‘I Have a Dream’
April Welch, CIT

Materials: copies of MLK’s speech; archived voice recording; Eagle example text; pennies for each participant

What are Tangibles & Intangibles? (pg. 10-12)

“The nature guide is at his best when he discusses facts so that they appeal to the imagination and to the reason, gives flesh and blood to cold facts, makes life stories of inanimate objects. What the guide says is essentially nature literature rather than encyclopedia natural history.” —Enos Mills

They are the building blocks of interpretation, the bread and butter of our profession, the tie that binds. Opportunities for visitors to meaningfully connect to a resource occur when an interpreter links a site’s tangible resources to its intangible meanings.

1.) Tangibles are things that you can see, touch, taste, hear, or smell.
2.) Intangibles are the meanings represented by the resource; they are abstract and can include ideas, feelings, relationships, values, and beliefs.

Can a tangible also be an intangible? Absolutely, like the word “blue”. How is it a tangible and an intangible?

Using Universal Concepts
Universal concepts mean something to everyone; however two people may not come up with the same meaning. They provide the maximum amount of relevance to the widest audience. For example, love, freedom, hunger are all universal concepts, but each one will mean something different to a teenager versus a Sunday School teacher; a 2 year old versus a WW II veteran; and a homeless person versus a marathon runner.

The story created by including tangible facts and intangible meanings answers the questions “So what? Why do I care? Why should this be important to me?” Remember, don’t use too much data; try to link every piece of information with a meaning. Interpretation is not instruction; it’s about leading visitors to self-discovery.

When we connect tangibles to intangibles, which of Tilden’s 6 Principles are we demonstrating? Principle 5 states that “Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.” After reviewing the Eagle example in the workbook, I ask a rhetorical question to introduce this activity: in one of our literature review texts, Knudson, Cable, and Beck state that a speech is not an interpretive talk. Do you agree or disagree?
We discuss oral interpretation skills in relation to volume, force, pauses, rate, emphasis, inflection, etc. Then, participants are asked to listen to the archival recording of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s “I Have a Dream” as they read along with the printed text hand-out provided. They are instructed to think about the following questions as they listen and to identify intangible meanings within his speech.

**Facilitated Discussion Questions:**
Do you think the speech is interpretive? Why or why not?
How are tangible and intangible used to address the ascribed versus inherent meaning?
What words were used to make emotional connections? Intellectual connections?

What was the goal and objectives of his speech? How could they be measured?
Was it inspirational? Motivational? Was there a ‘Call to Action’?

**What interpretive techniques were used?**
Repetition: 100 years; check, “I have a dream”, “We have come”, “Let freedom ring”, “With this faith”

**How did MLK relate his speech to the audience? How did he make it personally relevant and meaningful?** “I say to you today, my friends”; speaking of his children; “Bad check marked insufficient funds”; use of landmarks to connect people to one another

**How did he paint a picture with words?** “whirlwind of revolt”; “sunlit path of racial justice”; “justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a might stream”

**How did he appeal to the senses?** “Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred”; “I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice”

**How did he connect mind, body, and spirit?** “We must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force”; “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh see it together.”

**Why the penny? How does the penny represent the difference between ascribed versus inherent meanings?** A tangible can be an inanimate object, such as a speech; therefore, well selected props can become symbols of the meaning and take home message from the program. The penny can make it personal and act as a reminder.