



Our Native American History

Tribes of these bountiful lands



Courtesy of Maryhill Museum

Early histories of Oregon often begin with the 1805 Lewis and Clark expedition or when Oregon became a state in 1859. In the histories of the tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, these dates mark only a small period. For thousands of years before European settlement, Native American groups from the Columbia Plateau and Great Basin hunted game, fished and gathered food in the Crooked River region.

The Wasco and Warm Springs (Walla Walla) tribes lived beside the Columbia River and Cascade Mountains while the Paiutes lived throughout the vast plateaus to the southeast. Although the three tribes have much in common today, each tribe's history and heritage is unique.



Museum at Warm Springs

Wasco Tribe members, early 1900's.

1855: the "Treaty of Middle Oregon"

Under the Treaty, tribal representatives relinquished (ceded) to the U.S. Govt. approximately 10 million acres of land. The Tribes retained the Warm Springs Reservation, approximately 1/20th or 600,000 acres for exclusive use. In addition, the Tribes reserved their rights to harvest fish, game, gather roots and berries, and to pasture livestock across these ceded lands and at all other usual and accustomed stations. This is very important to Tribal members even today as the Tribes annually harvest salmon from the Deschutes, Columbia and Hood Rivers for subsistence and ceremonial uses. These treaty rights provide the backbone for Tribal restoration efforts across the Columbia Basin. Their efforts in the Crooked River are meant to improve fisheries in the mainstream Columbia and the lower Deschutes Rivers.

Mrs. Jack Thomas



Courtesy of Maryhill Museum

In the 1800s, immigrants from the east began to enter and influence these tribes, resulting in many changes including trade, languages, and disease. In 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Vancouver on the northern bank of the Columbia River, downriver from the Wasco and Warm Springs tribes.



Eda Halquilla
Courtesy of Maryhill Museum



Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society. BBNWISZ

Dip netting for Salmon at Celilo Falls

Fishing was paramount. Over the centuries, the Wasco, Warm Springs and other tribal groups developed an extensive economic network centered on the mid-Columbia region that depended on the Columbia River and its resources — particularly the salmon. The people built scaffolding over falls in the river and used long-handled dip nets to harvest salmon and other fish.



Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society. BBNWISZ

Salmon was a main staple to those tribes relying on the waters of the Columbia, Deschutes and its tributaries including the Crooked River. However, the Paiute's lifestyle was considerably different. Living in high plateau country required they migrate to distant areas more frequently for the plants and game on which they relied. The Paiute bands which eventually settled at Warm Springs lived in the area now known as Oregon's Lake, Harney and Malheur counties.



Duck decoy
Museum at Warm Springs



Thanks to:

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon Historical Society, Maryhill Museum and the Museum at Warm Springs

Find out more

The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (Tribes) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe with approximately 5,216 enrolled tribal members. There are 3,642 members living on the reservation and 1,309 employees working for the tribal government and various enterprises. <https://warm Springs-nsn.gov/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_peoples_of_Oregon

