no screens, no electronics. Teachers were admonished that this was not a spectator event, and happily jumped in. Even a safety vested construction worker watching through the window couldn't resist joining us. My favorite memory of that day came later when Donna was featured at an evening performance we assumed would be attended by adults. Rushing to the front to sit at her feet were some of these kids. They had convinced their parents to bring them to hear more of Donna's stories.

All this before we even started the workshop, where Donna first amazed the group with her own style of storytelling, and then coached them to find the storyteller in themselves. Without exception they each gave the workshop high praise. When asked how we might improve next year we got a resounding "make it longer!"

Thank you, Donna, for the amazing week. We look forward to another year!

Warmest thanks from us all,
Lisa and the Centrum Staff

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