

# Two Eastern Washington Men In The Running For Native Music Awards

By DOUG NADVORNICK · SEP 28, 2019

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*Grand Coulee's Faran Sohappy recorded the music and vocals for Joan Hammel's song "Nature Walk," which is up for two major Native music awards this fall.*

CREDIT DOUG NADVORNICK/SPR

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3:45

*SPR's Doug Nadvornick reports.*

It isn't often that a couple of guys from small towns in eastern Washington are nominated for major national music awards. But that's the case with Tim Brooks (of Coulee Dam) and Faran Sohappy (of Grand Coulee). What makes their story even more unusual is who their musical partners are and how they met them.



*Chicago singer/songwriter Joan Hammel hopes to hear her song "Nature Walk" chosen Sunday night for an Indian Summer Music Award.*

CREDIT COURTESY OF JOAN HAMMEL

This story starts in Chicago with singer/songwriter Joan Hammel. She's made quite a name for herself in The Windy City. Nominated five times as Entertainer of the Year for the Chicago Music Awards. She's won honors for her songwriting and her music has been played all over the world.

Two summers ago, the National Park Service named Hammel one of its Artists-in-Residence. It sent her to the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation

Area. Her assignment was to spend a couple of weeks there and create music inspired by the landscape.

So she and her son hopped in the car for her big adventure.

“As I was driving across the Dakotas, I had no radio coverage and became very bored in the car and started writing the music in the car,” Hammel said.

She’d test out melodies.

“There’s a great app called Garage Band, where you can just sing it in and you can still keep two hands on the wheel,” she said.

When they got to Washington, she learned that they would be staying on the Colville Indian Reservation.

“And so when I started calling around and looking for local musicians, they ended up referring me to Faran at the studio,” she said.

Faran is Faran Sohappy, a Yakima tribal member who lives on the Colville Reservation in Grand Coulee. He worked at the tribe’s community center and is a sound engineer.

“So I got a phone call from her and we started talking about collaborating with music,” Sohappy said.

Hammel had a song called “Nature Walk” that she and her songwriting partner, Rebecca Slone Rivera, had composed.

“I told her that my uncle, Tim Brooks, is a flute player and I think with the particular type of song that she wanted to do, flute music would probably be more proper than any other style of Native music,” Sohappy said.

He went through some music his uncle had recorded.

"I didn't just pick one and give it to Joan," he said. "I actually went through a few of them with my uncle. It was like just by listening to this particular song, which flute track would be the best."

He chose one and emailed it to Hammel, who by then had returned to Chicago, and she mixed it into the song.

"When the flute track arrived in Chicago and we put it together with the other part of the song, both Rebecca and I had goose bumps in the studio," Hammel said. "It was just such a moving and incredibly spiritual experience."

Fast forward a year or so. Hammel enters "Nature Walk" in music competitions and two chose it as finalists. First up is the Indian Summer Music Awards in Milwaukee.

"That is to recognize who people who are not members of tribes, but still have a respectful and inclusive idea of Native American music," Hammel said.

On Sunday night, Hammel and Sohappy and their partners will learn whether they win.

And then, in about a month, "Nature Walk" is up for a Nammy, the Native American version of a Grammy. The November 2 awards ceremony will be held in Niagara Falls, New York and Faran Sohappy will be there.

"Even if this is the only trip that I ever make for an event like this, I would be satisfied in life about it," he said.

And as for his Uncle Tim...

"I just called him and talked to him a couple days ago about this. Reality has finally set in. He was like, 'Wow, this is a big deal.' And I told him it really is," Sohappy said.

Sohappy has created a GoFundMe page to raise the money he needs to get to the Native American Music Association awards in New York.