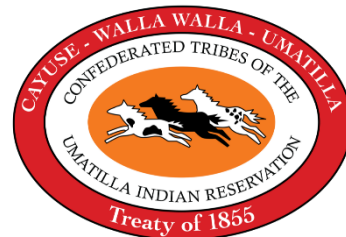


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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EOU, CTUIR Offering Umatilla Language Classes for College Credit

MISSION – In an effort to attract and retain Native American students, Eastern Oregon University (EOU) and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) are offering online Umatilla language classes for college credit.

Thanks to a memorandum of agreement between the CTUIR and EOU, Mildred Quaempts, a Umatilla Master Speaker in the CTUIR Education Department, is teaching Beginning Umatilla I for the Fall 2025 Term for four credits and Beginning Umatilla II in the Winter 2026 Term for another four credits.

"I am honored to have been asked to teach the Beginning Umatilla class in collaboration with Eastern Oregon University," said Quaempts, who began teaching the class in the Fall 2022 Term. "I am one of five remaining fluent Umatilla language speakers on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The speakers are myself, my brother Fred Hill Sr., cousin Thomas Morning Owl, son Damien Totus Thomas and daughter Annie Marie Kirk. The last elder speaker is Joan Watlamet, who lives in The Dalles, Oregon. Fred, Thomas, Damien and I were raised in Umatilla/Yakama Ichishkiin dialect language-speaking households."

The online course, held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 – 6:10 p.m., is open to all EOU students with no limit on class size. However, EOU will provide five tuition waivers each term for CTUIR community members who reserve spots in the 11-week courses through the CTUIR Higher Education Program.

Reservations for the five tuition waivers will be on a first-come, first-served basis with enrolled CTUIR members receiving preference. For more information or to RSVP, email LynetteMinthorn@ctuir.org or call 541-429-7819.

The Beginning Umatilla I class began Sept. 23, but participants have until Oct. 17 to register. The closing registration date for Beginning Umatilla II is Jan. 30. To fully engage in the courses, participants must have

access to a laptop, tablet, smartphone or other personal device; basic computer skills; and the ability to use the Zoom meeting platform.

“We’re excited to offer this class,” Pepper Huxoll, EOU Native American Program coordinator, said. “Understanding our location and our heritage, especially with our partnerships with CTUIR is vitally important to EOU.”

Quaempts said it’s important to have the Umatilla language taught because it “connects with the culture, beliefs and traditions, especially the First Foods, though our unwritten law and Indian ways.” First Foods are culturally significant staple foods consumed before colonization such as salmon, roots, berries and elk.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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