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To: Pauleena MacDougall, Director, Maine Folklife Center
Timothy Lloyd, Executive Director, American Folklore Society
From: Millie Rahn
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Re: Final Report on AFS Technical Assistance Consultancy to Maine Folklife Center

**Creating Prototype Best Practices for
Documenting and Preserving Foodways Content
at the American Folk Festival
for the
Collections of the Maine Folklife Center**

Background/Context

Between late July and mid-August 2009 I consulted with the Maine Folklife Center, based at the University of Maine/Orono, to create a prototype for documenting and preserving the foodways presentations, a portion of which would be implemented on the "Taste of Maine" foodways stage at the 2009 American Folk Festival in Bangor. The Maine Folklife Center (MFC) is one of the four presenting partners of the festival, and is responsible for producing all the material culture programming for the festival, including foodways. The MFC is the only organization in the state devoted to the documentation and study of the folklore and oral history of Maine and the Atlantic Provinces of Canada.

Foodways has been part of the MFC's programming for the traditional arts area at the festival since the festival began as a National Folk Festival in 2002. Increasingly, the foodways stage has become an important repository for this aspect of Maine folklife, which includes cultural information moderated by a folklorist, foodways demonstrations by Maine tradition-bearers on stage, and exchanges between presenters and audience members in the tent during the event. To my knowledge, there is no other venue or format of this quality and cultural breadth in the State of Maine.

Compared to other festivals in eastern New England with which I'm familiar, what is unique about Bangor is that the city is one of the major destinations for cultural events, as well as shopping and professional services, in the state and the region. For many northern and eastern non-coastal Mainers, Bangor is generally the southern-most point to which they'll travel. That is also true for many visitors from the Canadian Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, who share many of Maine's cultural traditions and history, and also see Bangor as a destination for shopping and, in August, attending the festival.

In addition, at Bangor all the foodways presenters at the festival are Mainers sharing their culture largely with other Mainers or Maritimers, whether these tradition-bearers represent new arrivals or long-settled ethnic or occupational groups. Thus the foodways stage at the American Folk Festival facilitates the opportunity to create and document a truly representative community discussion, which often challenges stereotypes about Maine's foodways and cultural make-up, and also educates multi-generational and multi-ethnic audiences about rural and urban traditions, as well as fostering the exchanges that reflect the diverse cultures, heritage, and geography of the state. The foodways stage at the festival is one of the few public opportunities to engage such a rich array of cultural exchanges in Maine today, and preserving these presentations is vital to documenting Maine folklife over time.

Strengths and Challenges

One of the greatest strengths provided by the Maine Folklife Center and the American Folk Festival is the infrastructure for the foodways and material culture areas featuring Maine tradition-bearers, as well as the commercial "Folk Arts Marketplace" featuring Maine craftspeople and foodways purveyors in a separate area of the event. Together, these areas reinforce the culture and visibility of Maine traditions old and new.

Another major strength is that the Folklife Center is part of the state university system. MFC is located on the university's main campus in Orono, about 20-minutes north of Bangor. The MFC has a long and illustrious history documenting Maine folklife and oral history, publishing in various media, and curating collections and making them available for public use. In addition, MFC already partners at the festival with the university's Page Farm and Home Museum, which is dedicated to preserving Maine's agricultural heritage; and the Hudson Museum, the university's anthropology museum known, in part, for its extensive collections of the material culture of Maine's four federally-recognized Indian tribes. At the festival, both museums present complementary exhibits from their collections that reinforce the foodways and/or material culture themes, and both do extensive education and programming throughout the year.

Also, in recent years the MFC has collaborated with Cultural Resources, another Maine organization interested in documenting community culture, to initiate the Story Bank project. Story Bank is modeled after Story Corps and its traveling sound studio, which is parked near the foodways tent and traditional arts area, collects stories at the festival. These recordings become source material for a series of radio programs for Maine Public Radio, which has a strong network throughout the state and a history of cultural programming. Story Bank is a natural resource for collecting oral histories from each foodways tradition-bearer after their presentation at the festival.

All of these collaborations are already in place and ideally will continue, but there are other recommendations that follow.

All that said, the major challenge for festival foodways curators everywhere is that most organizations have neither the budget nor the staff to devote to fieldwork. As at many festivals throughout the US, the foodways stage in Bangor is usually one of the ephemeral parts of the event, yet the one that features the regional cultures of the state and an opportunity to document the folklife of both tradition-bearers on stage and in the audience. At this time, presentations are not recorded in any medium on the foodways stage as they are on other stages (e.g., music, narrative), and visual documentation is limited to still photography usually done by roving MFC staff and random media photographers.

Another major challenge in 2009 was the fragile economic climate both nationally and especially in Maine, which affected the budgets of the festival and the Folklife Center's traditional arts area early in the year. Fortunately, the MFC, through the festival, was able to continue to pay tradition-bearers' an honorarium for their presentations, reimburse the cost of their ingredients and travel to/from the festival, and house them overnight Saturday in the festival hotel.

Creating a Sustainable Cultural Documentation Model

Pulling all this together, my role as consultant this summer was, in a short time, to create and implement a sustainable model for 2009 and subsequent foodways presentations at the American Folk Festival that would include (1) a feasible documentation plan; (2) written interpretive materials including an annual theme, presenters' background and contextual information on their foodways tradition and recipe(s) for use by media and on MFC and festival websites both for those who attended the festival and those who did not; (3) tie in foodways tradition-bearers to Story Bank's on-site oral histories collected at the festival; and (4) most importantly, edit these materials for an online series of foodways "exhibits" an/or "publications" on the Folklife Center's website. These exhibits/publications can then be available to a number of constituencies such as teachers, libraries, the general public, scholars, and others planning public programs about Maine foodways and folklife across the state and beyond.

My strength as a consultant is that I have more than a decade's experience working throughout the State of Maine for a variety of state and local agencies conducting fieldwork—though usually not foodways-related, per se--and creating public programs, and am as accepted there as much as anyone “from away” can be. I have also moderated the foodways stage since the second year of the festival (2003), but only took a more active role in its planning and implementation in the past year, which has given me some insights into how documentation can be improved.

I also have extensive experience working in a variety of media both in Maine and elsewhere, as well as foodways expertise. Significantly, as an independent consultant with a large network, a major strength has been the ability to draw on Maine resources that might not otherwise be known to or available to the Folklife Center. All of this helped to create the structure and provide the big picture for using this valuable resource—the foodways stage—to document and preserve as much intangible cultural heritage as possible in a way that reaches the widest possible audience and on a limited budget.

Based on all of the above, my recommendations to the MFC and best practices generally for festival foodways presentations. I also attach a copy of the 2009 Taste of Maine foodways materials related to the theme, tradition-bearers, and schedule.

Recommendations for Creating Prototype Best Practices for Documenting and Preserving Foodways Content at the American Folk Festival and

1. Continue to feature an annual theme as part of the Taste of Maine foodways stage. The theme for 2010 has been determined to be hunting and fishing. This gives ample time to tie in the material culture presentations, narrative stages, and exhibits by the Page Farm Museum and the Hudson Museum.
2. Continue to use Story Bank to produce broadcast-quality oral histories with tradition-bearers in the foodways area. For many, this is the first time they will have talked publicly about their tradition and/or heritage, family/regional folklife, etc.
3. Continue to put as much foodways information on the MFC website and use that archive to generate publications (written, online) and/or exhibits over time. Encourage university departments to use the resource as a way of publicizing the Maine Folklife Center's resources and also contribute to its collections.
4. Try to find a way to record audio from the demonstrations and discussions on stage. Perhaps tie it to University of Maine student coursework, an MFC internship, etc. This material differs from what tradition-bearers will likely focus on in an oral history, plus the wealth of information and cultural knowledge from audience members is captured in no other way.

5. One university resource that is recommended for consideration in future years is the documentary resources of ASAP [acronym not defined], the university's New Media hands-on program for students (graduate and undergraduate) to learn video documentation and editing by going out in the field. Having ASAP students, under the supervision of faculty, do video documentation of the foodways stage would also enable the MFC to add a vibrant component to the website in short, edited pieces demonstrating foodways and techniques, as well as sound clips of cultural material. These short pieces could also then be available to schools and Maine Public Television, all of which is done with virtually no cost to the MFC and/or the users. Ideally shooting tradition-bearers in the context of their home and/or farm or workplace would be ideal to supplement their presentation at the festival, that that would also be very costly. That said, the infrastructure for that already exists and should be considered in future, especially when grant monies are more available.

Best Practices for Documenting and Preserving Festival Foodways Presentations

1. Create an annual theme. For the Taste of Maine foodways stage, tie in theme, if possible, with material culture demonstrations in the folk arts area. Foodways themes can be geographic (Aroostook County, Mid-Coast, etc.); occupational (fishing, farming, lumber camps, etc.), united by one topic (beans: Native, Yankee, French, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Somali, etc.) or ethnicity (Acadian/Quebécois, Native, Greek, etc.). In 2009 the theme was Gathered Foods and featured the foodways of blueberries, mushrooms, maple sap, and honey.
2. Draw on established networks and previous fieldwork (own or others) to locate and contract tradition-bearers. Maine is a small state, population-wise, and ethnic and occupational communities are close-knit. Use local and/or statewide organizations to locate potential presenters. Often people will give names and phone numbers of family members that you could not otherwise locate, or fellow members of agricultural or trade organizations, such as local versions of the Maine Potato Board, Maine Beekeepers Association, Maine Agri-Women, Maine Mycologists, Maine Maple Association, Maine State Rabbit Breeders Association; or ethnic organizations such as Maine Acadian Heritage Council; or state offices and programs such as the University of Maine Extension Service or the Maine Department of Agriculture's Food and Rural Resources, which produced the "Get Real, Get Maine" branding campaign and Maine Maple Sunday, an annual event during sugaring season.
3. Tie in to historical or other anniversaries. In 2008, for the 400th anniversary of the founding of Québec, which had and has a huge influence on Maine's history and communities, the foodways theme was "A Taste of Aroostook/un p'tit gout d'Aroostook" to honor the Québécois, Acadian, Anglo, Native, and other traditions in Maine's largest county that shares a border with New Brunswick, Canada.

4. Book presenters early, but not too early. The Bangor festival is late August, which is harvest time, so many potential demonstrators simply cannot commit or be available at that time, which can affect choice of themes. Also, part of the culture is that many people do not make plans too far in advance. Draw on authentic tradition-bearers identified by fieldwork or other means and work with them by phone/email to shape their presentation. The foodways curator is usually the festival point of contact person, so it's up to the curator to work with MFC and/or festival staff on presenters' paperwork and logistics both for onstage and travel and accommodation, particularly if there are special needs for presenters while they're at the festival.

5. Foodways demonstrators should be paid a flat daily rate for their time presenting at the festival and reimbursed for the cost of ingredients, for which they must supply receipts and agree on an expense limit in advance with foodways curator. The American Folk Festival also pays mileage to/from the festival and houses demonstrators overnight on the Saturday night in the festival hotel. This is an attractive enticement for many people in Maine, which is and has always been hard-hit economically. It also provides a weekend to meet and socialize with family and others in Bangor. Tradition-bearers put in a great deal of time preparing for the festival, packing, cooking in advance in some cases, and doing interviews at the festival. They work as hard, or even harder, than many of the musicians at the event.

6. Foodways curator should meet deadlines and create clear, concise materials explaining the foodways theme, including explanations about the featured traditions and/or theme, as well as brief bios of the tradition-bearers and their heritage. All foodways materials should be tied into all festival publicity, even if only the theme is announced when festival publicity machine starts up. All these materials will go on the MFC website and the festival website as early as possible, as well as in the official program published by the *Bangor Daily News*, and ideally generate local publicity in trade organizations, local communities, and community newspapers in the hometowns of the tradition-bearers.

7. In some cases, an annual theme might lend itself to financial sponsorship at the festival, so the earlier themes are identified, the happier the development staff will be. The 2010 theme for A Taste of Maine is hunting and fishing.

8. Try to have the same tradition-bearers at the same time each day. That maximizes exposure for tradition-bearers and gives audiences who only attend for one day the chance to experience the range of presentations on stage. At Bangor the foodways stage runs from Noon to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday. There is a "full" temporary kitchen with full-size stove, refrigerator, and running water and electricity, plus working and serving tables, and serving materials. Demonstrators bring their own utensils and ingredients, many of which are unique to their family, heritage, and/or recipe. Sometimes they'll do a different recipe each day under the same general theme.

9. Ideally, demonstrations are 30-45 minutes each, with at least 15 minutes between to clean up previous demonstration and prepare for next one. Volunteers are essential to help demonstrators, serve samples, clean up, etc.

10. Have a contingency plan. Demonstrators often drop out due to emergencies or illness. You can always use the open hour for audience discussion, or general talk about foodways topics—recipes, agricultural or husbandry practices, proverbs, etc. In addition, in 2009 the first day of the foodways stage was torrential rain, and it was one of the few stages that had a big enough tent to be one of the featured parts of the festival. Crowds were larger than usual, thanks to the shelter from the rain, so food samples were truly just bite-sized in most cases.

11. Foodways samples. Most festivals allow audiences to sample the foods demonstrated. Many are prepared in advance by the presenters due to time or volume constraints. The festival will already have established local health department regulations concerning distributing samples. Audiences will see ingredients and/or ask presenters about content.

12. Have a folklorist or knowledgeable food person moderate the stage. They can put demonstrator(s) at ease since often they've met or worked together by phone and email before the event, fill in down time with cultural information, moderate audience questions of demonstrator(s), etc. The festival provides a PA system.

13. Give audiences printed copies of the recipe(s) being demonstrated and/or make recipes available on festival and MFC websites before/during/after the festival. For the Folklife Center, the recipes become part of the annual documentation of Maine Foodways, along with photos, audio, video, etc.

14. Document the presentations in various media. Depending on budget and creativity, try at least to record the audio of the foodways demonstrations and cultural discussion generated by the folklorist and tradition-bearer(s). Ideally stage should be documented in video, audio, still photography, and with written handouts and or links to presenters' websites, as well as festival website.

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2009 American Folk Festival “Taste of Maine” Foodways Area**Gathered Maine Foods**

For centuries, people in Maine have used the wilderness around them as extensions of their cultivated gardens and continue to do so today. They rake blueberries. They gather a variety of nuts, berries, greens, onions, mushrooms and other kinds of nature’s bounty from the woods and barrens and streams throughout the state. They tap maple trees. They keep bees. They dig roots or harvest barks for medicines and teas. They collect fruits for pies, jams and jellies, and beverages. Some items are eaten fresh, some are cooked or baked, and others are dried and/or “put up” for future use. This year’s Taste of Maine foodways stage features a sampling of the many gathered food traditions in Maine, along with recipes that reflect the families and communities who preserve and pass on these food traditions to future generations.

Recipe demonstrations and tastings afterwards will run from Noon to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday at the Foodways Stage in the Folk and Traditional Arts area.

Cooks’ Bios and Schedule**Noon, Saturday & Sunday: Lee & Everett Worcester, Orneville; Blueberry Vinaigrette**

Lee and Everett Worcester run Worcester’s Wild Blueberries in Orneville. All their products featuring Maine wild blueberries are raised and processed at their farm, which they’ve been operating for more than 30 years. The Worcesters are members of Maine Highlands Farmers and vendors at the festival again this year. They also can be found at local farmers’ markets and online (www.wildblueberryproducts.com). Worcester’s Wild Blueberries are known for their jam, jelly, syrup, chutney, pie filling, blueberry juice drink and blueberry vinaigrette, which they’ll demonstrate at the festival.

1:00pm, Saturday & Sunday: Charlene & Boyd Bradbury, Bridgewater; Maple Sugar

Charlene & Boyd Bradbury run Bradbury Maple Farms in Bridgewater, a three-generation family operation, and use the same evaporator that Boyd's great-grandfather used in the 1930s. More than a quarter century ago, Boyd bought from his grandparents part of the original woodlot where his great-grandfather tapped trees. He found pieces of the old operation and decided to put it all back together. He collected his first sap in 1984 and the business has grown from 150 taps to over 3,000 and says 2009 was his highest yield ever. The Bradburys produce maple products from syrup to sugar, and will demonstrate making their maple sugar at the festival. Their sugar house is open to the public in late March and early April and products are also available online (www.bradburymaple.com).

2:00pm, Saturday & Sunday: Carol Cottrill, Rumford; Master Beekeeper/Honey

As a child, Carol Cottrill was introduced to honey bees by her beekeeper uncle, who showed her that the bees would not sting if she observed them quietly and moved slowly when they came near. These fascinating insects captured her interest and she hoped someday to have bees of her own. After moving to Maine she found beekeeping classes in Rumford, and has been learning about honey bees ever since. Carol is an officer in the Western Maine Beekeepers Association, where she coordinates the Bee School each spring, and is on the board of both the Maine State Beekeepers Association and the Eastern Apicultural Society. In 2005 she passed the exam to become a master beekeeper and became the first female master beekeeper in Maine. Carol is now the "Queen Bee" of the family's Fox Run Farm and thoroughly enjoys sharing her knowledge of bees and honey. At the festival she will demonstrate several "very simple" honey products. For more on beekeeping see www.mainebeekeepers.org.

3:00pm, Saturday & Sunday: Mainers Talk About Gathered Food Traditions**4:00pm Saturday & Sunday: David Spahr, Washington; Edible & Medicinal Mushrooms**

David Spahr has been collecting mushrooms for 37 years, ever since he and a friend had their first taste of wild mushroom soup in 1972. Growing up on a farm in Massachusetts, where his family grew the bulk of their vegetables and also kept bees, chickens, and racing pigeons, David has been cooking since age seven and experiencing "close encounters" of the wild outdoors all his life. Known to some as the "Mushroom Maineiac," David just published "Edible and Medicinal Mushrooms of Maine and Eastern Canada," which is geared to cooks and eaters, not mycologists. "I have the heart of a hunter, farmer, and cook more than the heart of scientist," David says, along with "a forager's mentality." He has been foraging in Maine for more than three decades and frequently leads mushroom/foraging walks near his home in Washington. At the festival David will demonstrate making mushroom-stuffed potatoes. Check out his website (<http://mushroom-collecting.com>).