

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute shares local tribal history

By Heather Villa for TCAJOB

As you wander through the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Pendleton, you may forget you're inside a building. Fabricated basalt casts, painted with replicas of pictographs, bring the foothills of the Blue Mountains inside.

An entire mat-lodge structure made of reeds also easily fits.

Stepping through the Tamástslikt entrance is like stepping into the past. Outside the lodge two life-like horses with riders are posed on ridge are set against a sunny mural of a plateau.

Also a model of a small city, complete with a church and school are housed within the walls of the massive space.

But you'll want to narrow your focus as you examine the intricate beadwork threaded into colorful patterns, woven baskets and hand-carved tools, all carefully preserved.

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- Roberta (Bobbie) Conner,
Tamástslikt Cultural Institute

A complex history of the ancient communities, Lewis and Clark, fur traders, trappers, farmers and missionaries are laced together.

"This is not one story," says Roberta (Bobbie) Conner, director of the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute. "We welcome you to learn about everybody's history."

The Tamástslikt Cultural Institute next to Wildhorse Casino near Pendleton, Ore. offers an in-depth look at the life led by Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla

Walla Tribes from northeast Oregon and southeastern Washington.

Before entering the eye-catching 45,000-sq.-ft. museum, the open expanse of grasslands and replica of traditional American Indian dwellings bordering the facility introduces visitors to the life of the area's American Indians.

"Drink in the landscape," Conner said.

Tamástslikt is the only tribally-owned interpretive center along the Oregon Trail. Plus, Tamástslikt is certified by the National Park Service as an interpretive site for the Lewis and Clark Trail.

The archival, research and educational center's name was specifically chosen because Tamástslikt (Tuh-must-slickt) translates to "interpreting our own story." And that's exactly what Tamástslikt has been doing since the doors first opened in 1998.

"We want you to know our life has been lived in our homeland that's the cradle of our existence," said Conner.

Surrounded with artifacts, visitors learn about the Columbia River Plateau when its people lived in isolation from the rest of the world, the impact early explorers had on the ancient culture, and the survival of a society.

The story told is "Western expansionism from a tribal point of view," says Conner.

The museum is also known as an art center. Currently displayed in the exhibit hall is artwork from collection of young artists through Feb. 22. It's always changing. Look for "The Sustainable Choices in Everyday Life" exhibit that will run March 7 through May 5.

Throughout the year, community events like concerts, workshops and speakers provide tangible ways for cultures to connect.

Stop by the Kinship Café for lunch or



Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Pendleton, Ore. is home to the history of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla tribes.

a snack and dine on baked wild salmon or a huckleberry dessert.

Complete your visit at The Museum Store to purchase educational toys and gifts, artwork, jewelry, music, books or blankets and clothing from the Pendleton Woolen Mills collection. The management is dedicated to purchasing tribal arts and crafts.

During the warmer months, The Living Cultural Village, open Memorial Day through Labor Day, gives visitors a chance to explore even more types of traditional living.

Marjorie Wahneka, the living history coordinator will often ask people, "What do you want to learn?" Her answers may include what she learned from her maternal grandparents, decedents of the Cayuse and Palouse Tribes.

The Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday until April, and open daily from March to September. Admission is \$8.00 for adults, \$6.00 for

seniors and students, and children ages 5 and under are free. Group rates and interpreters are available. Admission on the first Friday of each month is free. Free admission is extended to members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Inwai Circle of Friends, families of active military and card-carrying members of the Oregon Historical Society, Washington State Historical Society and the Fort Walla Walla Museum. The Kinship Café is open 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is located at 47106 Wildhorse Blvd. in Pendleton, Ore., off of exit 216 of Interstate 84. The 140-mile roundtrip from Kennewick makes for an interesting educational escape.

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

For more information visit www.tamastlikt.org or call 541-966-9748.



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