



**VISIT THE MUSEUM AT  
TAMÁSTSLÍKT  
CULTURAL INSTITUTE**

**Contact:**

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**Description or Type of Museum/Institution**

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute tells the story of three American Indian Tribes, the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, who for more than 10,000 years inhabited the Plateau region of the Pacific Northwest, U.S.A. They welcomed and assisted the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804-1806 and Clark documented the contacts in his journal. Some 40 years later, the Oregon Trail cut through the heart of their homelands. Tamástslíkt brings the story alive with a 14,000 square foot exhibit space that incorporates artifacts, photography, video and interactive multi-media in world class exhibits. Its Museum Store sells American Indian arts and crafts, as well as books and music and uniquely designed Pendleton Woolen Mills Indian blankets. It is located five minutes from Interstate 84, four miles east of Pendleton, Oregon. For more information: 541-966-9748 or [www.tamastslikt.org](http://www.tamastslikt.org).

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

**Collections**

Collections focus on the history and culture of three American Indian Tribes, the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, beginning with traditional culture and history and including the later history of encounters with non-Indian immigrants: Lewis and Clark, early fur traders, missionaries, Oregon Trail immigrants, and contemporary society, in what is now northeast Oregon, southeast Washington and western Idaho.

**Pronunciation**

Tah-MAHST-Slicked, with the accent on the second syllable.

The logo consists of a black rectangular box with a thin white border. Inside the box, the text "VISIT THE MUSEUM AT TAMÁSTLIKT CULTURAL INSTITUTE" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The word "TAMÁSTLIKT" is significantly larger and more prominent than the other words.

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### **How It Came To Be**

Tamástlikt Cultural Institute was built by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation as a place to preserve the Tribes' culture and history while also presenting their story to the world. Inside its walls of native stone and wood are 45,000 square feet of exhibit space, meeting rooms, archive vaults, a research library and work spaces.

Located five miles east of Pendleton on the grounds of the Wildhorse Resort & Casino against the backdrop of the nearby Blue Mountains, Tamástlikt has drawn praise for its stunning design. The permanent exhibits that reveal the story were designed by a renowned exhibit designer in Vancouver, British Columbia. Rotating exhibits, changing every three to four months, are always connected to the Tribes' story.

Those Tribes are the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, people who have resided in what is now northeast Oregon and southeastern Washington since time immemorial. Their story is one of steadily growing knowledge and trade bases. The continuum was disrupted only recently by an onslaught of migrants who were initially welcomed, but whose arrival portended disaster for the Tribes' way of life. Those people were the immigrants on the Oregon Trail. Tamástlikt tells a large part of that Oregon Trail story and is the only interpretive center on the trail to address it from the American Indian point of view.

Permanent exhibits are organized in three sectors: We Were, We Are, and We Will Be. In each, displays, sound effects and interactive multi-media tell of the Tribes' past, present and how they envision the future.

At the beginning of the permanent exhibits visitors enjoy a multimedia trip in the curious mind of Spilyay the magical Coyote of legend time. Sitting in a darkened theater in the cone shape of a tipi, with twinkling stars overhead, visitors hear and watch how Coyote defeats a monster and saves the world, opening the way for humankind to live and prosper.

The permanent exhibits are housed in a round wing of the building, designed to capture the feel of the circle, a cultural concept of life in the round. Visitors walk the traditional life affirming counter-clockwise direction through the exhibits. It starts with the Seasonal Round, where the four seasons are presented as periods of harvesting, processing, and manufacturing. From high overhead are heard the ambient sounds of the natural world.

Subsequent exhibits reveal the extent of trade prior to the arrival of non-Indians, using colorful maps and displaying trade goods of the time. A major exhibit details the importance of the horse to the Tribes in the two centuries after it first arrived in the 1600's. A full-sized lodge constructed of tule reeds exhibits the traditional form of the highly mobile style of housing predominant in the Tribes' region. Inside the lodge are benches where visitors can relax while listening to the recorded voices of Tribal members telling Coyote stories and recounting other culturally significant memoirs.

The first sign of the new immigrants comes with the exhibit about the fur traders. Closely following them are the missionaries, then the settlers. On the heels of these exhibits come more stories of disruption, war, forced treaties and boarding schools, and the parceling away of reservation land.

When the visitor enters the We Are exhibits, it is apparent that contemporary Tribes are upbeat and active members of their larger community, major participants in such famed celebrations as the Pendleton Round-Up.

Finally, in We Will Be, Tribal members young and old speak on video about their hopes and plans for a future that holds up the continuum of their unique culture while dealing with the disruption of the past two centuries in a healthful, holistic manner.

Outside the museum, a living culture village—Naamí Nishaycht—open from Memorial Day to Labor Day inclusive, demonstrates how modern Tribal members continue to practice ancient traditions from food preparation and hide tanning to making a traditional lodge. Here visitors can talk with Tribal members about their culture and view various forms of housing going back thousands of years.

In addition to the exhibits, Tamástlikt hosts numerous events ranging from exhibit programming to the Kidz Powwow to a variety of guest speakers and native themed films. Art shows and artists, cultural demonstrations of ancient hunting weapons, American Indian storytellers—the events have run the gamut of entertaining and culturally significant presentations. The Museum Store regularly hosts authors for book signings and to speak on their work. Thousands of school children have visited to have fun and learn in half-day-long programs. A deli-style café offers visitors a place to relax, refresh and view the beautiful vista of the nearby mountains.

In a few short years, as a continually evolving institution, Tamástlikt Cultural Institute has become a major visitor attraction and a source of pride not only for Tribal members, but for the entire northeast Oregon region.

Note: The name Tamástslíkt was chosen by a planning group that included tribal language teachers and linguists. It is the word that commonly means to translate language to language. It literally means “to turn around.” It is glossed as meaning “interpreting our own story.” Tamástslíkt is from the Walla Walla or Walúlapam Sahaptin dialect. The Umatilla term is similar but distinct from this version. The Cayuse language became extinct and was succeeded by the downriver Nez Perce Sahaptin adopted by Cayuse speakers.

Note: American Indian is the nomenclature for indigenous tribal people in preferred usage by the Director of Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, rather than Native American. Native American can refer to anyone who was born in America. American Indian was the historic term invoked in treaty language. American Indian represents the special relationship of Tribal sovereignty with the US government. Nomenclature is at the discretion of each person’s personal choice.

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## Story Ideas

Here are some story angles for your consideration. Please call me for help with interviews or photos:

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- Tamástslíkt is the only one of five Oregon cultural institutes along the Oregon Trail that tells the Oregon Trail story from the Native American point of view. Tie the story as told at Tamástslíkt with that told at other interpretive centers. Note the differences and the similarities in the telling of this story.
- Museum exhibit design is an art form in itself. One of the best modern exhibit design firms is Jean Jacques André, Vancouver, B.C. This firm designed the exhibits at Tamástslíkt and has designed exhibits at museums worldwide. A look at modern exhibit design could include the work at Tamástslíkt and other museums in Oregon or the Pacific Northwest.
- Interview Tribal leaders regarding the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute's economic and cultural impact on the future of the Tribes.
- Interview the Institute Director, adjunct educators, elders, and other Tribal participants, regarding the importance of Tamástslíkt as a place for learning and promoting the Tribal languages—Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce.
- Talk with the Institute's collections curator regarding the importance of Tamástslíkt as a place for preserving the artifacts. Artifacts over 150 years old are protected with scientific conservation methods according to the state-of-the-art professional standard in Tamástslíkt. Preserving the artifacts enables the tribal members to study their construction and replicate old styles of apparel and other cultural items. Preserving the artifacts makes an interesting story about the process of eliminating bugs, mold and the destructive elements of a century or more. Furthermore, it shines a light on early conservation practices that rendered objects poisonous and toxic to handlers. Tamástslíkt curators continue a mission to educate the public about the need to screen collectibles for toxins.
- Talk with the Institute Director and the Museum Store manager about their operating philosophy concerning the sale of Tribal art and crafts from this area. Purchasing is guided by the store's identification with the Columbia River plateau culture and a commitment to the Buy-Indian policy.

Promotion of tribal artists and artisans in the museum store enables Tribal people to develop their expertise with the cultural arts while earning a living from their work.

- Diverse recreational, educational and historical study opportunities abound in the plateau and mountain areas around Tamástslíkt. A story or sidebar could cover activities for families.
- Tamástslíkt tells one part of the story of this area, covering the history and culture of the people who were here first. Other museums in the area, at Pendleton, Walla Walla, Baker City, The Dalles and Moro tell the story of the people who came later. Explore the overall appeal and diversity of this region through the telling of the story in these museums. Oregonians rediscovering their roots and the many newcomers to the state are interested in these stories and in visiting the places that help understand them.

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## **Naamí Nishaycht, Our Village – Living Cultural Village**

Since its opening in 1998, visitors to the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute have been greeted by a spectacular view of the adjacent plain fronting the nearby Blue Mountains. Since May 2005, they've also been greeted with the sight of the Naamí Nisháycht Village, the living culture exhibit of modern Tribal members practicing ancient traditions from food preparation to building a lodge. Along the way, they're also preserving the Tribal Sahaptin dialects of Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce.

Tamástslikt is the museum of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), a reservation government comprising three Tribes: the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla. In the village visitors can experience firsthand the evolution of tribal shelters, the richness and texture of traditional activities, and witness the way of life that Lewis & Clark described in their journals. As the village interpreters make clear, tribal members have kept ancient ways alive.

Among the traditional activities demonstrated by the village's permanent interpreters are storytelling, basket and tule mat weaving, hide tanning and smoking, lodge construction, flint knapping, hemp cordage making, food preparation and tools, dancing, singing, drumming, horsemanship, and the making of traditional clothing. In accord with tradition, the activities vary by season. The experience presents the opportunity for dialogue with interpreters and learning about the Tribes.

"We do not live in the past--the past is alive in us. Our Tribal people carry on ancient practices and carry very old knowledge while living in the modern world," says Bobbie Conner, Tamástslikt director.

"Visitors see Tribal people practicing ways that have sustained us for thousands of years. In our outdoor village, the visitor sees, hears, touches and even smells our Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla life."

The Living Culture Village is open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, every Saturday from 10am-4pm.

47106 Wildhorse Blvd. Pendleton, OR 97801 541.966.9748 [www.tamastlikt.org](http://www.tamastlikt.org) [www.tcimuseum.com](http://www.tcimuseum.com)