

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute highlights native history, culture

By Tammy Malgesini
Go! Magazine

MISSION — The public is invited to immerse themselves in history by exploring the exhibits at Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Mission. And what better time to visit than Friday, Dec. 3 — during Free First Friday, with no admission charge the first Friday of each month.

Celebrating the traditions of Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes, Tamástslikt features permanent exhibits, which are divided into three main sections: “We Were,” “We Are” and “We Will Be.” In addition, the Coyote Theater introduces visitors to Spilyáy, the magical coyote who shares about wisdom and foolishness in



EO Media Group/File Photo
Instructor Marjorie Waheneka, third from right, teaches a Native American beading class in the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute gift shop. The museum is located on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Mission.

a humorous exposition of how the world came to be as it is today.

Randall Melton, the center’s exhibits coordinator, is thrilled with recent recognition. Tamástslikt has gotten attention from both TravelMag — as one of the top 10 exhibitions to visit in Oregon — and for three years running, it has appeared on Oregon Business magazine’s top 100 fan-favorite destinations in Oregon.

“We consider ourselves ambassadors of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian

Reservation in telling our story in a respectful way ... being straightforward and factual,” he said.

“Accolades like that means we are following what our elders said (in the planning process) — make sure to do it in a hospitable way in explaining our history.”

With a planning process that spanned a decade, Tamástslikt opened in August 1998. The 18,000-square-foot facility features approximately 10,000 feet of permanent exhibition space and 3,000 feet for temporary exhibits.

In addition, there is a cafe and gift shop.

Melton, who has worked as a permanent full-time employee at the cultural institute since 1998, said the name in the Walla Walla language means, “to interpret.”

“For me, the highlight is the fact that we are telling our story in our perspective in our words,” he said. “When opening up, that was a radical idea ... now, it’s more common to hear those voices.”

With only a couple of exceptions, the permanent exhibits were closed for more than a year because of the global pandemic. Operations resumed in the late-spring with reduced occupancy. In addition, temperature checks are taken at the door and visitors are required to wear face coverings.

The Kinship Cafe offers native-inspired foods, hot and cold beverages, and tempting huckleberry pastries. With current COVID-19 restrictions, the food and beverage

ages are available for takeout service from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The museum store also operates at reduced capacity — but it’s worth a visit and will be celebrating Black Friday sales Nov. 26-27 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Shoppers will find everything from Pendleton Woolen Mills apparel, accessories and home decor to beading supplies, bags, books, jewelry and Tamástslikt exclusive and logo merchandise.

Melton said plans are underway to resume traveling exhibits in 2022. Also, sections of the permanent exhibit will be updated prior to the museum’s 25-year anniversary.

Tamástslikt is located off Interstate 84 Exit 216, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Mission. It is open Tuesday through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. During the pandemic, people are encouraged to call to confirm hours of operation. Masks and social distancing are required.

Regular admission, which is good for two consecutive days, is \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, \$7 for youths 6-17 and free for ages 5 and under. There is a family rate of \$30 for four. Also, the Libraries of Eastern Oregon has provided many area libraries with passes that can be checked out.

To place orders at the cafe, call 541-429-7702 — weekly specials are posted on the website. For more information about the museum, call 541-429-7700 or visit www.tamastslikt.org.

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Walk-In Wednesday: November 24, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. \$20

Registration open: Intro to Collage with Janis Carper **December 4, 1-4pm.**

Registration open: Wool Crafts with Jan Hohmann **December 11, 1-4pm.**

Registration open: Ceramics Foundations for Beginners

Registration open: Intermediate Ceramics

Submissions Open: *Nature in the Abstract* deadline **November 30**

Submissions Open: *Women's Exhibit* deadline **January 16**