



YAKAMA NATION MUSEUM

Post Office Box 151
Toppenish, Washington 98948
(509) 865-2800



Welcome to the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center and the Yakama Nation Museum. Located on ancestral grounds on our 1,371,918 square acre reservation, the 12,000 square foot exhibition hall is the result of years of hope, thought and effort on the part of the Yakama People, the General Council and the Tribal Council. The Yakama ways illustrated in the Museum are but representative of the variety of practices of our people.

"The Challenge of Spilyay"

SPILYAY IS THE LEGENDARY TRICKSTER WHO APPEARED MOST OFTEN IN THE GUISE OF A COYOTE AND WHO, WITH DARING AND HUMOR, TAUGHT MANKIND HOW TO SURVIVE AND LIVE HARMONIOUSLY WITH NATURE IN ALL FORMS AND MOODS.

"SPILYAY'S CHALLENGE IS ADDRESSED TO BOTH NON-INDIAN AND INDIAN TO LEARN ABOUT THE ART OF LIFE AND DEATH. THE CHALLENGE OF SPILYAY IS ALL AROUND US."

AS YOU ENTER:
(Go to the right)

today.

Chief Owhi (Ou-hi) stated, "In time immemorial the Creator made us of this Mother Earth and placed us here." This portion of a speech is still significant Yakama belief is that our people have been here since the beginning of time.

WHAT "YAKAMA" MEANS:

The meaning of "Yakama" These are interpretations. They are; 1. A growing family 2. a tribal expansion 3. pregnant ones (something growing or something big). These interpretations were not used locally. They were used by Spokanes or Salish neighbors. An original name of the Yakamas may have been "Tapteil" or "Wap-tail-min" meaning a narrow river people, referring to the narrows in the Yakima River at Union Gap where a large village was situated.

CONFEDERATED TRIBES AND BANDS OF THE YAKAMA INDIAN NATION:

Generations before the advance of the modern world, the land of the Yakamas extended in all directions from the Cascade Mountain Range to the Columbia River. We considered it land given in trust by the Creator for the use of the living and a heritage to be held and protected for unborn generations.

The ancestors of today's Yakamas are of different tribes and bands. The tribe was a sizeable group under one leader, and spoke its own dialect. Each band was a

closely related branch of the tribe. Following are the names of these tribes and bands that participated in or were named as part of the YAKAMA INDIAN NATION: Palouse, Pisuouse, Yakama, Wenatchapam, Klinquit, Oche Chotes, Kow was say ee, Sk'in-pah, Kah-miltpah, Klickitat, Wish ham, See ap Cat, Li ay was, Shyiks. At the signing of the Treaty of 1855, which took place near present day Walla Walla, WA., 14 Tribes and Bands were confederated into the Yakama Indian Reservation in south central Washington State. Leaders who signed the treaty were: Kamaiakun, Skloom, Owhi, Te-cole-kun, La-hoom, Koo-lat-toose, Sch-noo-a, Me-ni-nock, Shee-ah-cotte, Sla-kish, Elit Palmer, Tuck-quille, Wish-och-knipits, Ka-loo-as.

The original land claimed by the Yakamas was 10.8 million acres. The reservation was set aside for the Yakamas by the Treaty of 1855 negotiated at Walla Walla between the United States Government, Isaac Governor Stevens and our people. All of the remaining land was ceded to the United States Government. Today the reservation is comprised of 1.4 million acres, still one of the largest in the state.

Formally established in 1944, a governmental body of 14 members is elected by the General Council and authorized to transact business for the Yakamas. The General Council is comprised of all enrolled members over 18 years old who elect these officials to represent the Yakama Nation. This system of election is still practiced today.

We rely for economic sustenance on our natural resources as well as on employment at the Yakama Indian Agency, local lumber mills, our furniture factory, and the Cultural Center. Tribal administrators of today's Yakama Indian Agency work daily to upgrade Resource Management, Education, Health and Social Welfare for our people. Situated at the agency are the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Council offices, as well as Tribal activity offices. Smoke shops run by individual Yakamas and various cattle ranches and farms are located on reservation lands.

The first formal Yakama Indian Agency was established in 1859. After hostilities with the United States military subsided, the chosen location was the abandoned military base, Fort Simcoe, in present day White Swan. Father James Wilbur was the most well known Indian agent. This area, originally known as Toppenish Creek, had been a camp site for the summer and early fall seasons at the time when people did their hunting, root gathering, fishing, and huckleberry picking. This seasonal food area on the Eel Trail was the hub of travel to the usual and accustomed fishing spots. Its use as a gathering site for traveling bands was probably a main factor in the government's choosing the site as a military base. Troops under Major Robert Sheldon Garnett occupied the fort, renaming the area "Simcoe Valley". The name is derived from the Yakama word "Sim Quwe" pronounced "Sim Ku We," which means "saddleback" or a "A dip between two hills like a saddleback." The Yakama people called the area Mool Mool because of the spot where the water bubbles out of the ground, making a sound similar to "Mool Mool". Later the agency became the first boarding school in which tribal children began their assimilation into the "melting pot" system. The agency was thereafter moved approximately 30 miles east to present day Toppenish.

MUSEUM GLOSSARY:

THE TREATY: The Yakama Nation Indians and The United States signed a treaty that is still the basis of its government today and future generations. The Treaty was signed June 9, 1855, by Chief Kamiakin, head chief, and representative chief of the fourteen bands and tribes and was ratified on April 18, 1859.

EARTHLODGE: The Earthlodge was a dwelling once considered a permanent homesite by the people. Theories vary on the exact use. The most common explanation used by researchers and historians says that earthlodges were made from willow branches, reeds, grasses and mud. These lodges were used thousands of years ago. Some believe that the earthlodges were later replaced by mobile tule mat tepees and lodges.

HISTORIC UTILITY HUNTING ITEMS: Items displayed are service items which were used for food preparation, hunting, tools and gathering.

CELILO (WAYAM/WYAM): Celilo Falls, near The Dalles, Oregon, was a sacred life-long fishing ground of our people. In 1957 completion of dam construction took place near the Dalles, Ore. The need for these dams disregarded the "Wayam/Wyam" people's opposition and ancient fishing grounds. The people of Celilo were led by a spiritual leader and chief, Tommy Thompson, "Kuni" or "Laewut". Chief Thompson lived to be over one hundred years old, passing away in 1959. Chief Thompson was loved and respected by many non-Indians as well as his own people. Our museum re-creates the ancient setting of Celilo Falls. We show a young warrior learning his lessons about the river from his father.

THE TULE MARSH: Tules are gathered to make mats for shelter and utility items. Certain mats are used for burial, others to sit on, and some are used as mattresses for sleeping upon. The mats are tule reeds, bound together by cordage made from hemp. Tule mats are used in ceremonies and for household needs. A special traditional ceremony is observed before people gather the tules.

BERRIES & ROOTS: Berries are found near and around Pahto (Mount Adams). The high country in the mountain area of our reservation supplies huckleberries and many varieties of naturally grown roots supplied by Mother Nature. Cedar root baskets are used to store roots and berries which we gather for our family needs. A traditional ceremony is held before by our gatherers. Then a traditional feast is held after the roots and berries are gathered.

THE YAKAMA TIME BALL: Many lessons were learned by every young lady after marriage. The Time Ball was a personal calendar and could be interpreted only by her. Memory of events and happenings were recorded with knots and beads. A Time Ball was made from the bark of the hemp. The Yakima Time Ball, a publication, is available in the Gift Shop and gives a more detailed explanation. This is a publication of the Yakama Nation Museum program.

FOOD AND STORAGE AND CAMOUFLAGE: In our adolescent development diorama, we show a young girl learning at an early age to prepare and store foods such as roots, berries, nuts, fish and meats. How food stored was kept in bags in underground pits. The young girls dried food and berries, then prepared woven Indian hemp bags made from the bark of certain trees. Food was stored in these bags by journeying tribesmen. We also show a young man using camouflage as one of the spirit gifts received from the Creator. The gift will help him catch his prey, be it for transportation or for food.

TULE TEPEES: These were single family dwellings. They were summer mobile homes used along food gathering trails. Lodgepole pine trees were usually used for the tepee poles with tule mats wrapped around the frame and bound by Indian hemp string or rawhide strips.

TULE WINTERLODGE: In Yakama language the winterlodge is referred to as "Anustash" and was a semi-permanent house used during the cold weather months. Sizes of lodges varied according to the number of families living in them. Some were large enough to house up to fifteen families. Each group traveled together as an extended family unit with grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, sisters and brothers.

THE SWEATHOUSE: In the Yakama language the sweathouse is referred to as "Pusha" meaning grandfather. Willow branches form the frame, sometimes covered with animal skins. The sweathouse was a required and necessary structure for each family unit. It was used daily for spiritual guidance, mental, and physical healing and hygiene. Sacred song and communication with the spiritual grandfather was the daily sweathouse ceremony.

THE SUMMER ARBOR: The arbor was a community social work area in every encampment. In this spot people came to talk to others and socialize while doing handiwork or listening to council meetings. During the treaty negotiations in 1855 between the Yakama Nation of Indians and the United States, an arbor was constructed as a gathering site at Walla Walla.

NIPO STRONGHEART: Nipo Tach Num Strongheart was born in White Swan, Washington, on May 15, 1891 to George and Leonora (Williams) Mitchell, grandson of Robert Mitchell, a Canadian factor for the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1902, at the age of eleven, Nipo and his father joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show as trick and fancy horseback riders. A career in the Wild West Show lasted a short time for it was at the age of 14, in 1905, That Nipo found himself in Hollywood, California appearing in his first motion picture. This was the beginning of a career in the motion picture industry which was to last over forty years. During his career in the motion picture industry, Nipo Strongheart gathered the most extensive collection of books and artifacts of perhaps any private collector in the United States. The great Strongheart

Collection consists of over 10,000 volumes of books and artifacts. His personal library comprises a Special Collection in the Yakama Nation Library. It may be used by serious researchers, by request. This was willed to the Yakama Nation upon his death on December 30, 1966.

SUGGESTED READING ABOUT THE YAKAMA PEOPLE:

1937 H. Dean Guie, Tribal Days of the Yakima.

1958 A. J. Splawn, Ka-mi-akin, Last Hero of the Yakimas
Washington, Franklin Press

1962 Click Relander, Strangers on the Land Washington: Franklin Press.

1973 Dr. Richard D. Daugherty, The Yakima People, Indian Tribal Series.

1974 Virginia Beavert, Project Director, Yakima Tribe The Way It Was: Anaku Iwacha
Yakima Indian Legends, The Consortium of Johnson O'Malley Committees of Region IV of Washington State.

1984 Morris L. Uebelacker, Time Ball, a story of the Yakima People and the Land,
Yakima Nation copyright: Shields Bag & Printing Co. Yakima, Wa.

1990 Helen Willard, Pow-wow and other Yakima Indian Traditions
Rosa Run Publishing Company, Prosser, Wa.

1991 Schuster's The Yakimas, (young adult book) - Chelsea House.

1990 Hunn/Selam, Nch'i-Wa'na: The Big River U.of W. Press.

1991 Robin Wright, A Time of Gathering The University of Washington Press and the
Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum.

1992

NOTE:

Resolution T-053-94 has recognized the new spelling of the word "YAKAMA".

"Whereas, for many years the symbolic spelling of our Nation has been 'YAKIMA' within all of our documents, resolutions, letterheads, and Nation's flag, etc., and

"Whereas, in accordance with our Treaty negotiations, the Confederacy of the 14 original tribes and bands 'shall be known as Confederated Tribes and Bands of the YAKAMA Indian Nation.'"

10-94

