



Píswe

The Nez Perce language is nimipuutimt. Píswe (pis-weh) is nimipuutimt for “rock” or “stone”.

To the **Nimiipuu (Nez Perce)** the landscape of the Wallowa region is sacred. The Nimiipuu live by a moral covenant called **tama•lwit**, in which they take care of the land and in return, the land gives them all they need to survive and flourish. According to **tama•lwit** everything in the world possesses a consciousness. **The plants, animals, and rocks are relatives.** In this relationship, the rocks are gifts to the people to help them survive. Stone artifacts including projectile points, knives and scrapers, grinding stones, and mauls, are evidence of long-term inhabitation of the Nez Perce country dating back as far as 14,000 years ago. Here some examples of the igneous tools they used:



Photography Credit: Talia Galvin

K'ápoy – hopper mortar stone

This is used in combination with a pestle to crush berries or pound roots, such as **qa•ws (biscuit root)**. Dried foods are then formed into cakes. In the past, these cakes helped them eat through the winter.

Projectile points

Bows & arrows date back about 4000 years. Before then, people used stabbing spears, and later throwing spears, to hunt.

The two points pictured left are neoteric (modern day) examples of traditional projectiles. Object A is a large point with a corner notch stem that would be used on a spear. It is made from chrysoprase stone. Object B is an unfinished obsidian **wó•lit (arrowhead)**. Obsidian is used for arrows because when broken properly it is extremely sharp, like glass.



The **wó•lit** labeled C is a historical artifact found here in Wallowa country. Made from black glassy basalt local to the area, it is a side-notched arrowhead.

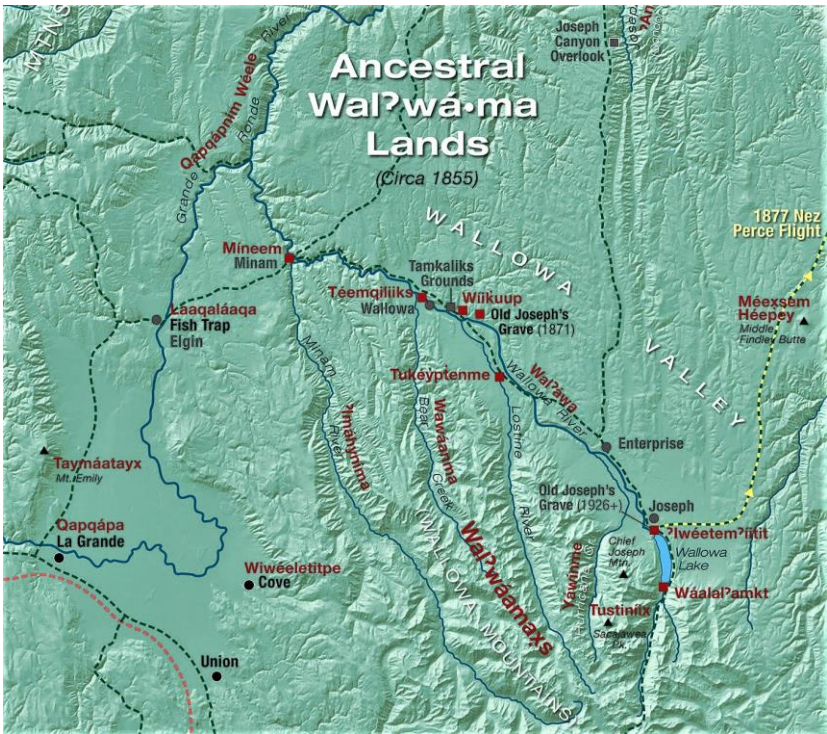


Photography Credit: Talia Galvin

Trail marker

This pictograph navigational marker was found along the Salmon River in Idaho. It was probably used to mark a safe place to cross the river. The pictographs were drawn with charcoal that was likely mixed with a fatty substance, like plant oil or animal fat, to help it stick to the chlorite rock.

On this map of the Wallowa Valley, you can see that many of our modern roads follow the web of ancient trails (indicated by the dotted lines) that were established long before White settlers arrived here. Most of our towns are also located near traditional camp sites that were used by Nez Perce and other tribal people who gathered food here. Similar to road signs, stone trail markers like the one pictured above helped guide people along these trails which were used for hunting, gathering, and trade for thousands of years.



Make your own trail marker!

Use a piece of charcoal to make your own pigment paint and create a trail marker like the one above. Here's how:

1. Use two flat rocks—one larger than the other, like the hopper mortar stones on Page 1—to crush a piece of charcoal that is about an inch in diameter.
2. In a bowl, mix the charcoal powder with a teaspoon of vegetable oil or egg yolk.
3. Add 2 teaspoons of warm water and mix well.

Now all you need is a finger and a rock to paint on! As you paint, think about this: rock art has been used by people all over the world to tell their stories for many thousands of years. Where will you place your trail marker and what story will it tell those who come across it for years to come?

The Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland project is a grassroots endeavor to develop a place in the Wallowa Valley where Nez Perce and other tribal people can celebrate their traditions and customs in their ancestral homeland. The Homeland Project's aim is to connect a new generation of Nez Perce people, local community members, and visitors from around the world with stories of the past and a vision for the future.

Our Visitor Center is open! Mondays 10 am to 4 pm and Tuesday – Friday 9 am to 1 pm. Located at 209 E. 2nd Street in Wallowa. Visit our website: wallowanezperce.org. Contact us: 541-886-3101 or info@wallowanezperce.org. See you soon!