“We believe strongly as an organization and as individuals, that art does not belong to any particular sector of the population— but rather, the making of art is an irrepressible force that is true of everyone. And it brings joy and beauty into both the lives of the makers and the lives of the people associated with the makers, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity.”

Greg Sharrow was VTAAP’s first Director, running the program for almost a quarter century.

In 2022, we are celebrating 30 years of the Vermont Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program!

Greg Sharrow built VTAAP on a foundation of communication and trust with Vermont’s many communities of traditional artists. He also documented their work and process through countless interviews. Here he is pictured speaking with Burmese weaver True Tender Htun in 2010.

What does a Traditional Arts Apprenticeship consist of?

- Master artists and apprentices apply to the program together.
- The Vermont Folklife Center, in partnership with the Vermont Arts Council, provides support to the pair, including a small stipend.
- Apprenticeships are face-to-face learning opportunities. Instruction addresses both the skills and techniques of an art form, as well as its meaning and use within the communities in which it is practiced.
- Program applicants are reviewed and accepted each summer. To apply, visit vtfolklife.org/traditional-arts-apprenticeship, or contact Mary Wesley at mwesley@vermontfolklifecenter.org

“The Vermont Folklife Center’s mission is to deepen our understanding of each other by engaging with communities across Vermont to document and share expressions of tradition, innovation, and culture.

To learn more, visit www.vtfolklife.org

Jeanne Brink, right, as an apprentice, working with master basket-maker Sophie Nolette.

Jeanne Brink, is an Abenaki ash and sweetgrass basket-maker who was an apprentice in the early years of the program and then went on to become a master artist.
Innovation in Tradition
The VTAAP 30th Anniversary Zine

Vermont

Traditional Arts Apprenticeship

Program

Lao Lam Singing • Turkish Ahiska Knitting • Amish Quilting • Nepali Sarangi Playing • Abenaki Dance • Nepali Madal & Tabla Percussion Instruments • Lao Weaving • Marble Carving • Anglo-American Folk Singing • Vermont Song & Fiddle Repertoire • Lao Pha Kouane Making • Japanese Koto Playing • Folk Songs Of Quebec • Burmese Weaving & Loom Building • Indian Mehndi Body Art • Burundian Drumming • Somali Bantu Drumming • Anglo-American Ballads & Songs • New England-Style Fiddling • Congolese Munde Dance & Drumming • Franco-American Fiddling • Franco-American Traditional Songs • Lao Khene Performance • Western Abenaki Dance • Lao Kun Tarbeth Stitchery • English Ballad Singing • Timber Framing • Bosnian Folk Music • Korean Samulnori Traditional Percussion • Japanese Ikebana Flower Arranging • Turkish Meskhetian Traditional Spinning & Knitting • Bosnian Traditional Folk Dance & Theater • Scottish & Irish Harp & Song • Burundian Women’s Dance • Somali Bantu “Shuka” Embroidery • Abenaki Herbalism & Traditional Knowledge • Champlain Valley Wooden Boat Building • Afro-Brazilian Capoeira • Shoemaking & Leatherworking • Blacksmithing • Nepali Kirat Rai Sakela Dancing • Abenaki Ceremonial Language • Nepali Folk Dance • Cidermaking

Many other states also have traditional arts apprenticeship programs! For VTAAP, the apprentices must live in Vermont, but master artists occasionally live in other states (or even countries!).

The artforms passed on through VTAAP are the creative expression of Vermont’s many cultures. They can be arts such as music, dance, blacksmithing, basketmaking, or embroidery. (You can see many of the individual art forms listed around the edges of these pages!)

The Vermont Folklife Center started VTAAP in 1992. Over the last 30 years, the program has supported more than 300 apprenticeships!

Tradition isn’t something fixed and unchanging—it’s a process of reflection and (yes) innovation—keeping practices we connect to the past alive and relevant to who we are today. Just like a recipe that’s been in your family for generations that may change slightly from one cook to another based on the younger generation’s taste or what is widely available. Even if you use butter now instead of margarine, or tofu instead of meat, the experience of making the dish still connects you to your great grandma, or whoever took the time to write out the recipe in the first place.

Program

Vermont

Traditional Arts Apprenticeship

Many other states also have traditional arts apprenticeship programs! For VTAAP, the apprentices must live in Vermont, but master artists occasionally live in other states (or even countries!).

The artforms passed on through VTAAP are the creative expression of Vermont’s many cultures. They can be arts such as music, dance, blacksmithing, basketmaking, or embroidery. (You can see many of the individual art forms listed around the edges of these pages!)

The Vermont Folklife Center started VTAAP in 1992. Over the last 30 years, the program has supported more than 300 apprenticeships!
What does **tradition** mean to you?

*Take a minute with a friend or family member to reflect on a traditional practice in your life.*

What’s your favorite family or community tradition?

How far back does the tradition go?

The Sakela Festival is how the Kirat Rai people of Nepal celebrate the spring.

The looms at Marshfield School of Weaving have been in use for 200 years!

How did you learn this tradition? How will you pass it on?

Describe a specific tradition in your family/community that has changed over time (like a recipe or song). How have you made this tradition more meaningful to you?

Makhbul Temirova passed on her artform of Turkish Ahiska Knitting to her granddaughters.

Share Your Tradition: Tell us all about it by emailing or sending a photo or voice memo to Mary Wesley at mwesley@vermontfolklife.org.
In 2019 VFC commissioned cartoonist Iona Fox to create a series of comics about VTAAP for the Burlington newspaper Seven Days. Iona spent time talking with and drawing Tibetan dranyen player Migmar Tsering, French-Canadian fiddling student Isabella Rottler, and Somali Bantu drummer and drum maker Mohamed Bulle. In order to make sure these comics were a true collaborative effort, she incorporated the artists’ feedback into the final versions. (Big thanks to NEA Folk and Traditional Arts for making this project possible!)
Scenes From Migmar Tsering’s Dranyen Class
at the Old North End Community Center in Burlington

1.2.3:

song composed by Migmar

Lasar

Losar is like Christmas

Losar is like Christmas
to Tibetans

We have started a new song on Lasar

The Tibetan New Year

After class

That we will play at a Losar party

(Feb 5)

Mary from Folklife, recording

Me, listening

A dad, listening

Innovation in Tradition: The VTAAP 30th Anniversary Zine

Iona Fox

12 year-old Isabelle Rottler graciously let me sit in on her music lesson with master French-Canadian fiddler Don Roy this January, on behalf of Vermont Folklife.

We had our first snow day today.

I wore my wool socks to celebrate.

Don lives in Maine, so they conduct lessons by Skype.

How’s the tune coming, Isabelle?

Wait, there’re multiple tunes. Do you mean this one?

That’s the one.

Now I’m going to be a stickler about the bowing patterns.

Anybody can play the melody; it’s what you do in bowing that counts.
Listen to episodes of the Folklife Center’s VT Untapped™ podcast that explore the apprenticeship program:

**Ep. 15 | The Apprentices** | Hear how three apprenticeship pairs kept meeting in 2020, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

**Ep. 10 | Pub Sing!** | Learn all about the Brattleboro Pub Sing, and the apprenticeship between Tony Barrand and Amanda Witman that centers around this monthly event.

**Ep. 6 | Remembering Martha** | This episode explores the life of Franco-American musician and VTAAP master artist Martha Pellerin.

vtfolklife.org/untapped

What’s next for VTAAP? More innovation to come!

The Folklife Center is expanding its support of Traditional Artists. In July 2022, Young Tradition Vermont, which supports youth as they are inspired by, learn, perform, and serve their communities through traditional music and dance, became a program of the Folklife Center. We are also expanding our support of traditional artists whose teaching has grown beyond the scope of the Apprenticeship Program through after school and summer programs.

VTAAP is supported by

Vermont Folklife Center
88 Main Street, Middlebury, Vermont

To make a gift to support VTAAP, visit
vtfolklife.org/donate

Vermont Folklife Center
88 Main Street, Middlebury, VT 05753
802.388.4964 • info@vermontfolklifecenter.org

Vermont arts council
for a creative state

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
arts.gov