

# HALLIE FORD MUSEUM

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Rare glimpses into the past are routine at Hallie Ford. And one of those rare looks showcases a unique women's basket cap – also made by Lane. The cap is an example of the type of cap worn by Siletz women in the early 1900s and before.

The cap is made from hazel sticks, split spruce root, bear grass, dyed fern and alder bark. According to Tribal history shared with visitors to the museum, basketry was one of the forms of Tribal art that survived forced relocations of Northwest Indian peoples.

Unique among Indian art is Siletz basketry that was developed in southwestern Oregon and northwestern California. Siletz basketry is known for its distinctive double-handles that consist of spruce roots twined over hazel shoots and was thought to have developed to please non-Indian dominant culture purchasers.

Dobkins said the museum's collection of Siletz Tribal basketry is large and some of the other art pieces in the collection are extremely rare.

"The Hallie Ford Museum of Art has a wide range of Siletz basketry on display in its permanent gallery, but in storage is a small but important collection of objects related to western Oregon Tribal cultures," she explained. "This collection includes necklaces, stone and bone carvings and wooden objects such as an Umpqua-style paddle and a Siletz-style box drum."

Dobkins said it is not only important to treat the collection with care, but the Tribal people need to be consulted to make sure items are handled properly and documented accurately.

She emphasized how important documentation is to a collection that needs to be brought to life.

"Many museums, large and small, have such collections," she said. "Without documentation, these objects can languish in storage for years if not generations. They become orphans, without clear parentage or kin relations."

If Dobkins has her way, the future for the Siletz collection is bright, not buried.

"The Hallie Ford Museum envisions a different future for this collection," she said. "One hope is that through the consultation process, new connections and identities will be made for the objects. Another is that Native artists may be inspired by imagery and techniques embodied in these objects to make new work, thus honoring the old. A third hope is that some of the objects might actually be "re-animated" or re-incorporated into new artwork so that they can live again in newly meaningful ways."

Willamette University's Hallie Ford Museum of Art is located in Salem at 700 State St., directly behind the State Capitol.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

General admission is \$3; students (13+), \$2; and seniors, \$2, except on Tuesdays, when admission is free.

For more details, call 503-370-6855.



**HANDLE WITH CARE** – Several Siletz historical items are part of the collection of Northwest Tribal artifacts at Willamette University's Hallie Ford Museum of Art in Salem. Rebecca Dobkins, Hallie Ford's curator, shows how the Tribe's historical items are stored and cataloged. The items range from delicate spoons to like-new antler carvings and bone pipes.



Photos by Brent Merrill