



• TAMÁSTLIKT •
CULTURAL INSTITUTE

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NEWS RELEASE

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Storyteller Ed Edmo will delight audiences at Tamastlikt Saturday, February 10. He will be joined by Kevin Peters and J.R. Spencer.

NOTE: This photo file is suitable for printing at a size of about 2.5-3 inches.

Tamástlikt Cultural Institute will host Wintertime Storytelling at Tamástlikt, Sat., Feb. 10 at 1 p.m., featuring Ed Edmo, Kevin Peters, and J.R. Spencer, prominent Native storytellers, as well as a local storyteller to be named later. Winter is the season when the Plateau people prepare for the coming springtime by remembering worlds gone by, such as the magical world of Coyote or “Spilyay”. Stories are passed down verbatim in the oral tradition so they reflect the authentic voices of ancestors and truly portray messages about the past and the future. Both Edmo and Spencer have traveled extensively to share their skill in this ancient tradition.

Ed Edmo is an internationally acclaimed poet, performer, traditional storyteller, and lecturer on Northwest Tribal culture. A Native American with Shoshone-Bannock tribal affiliation, he serves as a consultant to the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Edmo also works with the Oregon Folklife program at the Oregon Historical Society, and conducts writing workshops and performs his one-man theater pieces throughout the country. His poem *Indian Education Blues* was featured on Tri-Met’s Poetry in Motion program, and is etched in granite at the Valley Library at Oregon State University.

For the past 18 years Mr. Edmo has narrated the production of *Children of the Raven* for the Eugene Ballet Company, including tours with that group to India, Syria and Jordan. Since 1984 he has written plays and adapted the Klickitat legend, *Bridge of the Gods*, for Tears of Joy Puppet Theatre with a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1997.

“Storytelling is a non-threatening way of teaching,” according to Edmo. “People need to learn how to laugh when they learn.” He learned to tell stories from his father at Celilo Falls, where traditions were handed down from generation to generation through sharing stories.

James, J.R., Spencer, a member of the Nez Perce tribe with blood ties to the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Ojibwa, is a storyteller, flute player and participates in many native crafts.

“I focus a lot on the stories because they're very important to our people,” explained Spencer. “The children would hear the stories every wintertime from the time they were in cradleboards all the way until they grew up and they became the ones to tell the stories to the children. It was said that the only time to tell stories is in the wintertime or when you were traveling.”

Spencer has a special oral history handed down from his great-grandfather. During the Nez Perce War of 1877, in the very last battle, at Bear Paw, when his great-grandfather was about twelve, his family was nearly wiped out. Tending horses as many young boys

do, his great-grandfather saw the soldiers coming. He started to run back to camp but stumbled and fell. An approaching soldier pointed a rifle at him and pulled the trigger but the rifle didn't go off. This miraculous escape allowed his great-grandfather to make it safely back to camp to relay what had happened.

Spencer has had several recordings for Montana Public TV. He is also in an American Steamboat Company promotional video for the Nez Perce National Historical Park and he has recorded voiceovers that are on file at Lewis and Clark State College. Spencer is President of the Chief Joseph and Warriors Memorial Powwow Committee, started in 1977 by descendants of the Nez Perce war participants.

Like Spencer, Kevin Peters is a flute player, as well as a story teller and acclaimed artist, who works with acrylics to create striking portraits of native people from the Columbia Plateau. Thousands of visitors to the Nez Perce National Historic Park have seen and heard Peters in his role as a curator and park interpreter at the Spaulding, Idaho park. He also filled the role of park ranger at the Big Hole battlefield interpretive center, one of 24 sites along the route of the Nez Perce war of 1877, all of them part of the Nez Perce National Historic Park.

Peters also interpreted history in a segment of the television series, *How the West Was Lost*. In the segment, titled *The Flight of the Nez Perce* and hosted by historian Robert Utley, Peters and other Nez Perce speakers discuss the Nez Perce War of 1877.

Peters noted in an interview that many Nez Perce men had flutes in the late 1800's and early 20th century but that the art had diminished among the Nez Perce. "And so we decided to create flutes again and play them. We had flute recordings. We knew of a person who had made flutes. We decided it needs to be picked up again before it goes away."

Peters relates an astounding story about how he regularly used a historic photo of a Nez Perce warrior in his interpretive presentations. Then one day his father visited him at the interpretive center. "I ended my program and my dad said, 'Well, do you know who that guy is?' And I said, 'Well, yeah, that's Swan Necklace.' And then my dad dropped the bomb and he said, 'Well, did you know that is your great grandfather?' So all of a sudden I have a connection with this Nez Perce warrior here who has a flute, who has a flute!"

More amazing, Peters continues his story, describing how a visitor one day showed up with his great grandfather's flute! It is now a valued personal treasure. Today Peters conducts workshops, where he teaches people how to make and play flutes.

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is located at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, 10 minutes east of Pendleton. From Interstate 84 take exit 216 and follow the signs five minutes to Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Coming from the north, take the Mission exit from Highway 11 just northeast of Pendleton and follow the signs for about ten minutes to the Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Tamástslikt is open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In addition to exhibits telling the story of the three Tribes' history and culture, there

is also a Museum Store and the Kinship Café.

For more information: 541-966-9748 or www.tamastlikt.org. Direct dial the museum store at tollfree 1-866-282-2022. Tamástlikt is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

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