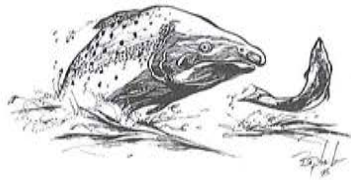


SALMON
AND HIS **PEOPLE**

FISH & FISHING
IN **NEZ PERCE**
CULTURE



DAN LANDEEN
ALLEN PINKHAM

CONFLUENCE PRESS
LEWISTON, IDAHO

Chronology of Columbia River

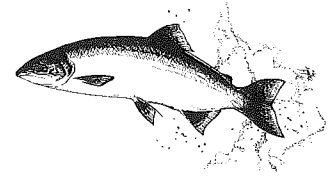


- 1775 First cases of smallpox reach the Northwest Tribes. Spanish captain Bruno de Heceta detects Columbia River current but fails to discover the river.
- 1778 Captain James Cook explores the Northwest Coast.
- 1792 American Captain Robert Gray enters the Columbia River and names it after his ship. Later in that same year, British explorers travel 100 miles up the river.
- 1793 Alexander Mackenzie becomes the first explorer to cross North America and reach the Pacific Ocean.
- 1801 French Canadian trappers encounter the upper Columbia.
- 1805 Reaching the Columbia River, Lewis and Clark express amazement over the abundance of salmon.
- 1811 David Thompson traverses the entire length of the Columbia by canoe in ten days.
- 1836 The Whitmans and Spaldings establish their missions near Walla Walla, Washington, and Lapwai, Idaho, respectively.
- 1850 Steamboats make their debut on the Columbia.
- 1855 The Columbia River tribes sign treaties with the federal government. In these treaties, the tribes cede most of their lands, but they reserve exclusive rights to fish within their reservations and at "all usual and accustomed" fishing places outside their reservation boundaries.
- 1863 With the discovery of gold on its reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe is forced to negotiate a new treaty with the federal government that effectively diminishes the reservation boundaries from 1.75 million acres to 750,000 acres.
- 1864 First salmon cannery established on the Columbia.
- 1876 Work begins on Cascade Locks and canal.

- 1877 War breaks out between the Nez Perce and the United States.
- 1887 Congress passes the Dawes Allotment Act, which further diminishes the acreage of Indian reservations throughout the United States.
- 1905 In the first major fishing rights case to reach the Supreme Court, *U.S. v. Winans*, the justices hold that treaty Indians reserved the right to cross non-Indian lands to fish at "usual and accustomed" places and that treaties are to be interpreted the way the Indians have understood them.
- 1915 Columbia River highway opens.
- 1932 Army Corps of Engineers completes its plans for building ten dams on the Columbia.
- 1933 Bonneville Dam construction begins.
- 1938 Congress passes the Bonneville Project Act to market power from Bonneville and other federal dams on the Columbia. Dams eventually inundate such important Indian fishing places as Celilo Falls and block salmon migration to some 2,800 miles of fish habitat. Congress passes the Mitchell Act, which promises that fish lost because of the dams will be replenished with the help of hatcheries.
- 1941 The completion of Grand Coulee Dam destroys Kettle Falls and all salmon runs on the upper Columbia River all the way into British Columbia, Canada.
- 1942 The Supreme Court decides in *Tulee v. Washington* that because a treaty takes precedence over state law, Indians with tribal treaty rights cannot be required to buy state fishing licenses. The court also rules, however, that the state can regulate treaty fisheries for purposes of conservation.
- 1943 Construction of Hanford Atomic Works begins in Eastern Washington as part of the Manhattan Project, and, in the next few years, nine nuclear reactors are built along the Columbia. These reactors contribute large quantities of radioactive and hazardous wastes to the river.
- 1948 State and federal fish agencies begin implementing the Mitchell Act by locating almost all of the hatcheries in the lower river, where mostly non-Indians fish, instead of in the tribes upriver fishing areas where salmon are being destroyed by the

dams. Of the twenty-five Mitchell Act hatcheries eventually built, only two are above The Dalles Dam. Consequently, some 85 percent of the tribes' mainstem fishing area receives no benefit from Mitchell Act releases.

- 1957 The completion of The Dalles Dam destroys Celilo Falls.
- 1967 The completion of Hells Canyon Dam on the Snake River destroys the salmon runs to the upper Snake River Basin.
- 1968 Fourteen members of the Yakama tribe file suit against Oregon's regulation of off-reservation fishing (*Sohappy v. Smith*). The United States and the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes also sue (*U.S. v. Oregon*). The federal court combines the two cases.
- 1969 Judge Belloni, in *Sohappy v. Smith/U.S. v. Oregon* (the Belloni decision), holds that the tribes are entitled to a "fair share" of the fish runs and that the state is limited in its power to regulate treaty Indian fisheries. (The state may only regulate when "reasonable and necessary for conservation.") The court further rules that state conservation regulations are not to discriminate against the Indians and must employ the least restrictive means.
- 1974 In *U.S. v. Washington* (the Boldt decision), Judge Boldt defines a "fair share" as 50 percent of the harvestable fish destined for the tribes' usual and accustomed fishing places. He also reaffirms tribal management powers. (Belloni then applies the 50/50 principle in Columbia River fisheries.)
- 1974 In *Settler v. Lameer*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals rules that the treaty fishing right is a tribal right, not an individual right, and that tribes had reserved the authority to regulate tribal fishing on and off the reservations.
- 1975 The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completes the last of four lower Snake River dams, compounding downstream passage problems for juvenile salmon, steelhead, and lampreys, and causing further declines in fish runs. The total number of dams on the mainstem Columbia and Snake rivers increases to eighteen.
- 1977 The federal court, under its jurisdiction in *U.S. v. Oregon*, approves a five-year plan that sets up an in-river harvest sharing formula between non-Indian and Indian fisheries. The plan fails because it does not include specific controls on ocean harvests or specific measures to replace fish runs destroyed by development.



- 1979 The Supreme Court upholds *U.S. v. Washington* (the Boldt decision).
- 1979 Columbia River, Puget Sound, and Washington coastal tribes sue the Secretary of Commerce over ocean fishing regulations because a large percentage of treaty fish are being caught in waters managed by the Department of Commerce. Columbia River tribes also sue in 1980, 1981, and 1982 (*Confederated Tribes, et. al. v. Kreps*; *Yakima et al v. Klutznik*; *Hoh v. Balarige*; and *Yakima, et. al. v. Balarige*). As a result, the federal government is held to have a legal obligation to regulate the ocean fishery to ensure that a reasonable number of salmon reach tribal fishing places on the Columbia River.
- 1980 Congress passes the Northwest Power Act, which—for the first time—mandates that Columbia River power production and fisheries be managed as co-equals. It calls for a fish and wildlife program to make up for losses caused by federal water development in the basin.
- 1980 The Federal District Court issues the *U.S. v. Washington* (Phase II) decision that affirms a right to protection of the habitat that supports fish runs subject to treaty catch.
- 1982 The Northwest Power Planning Council—the body charged with implementing the Power Act—adopts a Fish and Wildlife Program that draws heavily on recommendations made by the tribes. (Unfortunately, the program will be amended at least three times after its inception and will effectively filter out or ignore most of the tribes' original recommendations.)
- 1982 “Salmonscam” results in the arrests of Indians on the Columbia River.
- 1983 Worst Columbia River salmon catch on record.
- 1985 President Reagan and Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney sign—and Congress later ratifies—the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty, which reduces Canadian and Alaskan harvest of Columbia River salmon and reserves a seat at the table for Indian tribes along with other government fish managers.
- 1987 Congress establishes the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

- 1988 After five years of negotiation, the states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, federal fishery agencies, and the tribes agree to the Columbia River Fish Management Plan: a new, detailed harvest and fish prediction process under the authority of *U.S v. Oregon*. Judge Marsh enters the plan as an order of the U.S. District Court.
- 1990 Native Americans and environmentalists petition to place Snake River salmon stocks on the Endangered Species list.
- 1991 Sockeye salmon and spring, summer, and fall chinook salmon from the Snake River, the Columbia's largest tributary, are listed under the Endangered Species Act.
- 1994 In *Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) v. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)*, brought under the Endangered Species Act, Judge Marsh rules that NMFS' biological opinion of "no jeopardy" regarding hydrosystem operations on the Columbia and Snake rivers violated the act. He orders the fish management parties to determine what hydrosystem changes are needed to restore endangered salmon.
- 1994 With spring chinook runs on the Columbia at record lows, the tribes reopen tribal fishing at Willamette Falls near Oregon City, Oregon. In recent decades this usual and accustomed Indian fishing place had been taken over by a large non-Indian sport fishery supported by strong runs of hatchery fish.
- 1994 The tribes develop their own Columbia River salmon plan, *Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit: Spirit of the Salmon*.
- 1998 *United States v. Oregon* (Imnaha Subproceeding). The Nez Perce Tribe, joined the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and supported by Yakama Indian Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, obtained an injunction preventing the State of Oregon from destroying Imnaha River hatchery steelhead that they deemed "surplus" to their hatchery program. The court approved settlement provided that these Imnaha River hatchery steelhead, developed from broodstock native to that basin, would be used to assist in rebuilding the steelhead runs in the Imnaha River Basin.

Introduction

Nez Perce tribal elders believe that one of the greatest tragedies of this century is the loss of traditional fishing sites and chinook salmon runs on the Columbia River and its tributaries. They believe the circle of life has been broken and ask us to consider what the consequences of breaking that circle may mean for future generations. In many ways the loss of the salmon mirrors the plight of the Nez Perce people. The elders remind us that the fates of humans and salmon are linked.

Historically, the Nez Perce Tribe depended upon fish as a major food source. Of all the fishes, however, none was more utilized by the Nez Perce than the chinook salmon. Other fish were harvested—suckers, lampreys, whitefish, steelhead, chiselmouth, trout, shiners—but no other species compared with the chinook. Times of the year were measured by the chinook's lifecycle. Families gathered at traditional fishing sites on the Columbia and its tributaries to await its miraculous return. The religion of the Nez Perce—the stories, legends, and ceremonies regarding the fish and rivers—reflects this bond.



There was a time when the animals could talk and act like people, but they were still animals.

—Alex Pinkham (Nez Perce)

Our animal legends have a lot more truth to them than many think and there are a lot of lessons we can learn from our brothers and sisters who live on the land, in the air and water. It is important to observe animals and pay close attention to them and do things that will preserve them. If we lose the animals because of pollutions which we have made, we will be next.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

In Nez Perce lore the coyote is a mystical being who can change himself into anything he wants. He is a being who makes all the mistakes a human can make — and he has to learn.

—Ronald Pinkham (Nez Perce)

Figure 1. Facing page. Salmon catch on the Clearwater River in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy of Nez Perce National Historical Park.

Figure 2. Coyote is the main character in Nez Perce legends. Photo courtesy of Boeing Computer Services.

Figure 3. The Frog sitting on the hillside with his back facing the Clearwater River. Author photo.

Figure 4. Coyote's Fishnet on the hill next to the Clearwater River at mile marker 12 on U.S. Highway 12. The gullies that form the "net" converge in a V at the bottom left of the photograph. Author photo.

Because the Nez Perce have always revered water and the fish that reside in it, they are concerned about the future of the Columbia Basin's rivers and fish. It is not surprising that Nez Perce stories include accounts and descriptions of the region's flora, fauna, and geology. Fish and other animals are characters in many of these stories. Coyote, the main character in Nez Perce stories, exhibits all the good and bad traits of human beings. Many Nez Perce coyote stories begin with "One day Coyote was going up the river. . . ."

Stories were normally told by the elders during the winter months and during travel. These stories imparted basic beliefs, taught moral values, and helped explain the creation of the world, the origin of rituals and customs, the location of food, and the meaning of natural phenomena. Although some of the characters and themes differ slightly, many of these same stories are also held in common by other Columbia Basin tribes. Throughout this book we have included tribal stories that provide information about the Columbia River, some of its relevant geological features, and stories about the fish that reside in its waters.


The following Nez Perce story entitled "Coyote's Fishnet," for example, uses a fishing theme to describe the creation of two geological features along the Clearwater River near Lewiston, Idaho.

Coyote's Fishnet

One day Coyote made a net and was fishing for salmon on the Clearwater River. He had his net in the water when Frog came along and said, "What are you fishing here for? You aren't catching any fish." Coyote replied, "No, I'm not catching any fish." Frog watched a little while longer and said again, "You are still not catching any fish. The fish already went up the river. What are you doing here fishing? The salmon have already passed this way." Soon Coyote and Frog started to argue about where the fish were in the river. Finally, Coyote got mad and picked up Frog and threw him across the river where he was turned to stone. Coyote told Frog, "Because you argued with me, I'm going to face you away from the water and that's the way you will remain and people will know that when you argue something bad might happen." Coyote went back to his



fishing, but after a while he realized that Frog was right about the salmon because he wasn't catching any fish. This made Coyote mad, so he threw his net up against the hillside and went upriver to try and catch some salmon. Today you can still see Coyote's Fishnet against the hillside and Frog on the other side of the river.

—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce) 

Today, arguments just as heated as the one between frog and coyote are still going on over the presence and lack of presence of salmon in our rivers. In many instances, fish have been at the center of Threatened and Endangered Species legislation. It is difficult to forget the controversy that resulted from the snail darter being declared an endangered species in the 1970s. This single action curtailed further development of hydroelectric dams in one region of the country and had a major influence on our nation's environmental movement. The listing of the snail darter as an endangered species made many of us realize how powerful the Endangered Species Act really is. The listing of several fish species in the Pacific Northwest, including the sea run cutthroat, sockeye salmon, chinook salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, and bull trout, are creating similar controversies today. The fate of many Northwest politicians may be dictated by their stands on Columbia River Basin salmon policies and fish restoration issues. State and tribal governments and federal agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency) spend large sums of money each year to document natural resource damage that occurs on the Columbia River and its tributaries, destruction that results in loss of habitat, reduction in populations, and fish kills.

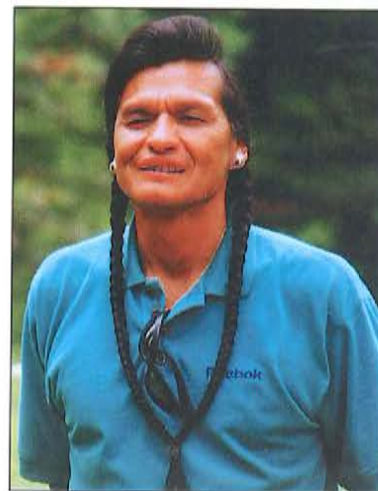
In 1997 the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission nominated the Columbia River for designation as an American Heritage River. Their letter written to President Clinton stated that the "Columbia River was vital to the history and culture of the tribes and to the well-being of the entire region. Recognition as an American Heritage River will help the communities in the Columbia River watershed work together to recover this magnificent national treasure for all of us and for future generations." The Columbia River is a life source for many diverse plants and animals that are associated with this system, including the fishes. The Columbia River System has always been known as the greatest salmon fishery in the contiguous United States. These fish have a life cycle that has been severely threatened by many other uses of the river. As smolts in fresh water, the salmon migrate to the ocean to live until they mature. Years later they return to their spawning beds to renew the cycle. Declines of these fish runs in the last several years have reached crisis proportions.

In 1997, Samuel N. Penney, Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, testified before Congress regarding the Tribe's commitment to salmon restoration:



We learn a lot of lessons from watching animals. The salmon are one of our best teachers. We learn from them that we have to do certain things by the seasons. We watch the salmon as smolts going to the ocean and observe them returning home. We see the many obstacles that they have to overcome. We see them fulfill the circle of life, just as we must do. If the salmon aren't here, the circle becomes broken and we all suffer.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)



The tribes have always treated water as a medicine because it nourishes the life of the earth, flushing poisons out of humans, other creatures, and the land. We know that to be productive, water must be kept pure. When water is kept cold and clean, it takes care of the salmon.

—Levi Holt (Nez Perce)

For generations, our ancestors were the caretakers of the Pacific Northwest's salmon runs and treated them as a part of the world that our creator had entrusted to us. The decline of the Pacific Northwest's salmon runs is the most serious environmental concern in the region and is also one the Tribe must squarely face. The concerns we have with the declining salmon runs are shared by many of our neighbors in the Pacific Northwest who also share a connection with the region's signature resource.

From the Nez Perce Tribe's point of view, reversing the decline of Columbia Basin salmon is more than just a matter of professional interest, or a legal obligation, or a cost of doing business. The salmon are an integral part of our way of life. We recognize that we have more to lose than anyone if the salmon runs continue to decline. Thus, the Nez Perce Tribe is committed to doing everything we can to ensure that these declines are reversed and that all species and all stocks of salmon are restored. We know, in our hearts, that our vision and plan for salmon restoration will provide a sustainable fishery resource for the benefit of all peoples in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

Many books have been written about the Columbia River System. This book concentrates on the Columbia River as a life source for the region's tribes and as the most important river in the Pacific Northwest for salmon and steelhead migration. The Nez Perce Tribe is hopeful that this book will educate and inform people about the importance of maintaining and protecting the Columbia River Basin System by emphasizing the significance of fish and fishing in Nez Perce culture and by showing the diversity of fishes that reside in these waters. The Columbia River and its salmon people are legacies that should not die with us, but continue for the spiritual and physical benefits they can provide for all time.

The following Nez Perce creation story explains the origins of other geological features as well as the important reciprocal relationships the Creator established between the animals and human beings.

A Meeting Between Creator and the Animals

On one of the slopes of the Clearwater River near Lewiston, Idaho, there are a lot of rounded stones going up one of the draws. As you look along the ridgeline there are also other rocks of all different sizes and forms, but most of them are very large. Some of these are referred to by the Nez Perce as the "large animals." They are the remains of the large animals before there were human beings. The Nez Perces have always known that at one time there were large animals that inhabited this country because we find large bones in the ground between Clarkston and Pasco. The Creator called all of these large

animals together telling them that there was going to be a great change, and he said that some of them probably wouldn't survive. Many of the animals were late to the meeting that the Creator had called and as a result were turned to stone. So Creator called all the large animal people together and said there was going to be a great change and that he wanted all of the animals to qualify themselves for a new kind of human being that would be coming as a result of this great change. Creator wanted to know who was going to be qualified to help these new human beings when they came because those human beings were going to be naked, and they were going to have a hard time making a living. The Creator said, "I want each one of you to come forward and be qualified to help these new human beings when they come." So all the animals had to come up and be qualified.

The Nez Perce people could describe every animal including the birds, fishes, and insects that they knew of with this story. This is one story that they could relate for days and days to the young people and tell them how they used these species to survive.

So Deer, he comes out and says, "I want to have horns that come up and branch out, and I want to have big ears so I can hear well, and I want a little short tail with a black tip on it. These new human beings when they come can use my horn to make arrows and flint knives, and they can use my hide for clothing to keep warm, and they can use my hooves to make rattles to sing their songs with." So Creator said, "You act the way you want to act, and that's the way you will be," and that deer is what we call mule deer today.

Well, another deer came forward and said, "I don't want to be like that one. I want to have horns that come up a different way and then branch out. I don't like large ears and I want a tail that's longer," and so he described himself how he wanted to be, and he also said that the new human beings could use his body parts and also his brains to help them tan the hides and make them soft and white. That deer was called



Figure 5. Large rocks on the hill next to the Clearwater River, according to Nez Perce legend, are the animals that were turned to stone because they were late to a meeting called by the Creator. Author photo.

Figure 6. Mule deer are found throughout the Columbia River Basin. Photo courtesy of Corel Corporation.

Figure 7. Moose are one of the many game animals utilized by the Nez Perce. Photo courtesy of Corel Corporation.

Blacktail deer. The Creator said, "Okay, you are qualified to help these new human beings when they come."

Another deer came forward and said, "I don't like those horns that come up and branch like the other ones. I want them to come up and go back and go straight up, and I don't like large ears, but I want a long tail that will wave when I run, and it will give warning to others in the woods when I run." That was Whitetail deer, and he also said that the new human beings could use his body parts. Then Moose came forward and said, "I want to be bigger, I want to be black, and I want white feet, and I want my horns to be flat with points on them, and I want to have wide feet so I can wade around in the mud and eat those plants that grow in the water." Moose also said that the new human beings could use his body parts for clothing and food. Then Elk came forth and said, "I don't want to have flat horns like Moose. I want to have horns that come up and branch out and have points." Then he described himself, and Creator said, "Okay, you are qualified."

Then Eagle came forward and said, "I want to fly up high so that I can bring the messages to you from these new human beings, and they can use my feathers for ceremonies and symbols so that they know who the Creator is." Creator said, "Okay, you are qualified." Then Crow came out and said, "I want to be black and I'll be a warning to the other animals in times of danger." So Creator said, "Okay, you are qualified." Then another Crow came out and said, "I don't want to be that small, I want to be bigger, and I want a different sounding voice, but I still want to be black," and that bird was Raven. So Creator said, "Okay, you are qualified." Then another bird came out and said, "I don't want to be all black, I want a long black and white tail, and I'll also be a warning to the people." That bird was Magpie. Then Bee came forward and said, "I'll make honey that is very sweet, and they can use it for food, but I'll sting them to protect what I have." So Bee became qualified. Spider came forward, and he said, "I would like to give these new human beings wisdom.



When I make my webs they'll never know how I make the webs, and yet I can catch food. This will tell them that I have something that they can acquire, but it will take a long time for them to learn how to get that wisdom." So Creator let the Spider be qualified.

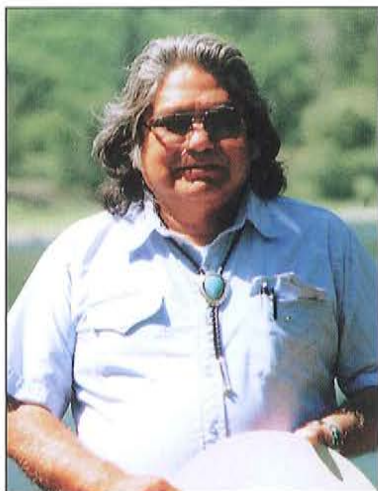
Salmon and Steelhead came forward and said, "We can help the human beings with our flesh." Salmon said, "When we come up the river we will die, so the human beings will have to catch us before that happens. I'll come up only on certain times of the year, and that's when they'll have to catch me." Then Steelhead said, "I want to come in the wintertime, but I'll give them something special. That will be the glue from my skin. This glue can be used to make bows and spears. I'll be in the water all winter long." So Creator let Steelhead become qualified. Sockeye Salmon came forward and he said, "I don't want to be big like Chinook Salmon and Steelhead, and my flesh will be red because I will eat different foods." Then Trout came forward and he said, "I am going to look like Steelhead, but I am not going to go down to the ocean. I'll just stay here in the waters even in the winter, and if these human beings can find me they can have me for food. But in the wintertime I will be down in the gravel and if they can find me that's where I will be." Then Eel came out and said, "I don't want to look like the Steelhead or Salmon or Trout. I want to be long, and when I rest I want to put my mouth on the rocks. But I'll come up the river every year, and they can use my flesh for food." So this is how the fish became qualified.

The last animal to be qualified was Coyote. Coyote came out, and he couldn't get qualified. He tried to be qualified to do something, but he couldn't do it. You know when you hear Coyote today, he goes yip, yip, yip. He couldn't even talk. When Coyote talks, it sounds like two or three coyotes talking at the same time. So he couldn't get qualified, and finally Creator said that he would take pity on him. He said, "Because you can't get qualified I'll give you special powers. When these new human beings come, you will have all the faults and all of the traits that this new human being will have. That's what you will be able to do, but I'll give you some special powers beyond that. You

Figure 8. Bald eagles winter along many of the rivers in the Columbia River Basin. Photo courtesy of Corel Corporation.

Figure 9. Chinook salmon preparing to spawn. Photo courtesy of Idaho Fish and Game.





Sometimes I try to get people to compare plant and animal species with their own body parts. For instance, the buffalo could be a finger, the passenger pigeon another finger, the peregrine falcon another finger; the wrist could be the sockeye salmon. If you relate these body parts to these species, how many would you eliminate before you would say, "Stop." You can get along pretty well if you lose a finger, but if you keep doing that, when is it enough? I learned this philosophy from my elders. Even Joseph himself said, "I am of the earth." Well, if you consider yourself part of the earth, you won't sacrifice those body parts.
—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce)


Allen Pinkham, former chairman of the Nez Perce Executive Committee, is known for his stories, many of which he graciously contributed to this book.

Figure 10. Grizzly bears once inhabited many of the areas frequented by the Nez Perce. Photo courtesy of Corel Corporation.

will be able to transform and change yourself, and you will be able to get out of bad situations in order to save yourself. You will also be able to teach these new human beings many things." Creator said, "I'll make you qualified, but you'll get to be gray. You won't have any other colors." That's the way Coyote was created, and that's how Coyote became qualified to help the new human beings.

About this time Grizzly Bear spoke up and said, "What are we going to do about day and night? I want six months of night and six months of day." Chipmunk perked up and said, "We can't have that. I want one day and one night." So Chipmunk and Grizzly Bear started to argue. Grizzly Bear said that he wanted six months of day and six months of night so he could rest and sleep for half the year and work for the other half of the year. Chipmunk was adamant that there would be one day and one night. Finally, Creator told the two of them to go off to have their argument, and he told them that whoever won the argument would determine the way the new world would be created. So Grizzly Bear and Chipmunk went off and continued arguing.

After a long time, Grizzly Bear started to get tired, and he was trying not to go to sleep but Chipmunk was still going strong. Finally, Grizzly Bear got so tired that he went to sleep. Chipmunk yelled, "I won, I won, there will be one day and one night when those new human beings come." Creator replied, "That's the way it will be from now on, one day and one night." Soon, Grizzly bear awoke and found out from the other animals that he had lost the argument. This made him angry and he started chasing Chipmunk. As Chipmunk was trying to get away, Grizzly Bear put out his claws and scratched Chipmunk on the back, and that is why today the Chipmunk has black and white stripes on his back.

—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce) 





Chapter 4

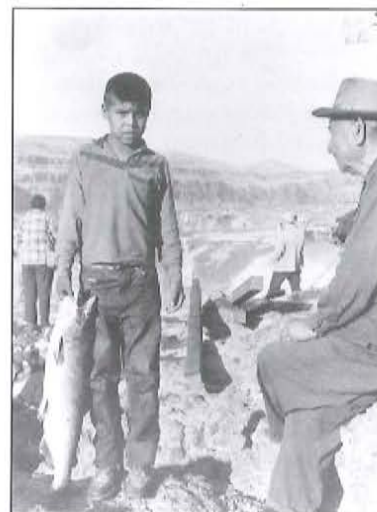
Celilo Falls

Any account of fishing by the Columbia Basin tribes, especially the Nez Perce, must include Celilo Falls, the most important Native American gathering place and fishing site on the Columbia River. For catching salmon, Celilo, or “Great Falls,” was certainly the most famous and perhaps the most productive stretch of water on the entire river, which is why the Nez Perce and other interior tribes traveled to Celilo each year to fish and trade. Celilo Falls was located near the site of the present-day hydroelectric dam called The Dalles, not far from the town of the same name.

Archaeological evidence indicates that humans have utilized the Celilo site for at least 12,000 years. (Older evidence would have been wiped away by the great floods that swept across the land.) Celilo Falls was not just one fall but rather a series of basalt outcrops, rapids, and narrow areas over which the water ferociously and swiftly flowed. The crest of the river narrowed to four hundred yards and then, boiling and churning, plunged over cliffs with names like “The Grand Rapids,” “Great Falls,” and “The Dalles.” At twenty-two feet, Horseshoe Falls dropped the farthest. During spring runoff, most of the falls were covered by water.

The area generally referred to as “Celilo Falls” was actually composed of three primary fishing sites. The area near the main falls was known as *Wyam* and located on the Oregon side of the river. The area known as *Wishram* was located on the Washington side of the river and eventually became the town of Spearfish, Washington. The third major area was known as *Skein*, which means “cradle board.” Skein was located immediately below the railroad bridge that crossed the Columbia west of the falls. The place was so named because the camping area was shaped like a cradle board.

Fish at Celilo were caught with lines, nets, and harpoons cast from the slippery rocks or wooden platforms. Sometimes fishermen were lowered into a basket and down the sides of the rocks where they would spear the salmon. Tribes that lived in the immediate area and controlled the fishing were the Wyam, Wasco, and Wishram. In 1907 the first cableway across the Columbia was made by firing a skyrocket with a line attached to it across the river. By the 1940s several cable cars had been built. These were powered by gasoline engines and facilitated the transportation of men and harvested salmon to and from the fishing areas located on the islands. The fish boxes attached to the cables could hold about four hundred pounds of salmon per trip. After the fall fishing season was over, the cableways were removed. Otherwise they would have been destroyed in the spring floods. Prior to the acquisition of the cable cars as



Words that come to mind about Celilo include “powerful” and “awesome.” I can still hear the roar of those falls today. That water was unbelievable. The falls were like a volcano in power. Mount St. Helens blew up once, but Celilo was there every day.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

Figure 69. Facing page. Nez Perce fishermen at Celilo. Left, man in gray hat, Wally Wheeler; front, boy in white T shirt: Norman Moses; right, man in white T shirt with net: Sam Jackson. Photo courtesy of Loretta Halfmoon.

Figure 70. Josiah Redwolf (Nez Perce) and unknown boy at Celilo Falls in 1956. Photo courtesy of Nez Perce National Historical Park.

The roar of the river was everywhere; the roar and the mist, the roar of the falls. I don't know how many hundreds of yards of falls there were, but they raised a big mist everywhere.

— Ron Halfmoon
(Umatilla, Nez Perce, Cayuse)

As a small boy I went with my family down to Celilo, and I used to get scared from hearing the constant roar of the rushing water going over the falls. It was very loud.

—Clifford Lawyer Jr. (Nez Perce)

One springtime evening at Celilo we were fishing at a place called Tumwater. You had to get to it by pulling yourself across on the cable car. There were two kids playing on the rocks when we got there, and we told them to go back to shore because the river was starting to rise. They left and after we had fished for a couple of hours we went back home. We found out the next day that those kids had stayed out there on those rocks and were drowned when the river rose.

—Julius Ellenwood (Nez Perce)

Figure 71. Chinook salmon in Columbia River. Photo courtesy of Ken Gatherum.

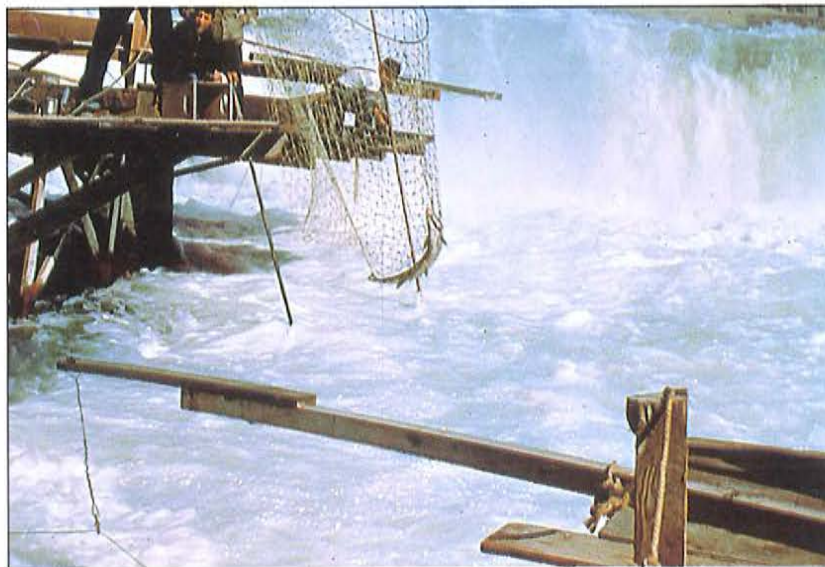
Figure 72. Chinook salmon in dipnet at Celilo Falls. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

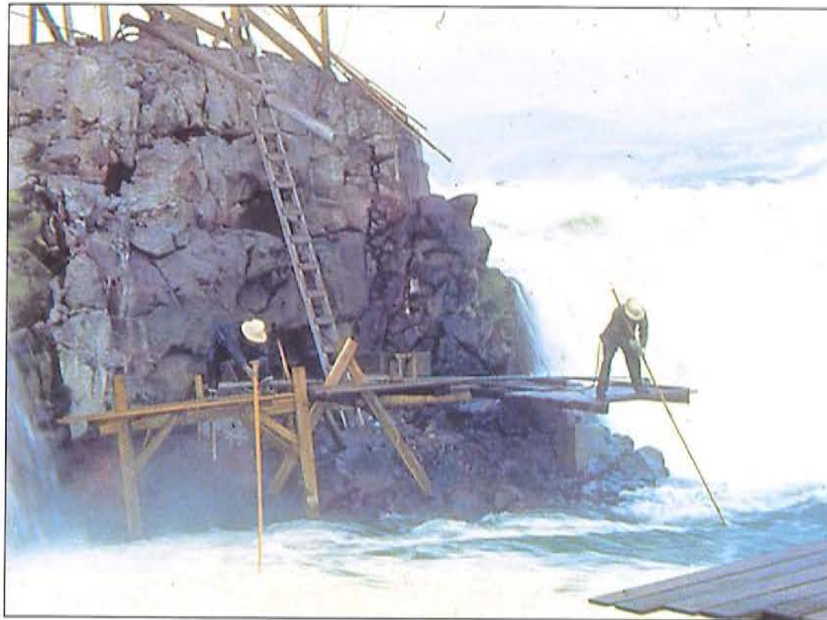


transportation, the Indians reached the fishing stations by swimming downstream with the current reached while attached to a safety line.

Fishing places were handed down from older to younger members of the same Indian family, from one generation to the next. When there was no one in the family capable of using a particular location, a local chief decided who could then use the place. The Chief's decision was final. About eight men took turns fishing one site until they had caught as many fish as could be cleaned and properly prepared in that day.

In 1855 a Wyam Indian named Kuni was born at Celilo on a flat rock on an island in the river. He eventually became known as Chief Tommy Thompson and was elected as the chief of Celilo in 1875. As chief, he was responsible for managing the activities at the longhouse and for directing the salmon fishing at Celilo. He told the people when to harvest fish and when to stop. He also encouraged the people





to keep the river clean and to avoid doing anything that would show disrespect for the salmon. Anyone who disobeyed his rules could be banished.

Almost 16 million salmon passed through Celilo each year when Tommy Thompson was the chief. Some authorities estimate that the Indians caught one salmon for every twenty that passed upriver through Celilo Falls. From 1938 through 1940 the Oregon Fish Commission reported that the Indian commercial fishery at Celilo accounted for only 8.6 percent of the total catch for the entire Columbia River. These figures speak for themselves and should dispel the widespread belief that the Indian fishery dramatically hindered the annual salmon migrations.



One of the first fish I ever caught at Celilo when I was a boy would have pulled me in if I hadn't been tied off. I learned a lesson that day. Some things are a lot more powerful than we give them credit for. I had no idea that the combination of water and fish could be so strong.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

I tell my children that Celilo was like having a mile of Selway Falls. That's the only way I can think of to describe it.

—Rod Wheeler (Nez Perce)

One night there were three of us fishing at Celilo. I was tied off with a rope, but I got pulled in by a large chinook and I lost my net. The current pulled me up against the side of the rock, and the more I kicked the worse it got. Finally, my friends saw my predicament and pulled me out because I wasn't able to do it by myself.

—Julius Ellenwood (Nez Perce)

My first impression of Celilo was unforgettable. I was awestruck by the falls and the sounds of the river. It was just beautiful; the falls went across the whole river.

—Richard Powaukee (Nez Perce)

Figure 73. Ladders and scaffolding were used to fish off the rocks at Celilo. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.

Figure 74. Dipnetting for salmon off scaffolding at Celilo Falls. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.

There was a section of water at Celilo that was called the "Roping Place." The water was relatively shallow and quiet compared to the rest of the river, and it was easy to see the fish when they were swimming through. We would catch the fish with our hoop nets and place the net over them just as if we were roping cattle.
 —Ron Oatman (Nez Perce)

One time I was dipnetting for salmon with some of my friends at Celilo. I hadn't been fishing long when "Boom!" I got a big hit. I had a rope tied around my waist and my feet went into the water, but I held on. My friends were laughing at me because I had almost fallen in, and I was having such a hard time. Finally, I was able to pull the net in and there were two thirty-five pound chinooks in there, a male and a female. They didn't laugh at me when I had them weighed and cashed in.
 —Horace Axtell (Nez Perce)

Figure 75. All rocks and islands were used as fishing platforms at Celilo Falls. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Figure 76. Twenty foot dip nets were often used by fishermen at Celilo. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.



The lives of the local people centered around the migration patterns of the salmon, which historically ran upriver from April through November. Because their lives were dependent on the salmon, Indian people were very careful not to offend them. Native people viewed the salmon migration as a voluntary act, and the people respected the fish for making the journey every year. They believed that the salmon were beings who dwelled in a great house under the sea. There they lived in human form, feasting and dancing. When the time came to run up the rivers to spawn, the salmon people assumed the forms of fish to sacrifice themselves. Once dead, the spirit of each fish returned to the house beneath the sea. If the bones were returned to the water, the salmon people could then resume their form with no discomfort and repeat the trip the next season. Many of the tribes who depended on the salmon had ceremonies in which they returned the bones to the water or back to the earth.





Occasionally, fishermen lost their lives at Celilo when they fell into the river. The Klickitat Indians who fished at Celilo attributed these deaths to a monster who lived at Celilo Falls. In 1954 a twelve-year-old boy fell into the river, and a fisherman, thinking he had a large salmon in his set net down below, caught the boy and brought him to safety.

Francis Seufert, a salmon cannery manager at The Dalles, was a keen observer of life on the Columbia River. He knew better than most how dangerous and capricious the river could be. In the passages below, Seufert describes Native American customs in the face of the danger and recalls an event in the life of his cannery supervisor:

There was absolutely no chance of survival if you fell in. Drowning among Indians was common, for they were often pulled off their fishing scaffolding into the river when big



My grandfather used to tell me that there was a beautiful Indian maiden who lived by the great falls at Celilo. Occasionally this maiden would sacrifice some of the fisherman to the river. This was a way of giving back to the river for the salmon that were being taken from it. Fisherman that would fall into the river that were never seen again were those that had been taken away by the Indian maiden. He would say that the river gives and it also takes. Even today people lose their lives on that river.

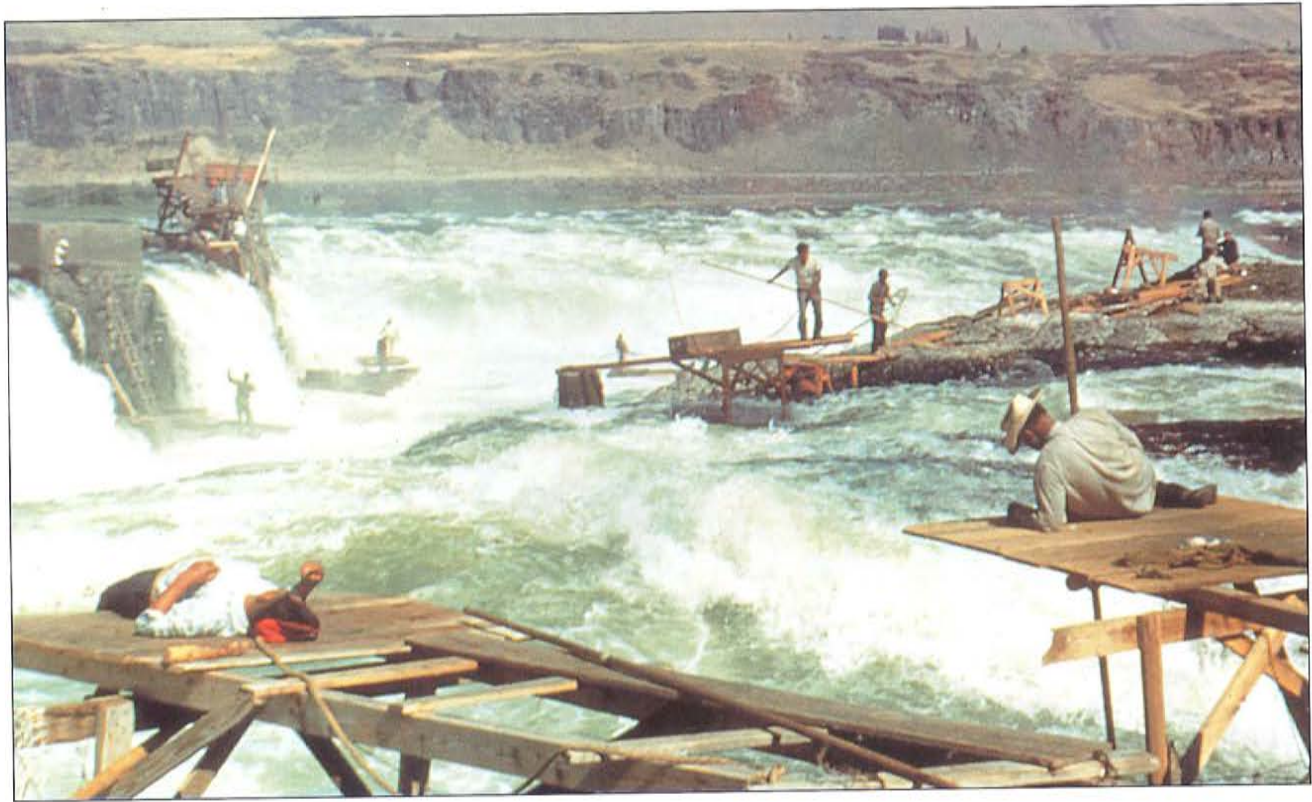
—Joseph Daniels (Nez Perce)

One time at Celilo when I was young there were a few of us one night that were still hungry. The little store had closed, but it didn't matter because we didn't have any money. One of the older kids told us to wait because he was going to get us something to eat. He went down by the rocks near the river and came back with some eels. He hit their heads on a rock, cut them open, and put them on a stick, which we leaned against a small fire. I still remember the large quantities of oil that came from those eels and how the fire would blaze when the oil would hit the coals. After a while we pulled the sticks out of the fire and cut the eels into pieces. It was the first time I had eaten eels and I can still remember how good they tasted.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

Figure 77. By the 1940s cable cars were utilized at Celilo to transport fishermen and fish from the islands. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.

Figure 78. The turbulence and ferocity of the water at Celilo was awesome. Not many fishermen survived if they fell into the water. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.



To me Celilo was the eighth wonder of the world. I was there that day in 1957 when the water covered up that area. That experience was probably the most heart-breaking time of my life. The government paid us each \$3,494.26 to make up for the loss of Celilo. When you think that many of our people at that time were sometimes able to earn anywhere from \$1,000 to \$4,000 a week from catching and selling salmon, the amount we got does not even come close to making up for the loss of the Celilo fishery.

—Kathleen Gordon (Cayuse)

Figure 79. Overall view of Celilo Falls. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.

salmon hit their dip nets. Those big salmon would actually pull a man into the river. . . . If one of the Indian fishermen fell into the river and was swept to his death, then immediately all of the Indian fishermen would stop fishing for the day and would not return to the river until the following day. I remember being down at Tumwater and looking up at Celilo Falls. Unknown to me an Indian had lost his life in the river and the word had swiftly spread to all the fishermen. They quit en masse: every Indian fisherman on the rocks simply walked off the fishing site together. It was a sight you could never forget.

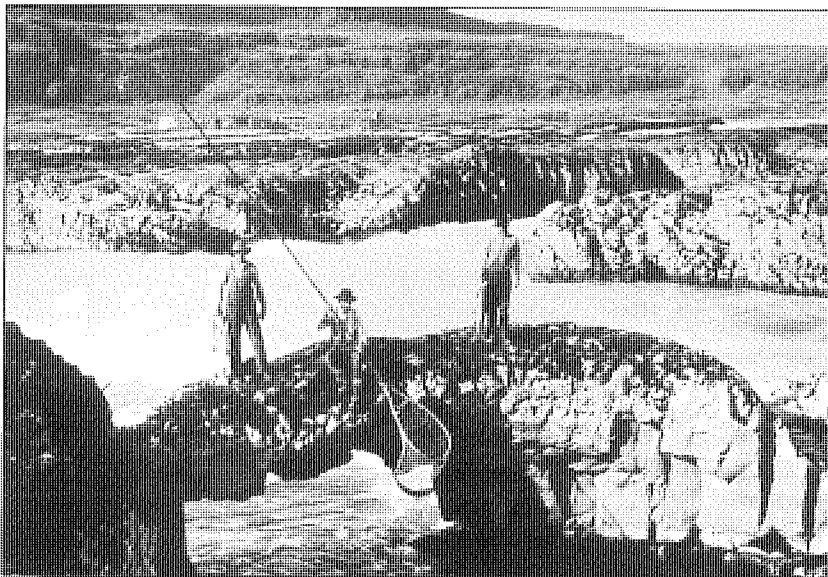
One fall, Guy Whipple, our cannery superintendent, wanted to cross the river to the Oregon side. He took an empty ferry boat that was twenty-five feet long and five feet wide. He took one of the men working on the seine with him and shoved off. When they reached the middle of the river, a large whirlpool opened up alongside them. The ferry boat fell stern-first into the whirlpool and went down. Whipple grabbed the painter at the end of the bow and hung on. The whirlpool broke and formed a huge boil, which tossed both men and the boat back up to the surface. The boat was upside down. The men yelled for help and some gillnetters came by and picked them up. Guy found that he still had his hat on his head, and that his hat was dry.

Celilo Falls not only served as a great salmon fishery, it was also the focal point for trade between tribes from all over the region who gathered there to obtain supplies and exchange information. Hundreds of Indians came from the interior to trade for dried and fresh fish. Other trade items included dentalia shells, mountain sheep horns, bows, horses, baskets, rabbits, and bear and buffalo robes. At Celilo, ceremonies and social gatherings were especially important.

In the last years before the government dams destroyed Celilo Falls, there was a substantial increase in the number of Indians who fished there. This situation was brought about by two conditions: (1) fish could be caught and exchanged for money, and (2) at many of the "usual and accustomed places" it was no longer possible to fish for subsistence purposes. Streams had been destroyed and non-Indian governments had passed laws forbidding the construction of fish traps and weirs. Consequently, in the last years as many as 1500 fishermen assembled at Celilo during the height of the season.

When fishermen were out on the river, the salmon had to be delivered to the fish buyers in prime condition—fresh, with the skin moist. The hot summer wind at Celilo could very quickly dry out a salmon. In fact, the hot basalt rocks could cook a salmon if a fisherman left it unattended: pieces of flesh would fall off when he picked it up. Consequently, a fisherman usually laid his salmon on the rocks or in a fish box and covered them with wet gunny sacks. Fishermen kept these gunny sacks continually wet during the day. As long as the salmon were kept moist, they would stay fresh, and the fishermen knew that the only way to sell their salmon was to keep them in a prime condition.

Roy White, a Nez Perce elder, remembers the first time he fished at Celilo in 1936. "I was over in Yakima working in the orchards," he recalled, "and one of the Yakamas who I was working with said



What most people don't realize is that the destruction of Celilo Falls entailed more than just eliminating a traditional fishing site. Celilo was a gathering place. It symbolized a very important social event that the Indians looked forward to every year. Celilo was a celebration for the people to watch the salmon run and to be a part of it.

—Rod Wheeler (Nez Perce)

We didn't just go to Celilo to catch fish. Celilo was the place to go to be with your relatives, to trade for other goods, to play games, gamble, and it was a good place to find a mate.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

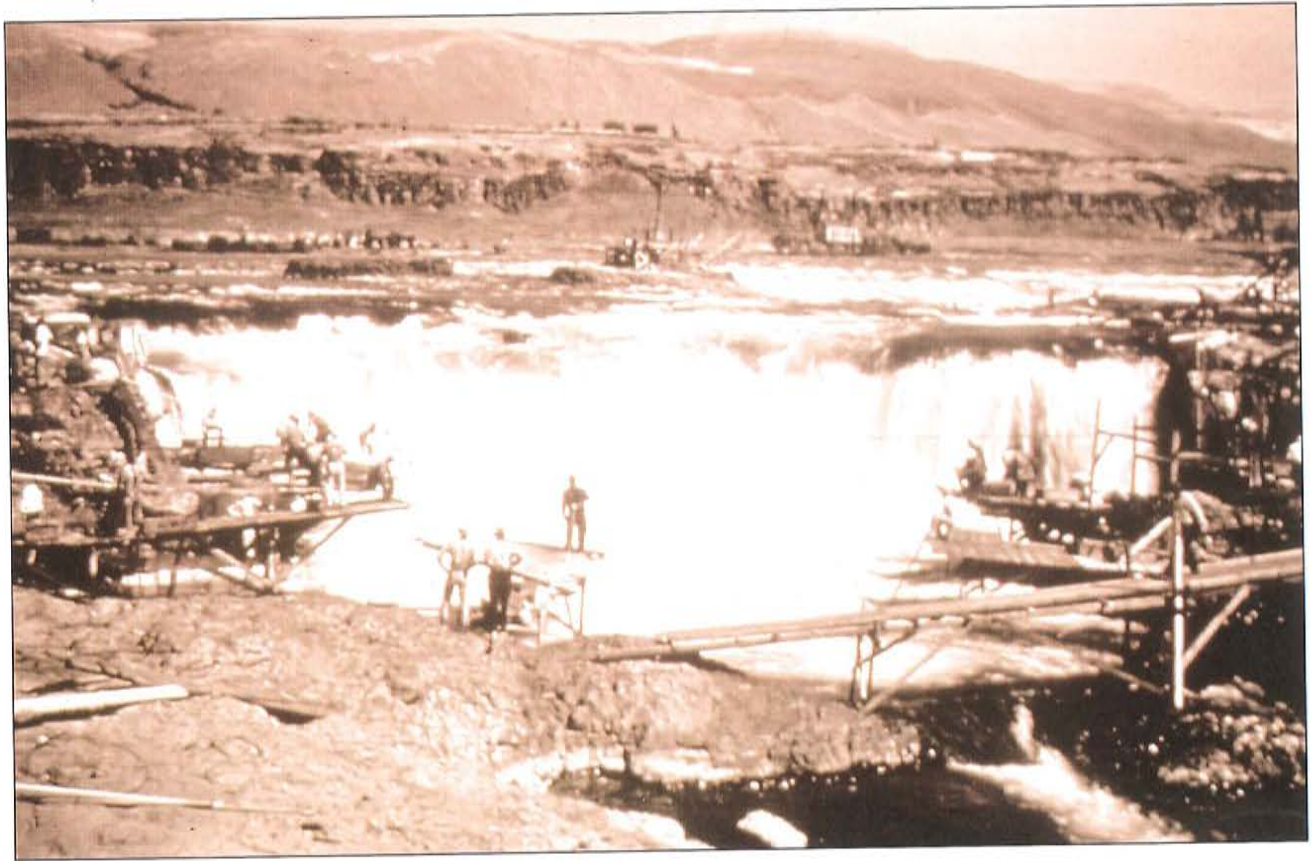
Dad would go fish at Celilo so he could buy farm supplies and implements. I remember one year he bought a plow selling the salmon he had caught.

—Ron Oatman (Nez Perce)

I can remember one time at Celilo when we pulled Dad's set net up out of the water and there was a large hole in the net. Dad would say that a sturgeon had probably passed through it. The skin of a sturgeon is just like sandpaper and could cut right through some of those nets.

—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce)

Figure 80. Three fishermen with salmon captured in a dip net at Celilo. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.



One of the most impressive things to me about Celilo was the lack of sounds and smells when you left the river. The lack of the smell of fish and the lack of the roar of the water—the silence—was very noticeable.

—Vaughan Bybee (Nez Perce)

Figure 81. Overall view of Celilo Falls. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

we should go over to Celilo on the weekend and make some extra money. So we went down there. His relatives had a couple of scaffolds and that was the first time I netted a salmon. It was a first-time experience and I just about fell in because the salmon would weigh from thirty to fifty pounds. We fished for about half a day and caught a number of salmon, and then we weighed our catch. They had a buyer right there where we could turn our salmon in for money, and that's what we did. At that time it was all commercial."

On April 27, 1945, the Indians and a colonel representing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers held a meeting at The Dalles, Oregon, to discuss the proposed construction of The Dalles Dam. Francis Seufert, who attended this meeting, recorded the following:

It was a hot day and it was soon apparent that many of the Indian fishermen from Celilo were present. The colonel was there in full uniform and also present were the old Indian chiefs from the reservation. The Indian chiefs were all old men, very dignified. Each of the old chiefs came forward, one at a time, shook the colonel's hand, and talked through an interpreter, giving the Indian's story of their dependence on Columbia River salmon, and the serious effect that the building of the dam at The Dalles would have on the Indian's



livelihood. The old chiefs made many references to the Treaty of 1855, the terms of the treaty, and the obligations of the U.S. government to uphold the sacredness of the treaty and not build The Dalles Dam. The elegance and dignity of the Indian chiefs in stating their case, their choice of words, the beautifully put phrases, excellent prose, their poetic way of using picturesque and yet descriptive speech was something that no one present would ever forget. The simplicity of the old chiefs' speech was a moving thing to hear. I was impressed with the respect the old chiefs were held in by the younger Indians. I had never seen anything like it before.

After all the old chiefs had spoken, a number of the old women also addressed the colonel, these old Indian women telling the Indian's side of the story of previous promises, and only receiving broken promises and excuses from the U.S. government. These old Indian women pleaded with the colonel not to let that history. . . repeat itself again. After the old chiefs and the old Indian women had all had their say, the good colonel expressed extreme sympathy for the Indians and wanted them to know that the Army Engineers would have nothing to do with the decision to build a dam at The Dalles, only Congress could do that.

It was a good sound to hear that water coming off the main river and dropping down several feet over the falls.

—Horace Axtell (Nez Perce)

Figure 82. Salmon were also caught in the narrow chutes of water with dip nets at Celilo. Photo courtesy of Army Corps of Engineers.

The main falls at Celilo were pretty big. I used to sit and watch those big chinook salmon try and climb those falls. I used to sit there and think to myself, "I hope he makes it." You could see those fish going up, and you could see them wiggling. They would make it almost to the top before they would fall back down. Then, all of a sudden, you would see another one come out of there and do the same thing. It was beautiful.

—Horace Axtell (Nez Perce)

Most of the rocks and falls at Celilo had names. Some of the more famous names were "Hobo Rock," "Chief Island," "Big Island," "Standing Island," "Albert's Island," "Downe's Channel," "Tumwater," "Whiskey Rock," "The Roping Place," "Rabbit Island," "Fivemile Rapids," "Eightmile Rapids," "Elvis Island," and "Salmon Beach."

—Julius Ellenwood (Nez Perce)

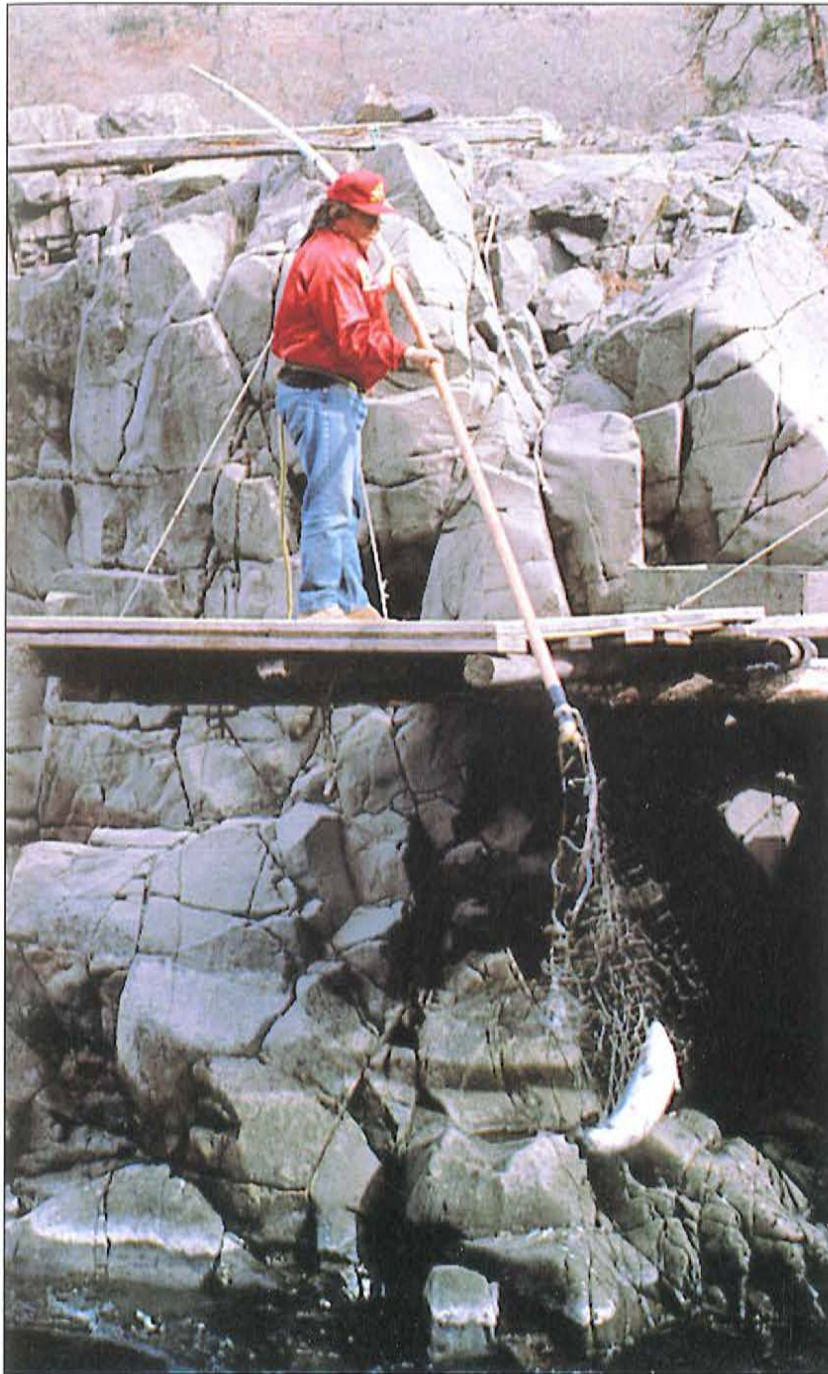
Figure 83. Cable cars were in use by the 1940s to transport fishermen from the mainland to the islands. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

As I left the meeting, I couldn't help feeling I had witnessed another bit of history in our government's dealing with the American Indian, and I was sure of one thing at the time: If local merchants saw a chance to make money through the building of a dam at The Dalles, then nothing as simple as an Indian treaty signed some 90 years before was going to stand in their way.

On March 10, 1957, Celilo was destroyed when the water level of the Columbia rose 110 feet with the opening of The Dalles Dam. The Dalles Dam was one and a half miles long with fourteen turbines and a lock for ships. From that time on, this ancient traditional fishing site ceased to exist. Ten years earlier, in 1947, Chief Thompson had testified against building the dam. He said, "I think I don't know how I would live if you would put up a dam which will flood my fishing places. How am I going to make my living afterward? It is the only food I am dependent on for my livelihood, and I am here to protect that."

As the people watched the water level rise, they felt devastated. It was a time of great sadness. Chief Tommy Thompson had previously sung a death song because he realized, along with thousands of others, that the loss of Celilo was an irreparable loss for Indian people. On the day that Celilo was destroyed, Chief Thompson was 102 years old and residing in a rest home. It was reported that when he was sleeping that day, he cried out to his wife, "Bring me some more blankets. I can feel the waters rising. They are covering me up. I am shivering with cold." Del White of the Nez Perce Tribe summarized what the loss of Celilo Falls meant when he said, "I think the elimination of Celilo Falls was probably one of the most tragic things that has ever happened to Indian people. A whole way of life came to an end. I'm glad that I still have memories of that place."





Ip Sus Noot V, a Nez Perce elder, has fished on the Columbia River since 1946 and remembers Celilo Falls well. His grandfather also fished at Celilo. "That's where I learned how to fish," he said. "We used dip nets on fourteen-foot poles and fished so close to the water we had to tie ropes around our waists to make sure we weren't swept away if we got dragged in. That water was swift, and the fish were bigger in those days."

I remember my father and relatives bringing back huge chinook from Celilo. I can remember the feeling of happiness that everyone had when they brought these fish home.

—Julia Davis (Nez Perce)

On the day that the Celilo salmon would arrive, the first thing my aunt or grandmother would do was to boil the salmon heads for my grandfather. That was his favorite part of the fish, and he considered the eyes to be a delicacy. He would also drink the broth that the salmon heads had been boiled in.

—Donna Powaukee (Nez Perce)

Those rocks at Celilo would soak up a lot of the heat from the sun during the day. At night when we fished we would lay on those rocks because they would stay warm for several hours after the sun went down.

—Julius Ellenwood (Nez Perce)

During many of the treaty negotiations on the Columbia River, people have tried to make the claim that the Nez Perce did not do much fishing at Celilo. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For many years the Nez Perce fished there. They had their own reserved sites, or they fished on the sites that were controlled by their relatives.

—Leroy Seth (Nez Perce)

Figure 84. Lone fisherman capturing a chinook salmon in a dip net. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

My first impression of Celilo was the smell. You could smell the fish at Celilo before you could see the actual falls. It was beautiful to watch the fisherman and the fish that were jumping.

—Mary Jane Miles (Nez Perce)

You could smell Celilo miles before you saw it. Because the wind always blows through that part of the country, it was an ideal place to dry fish.

—Vaughan Bybee (Nez Perce)

There was a dangerous section at Celilo where Dad and my cousin used to fish. It was an area that required a twenty-five to thirty-foot dip net. Most of the people who tried to fish that area would end up losing their poles after they had netted a salmon because they couldn't lift it up. A lot of the kids would lie in wait below this spot and retrieve the dipnets and the salmon as they would go by. In order to get the dipnet back, the kids would require a payment. They would either keep the salmon that was in the net as payment or something else. Everyone knew that if you lost your net, you would have to pay to get it back.

—Ron Oatman (Nez Perce)

Celilo has been gone nearly four decades, yet still reverberates in the heart of every Native American who ever fished or lived by it. If you are an Indian, you can still see all the characteristics of the waterfall. If you listen, you can still hear its roar. If you inhale, the fragrances of mist and fish and water come back again."

—Ted Strong (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission)

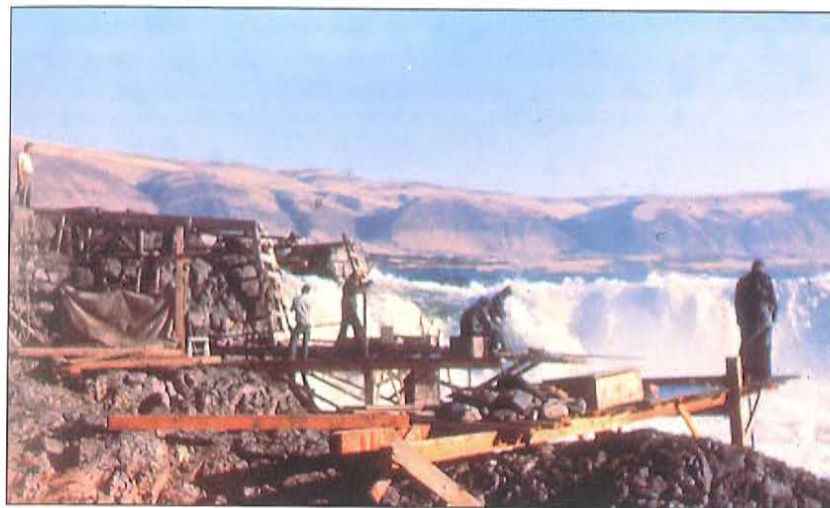
Figure 85. Scaffolds and platforms were built to extend out over the water at Celilo. Scaffolds and platforms were taken down, stored through the winter, and rebuilt each fishing season. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Ron Halfmoon also fished at Celilo in the 1940s and recalled the following story about his experiences there:

When I was in my teenage years we used to go down to Celilo and catch salmon. We lived with Chief Tommy Thompson, who was a friend of my mother's. We would usually go across on the cable car to Chief Island. You would sit on the floor of the car with your feet hanging out, and you would have to use your hands to pull yourself to the other side. The water was very fast and the scaffolds were about thirty inches above the water. We would use dip nets with sixteen-foot poles to catch salmon that sometimes weighed forty or fifty pounds. The net was thrown into the water and you would push downward, close to the bottom of the channel, and you would make a sweep going with the current. The fish coming up would enter the net, and the force of the fish moving about in that current would cause the net to close.

One day I was fishing with some of my relatives and one of them felt something really big and heavy in the net. Whatever it was was so big that he couldn't lift the net up, so he hollered for some help. My two cousins ran over to help, but even with three of them they couldn't lift the net out, so pretty soon two others joined in to help, and they all jumped on the scaffolding to help lift the net up, but the combined weight of all five of them on the scaffolding was too much and it broke, spilling them into the water. Only one of the boys was tied off, and it was only due to the strength and agility of their youth that the other boys weren't drowned. The object in the net was a large sturgeon, and it was lost along with the net, but the boys who fell in the water were able to make it to shore without being hurt.





Historical Descriptions

Some of the earliest descriptions of Celilo Falls come from the 1805 journals of Lewis and Clark and from the accounts of other explorers in the 1820s and 1830s. Below is the first description of the falls from Lewis and Clark:

We proceeded on passed the mouth of this river [Des Chutes river] at which place it appears to discharge 1/4 as much water as runs down the Columbia, at two miles below this River passed Eight Lodges on the Lower point of the Rock Island below this Island on the main Stard. Shore is 16 Lodges of natives, here we landed a few minits to Smoke, the lower point of one Island opposit which heads in the mouth of the river which I did not observe untill after passing these lodges about 1/2 mile lower passed 6 more Lodges on the Same Side and 6 miles below the upper mouth of the great falls, opposit on the Stard. Side is 17 Lodges of the natives we landed and walked down accompanied by an old man to view the falls, and the best rout for to make a portage which we Soon discovered was much nearest on the Stard. Side , and the distance 1200 yards one third of the way on a rock, about 200 yards over a loose Sand collected in a hollar blown by the winds from the bottoms below which was disagreeable to pass, as it was steep and loose. at the lower part of those rapids we arrived at 5 Lodges of natives drying and preparing fish for market, we returned droped down to the head of the rapids and took every article except the Canoes across the portage where I had formed a camp on an ellegable Situation for the protection of our Stores from theft, which we were more fearfull of, than their arrows. we despatched two men to examine the river on the opposit Side, and they reported that the canoes could be taken down a narrow Chanel on the

I can remember the excitement around our home when my father-in-law, Corbett Lawyer, would come back from Celilo with the back of his pickup truck full of salmon packed in layers of ice. As a youngster it was my job to clean and scale them before they were canned.

—Doug Nash (Nez Perce)

One time I was fishing for salmon at Celilo at a place called Hobo Rock. It was named that because it was not a reserved fishing spot and anyone could fish there. One time I was a little careless and didn't tie myself off very well. On my first dip I netted three salmon and the weight of them pulled me right into the water. Fortunately, I was able to make it to the shallow water and the beach below the rapids without drowning.

—Richard Powaukee (Nez Perce)

Dad would tell the story of the time he was at Celilo and having an altercation with some members of another tribe. There was a dispute about who should be fishing at this particular location. When he was able to resume fishing, he tied himself off and turned his back on the others. It wasn't long before he slipped and fell in. He hung on the pole but was unable to grab onto the edge of the scaffold. He finally pulled himself up with the rope and as soon as he did the rope gave way. When he went over to investigate, he could see where someone had untied the knot. He was very lucky he didn't drown. He almost passed out because the rope had tightened against his waist and he barely got it off before he fell unconscious.

—Ron Oatman (Nez Perce)

Figure 86. In the last few years at Celilo it was mandatory for fishermen to tie themselves to the rocks with a safety rope in case they fell into the water. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Dad told me about an old man at Celilo whose Indian name was Water Ouzel. The water ouzel is a small water bird also known as a dipper who swims under the water in search of food. This particular fisherman caught salmon in a dip net at a place where there was hardly any room to pull out a salmon, and he wouldn't tie himself off with a safety rope. When he would catch a large salmon, it would pull him in the river and away he would go down the river through the white water. The other fishermen who would be watching would say, "Keep watching. Pretty soon he will pop up out of the water. Pretty soon." Sure enough he would come up and swim to shore with the salmon and his net in tow. He did this routinely, even when he was an old man.
—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce)

I first started fishing at Celilo when I was ten years old, and I fished on my Uncle Joe's scaffolding. To get to his scaffolding I would have to ride the cable car across the river. The set net that we used weighed more than I did at that time. The poles in the net were four or five inches in diameter and about twenty feet long. All in all the net probably weighed about a hundred pounds, and I probably only weighed sixty pounds. So I would get the net and throw it off the scaffolding, and it would slide down and lock on a board. I was able to throw the net out and pull it back in, but if a salmon got in it, I couldn't pull it out. I was in trouble. When that happened I would have to call for help and have someone help me pull it out.
—Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce)

Figure 87. Large set nets were also used at Celilo to catch chinook salmon. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.



opposit Side after a Short portage at the head of the falls, at which place the Indians take over their Canoes. Indians assisted us over the portage with our heavy articles on their horses. The waters are divided into Several narrow chanel which pass through a hard black rock forming Islands of rocks at this Stage of the water, on those Islands of rock as well as at and about their Lodges I observe great numbers of Stacks of pounded Salmon neatly preserved in the following manner, i.e. after being sufficiently Dried it is pounded between two Stones fine, and put into speses of basket neatly made of grass and rushes better than two feet long and one foot Diameter, which basket is lined with the Skin of Salmon Stretched and dried for the purpose, in this it is pressed down as hard as it is possible, when full they Secure the open part with the fish Skins across which they fasten through the loops of the basket that part very securely, and then on a Dry Situation they Set those baskets the corded part up, their common custome is to Set 7 as close as they can Stand and 5 on the top of them, and secure them with mats which is raped around them and made fast with cords and covered also with mats, those 12 baskets of from 90 to 100 lbs. each form a Stack, thus preserved those fish may be kept Sound and sweet Several years, as those people inform me, Great quantities as they inform us are sold to the white people who visit the mouth of this river as well as to the nativs below.

I with the greater part of the men crossed in the canoes to opposit side above the falls and hauled them across the portage of 457 yards which is on the Lard. Side and certainly the best side to pass the canoes, I then decended through a narrow chanel of about 150 yards forming a kind of half circle in its course of a mile to a pitch of 8 feet in which the chanel is divided by 2 large rocks, at this place we were obliged to let

the Canoes down by strong ropes of Elk Skin which we had for the purpose, one Canoe in passing this place got loose by the cords breaking, and was caught by the Indians below. I accomplished this necessary business and landed Safe with all the canoes at our camp below the Falls by 3 oClock P.M. nearly covered with flees which were so thick amongst the Straw and fish Skins at the upper part of the portage at which place the nativs had been Camped not long since; that every man of the party was obliged to strip naked dureing the time of takeing over the canoes, that they might have an oppertunity of brushing the flees off their legs and bodies.

Clark also recorded a First Fish Ceremony at Celilo on April 19, 1806. "There was great joy with the natives last night in consequence of the arrival of the Salmon," he reported. "One of those fish was caught; this was the harbinger of good news to them. They informed us that those fish would arrive in great quantities in the course of about 5 days. This fish was dressed and being divided into small pieces was given to each child in the village. This custom is founded on superstitious opinion that it will hasten the arrival of the Salmon."

In July of 1811 David Thompson came through Celilo in his canoe, and he likened the river to a monster "raging and hissing, as if alive." Another description of Celilo Falls comes from the diary of Wilson Price Hunt in the 1830s. Hunt was the leader of the Astor expedition to Oregon:

On the 31st we passed Celilo Falls that we had viewed in the distance the day before. I could not see the largest of them which was on the south bank. The river course is dammed by rocks over which the water rushes violently through several channels. A village called Ouaioumpoum is



I can still recall as a youngster of four or five going to Celilo with my father and uncles. There I always knew that something special was taking place and never imagined that my eyes would have to look that in for remembrance for the times that we would know today when it is gone and doesn't exist anymore. I am honored that I have that remembrance of watching my elders fish from those platforms. It gave me a feeling and assured me that all Indian people honored the Salmon in the same way. They respected Mother Earth and the strength of those great rivers. They not only respected the life that they gave but also respected the life that they could take as well.

—Levi Holt (Nez Perce)

Figure 88. Lone fisherman on rocks near Celilo. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Celilo was one continuous, deafening roar. It had a sound and smell all its own. There were lots of holes in the rocks that were formed by the wave action, and many times eels would become trapped in these holes and die and contribute to the overall smell.

—Julius Ellenwood (Nez Perce)

I fished Celilo as a boy during the last two years of its existence. I can remember that my thoughts about seeing Celilo for the first time as a boy were the same thoughts I had when I saw Niagara Falls for the first time as an adult. Both places were awe inspiring, and it is difficult to put into words how I felt about those places.

—Del White (Nez Perce)

Figure 89. The Columbia River near Celilo Falls became narrow and very swift in several places. Photo courtesy of Bonneville Power Administration.

situated on the north river bank at that spot where the Falls begin. The Indians give a special name to each village that has more than one lodge in it, and they love to talk about their villages to strangers. At an early hour we reached the village of Wishram. It is at the entrance to a long gorge through which the river has carved a channel of from 200 to 240 feet wide and several miles long. This is the great fishing ground of the Columbia. It looks like one of the seaport villages on the east coast of the United States. On both sides of the river we saw large platforms made of carefully woven stakes. On these the Indians dry their fish. The ground around them is covered with bones and heads of fish. In the spring when the river waters are high, the salmon arrive in schools so large that the Indians can catch them in purse nets attached to the ends of poles. To accomplish this they stand on the edges of those rocks that extend farthest in to the river.

John Kirk Townsend, an ornithologist who greatly contributed to our knowledge of the plants and animals of the northwest, made the following entry in his journal in 1834: “This afternoon we reached The Dalles. The entire water of the river here flows through channels of about fifteen feet in width, and between high, perpendicular rocks;





Figure 90. Fishing locations at Celilo were controlled by families and passed down from father to son. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

there are several of these channels at distances of from half a mile to a mile apart, and the water foams and boils through them like an enormous cauldron.”

Joe Meek, a famous northwest mountain man, also described Celilo Falls: “Great scaffoldings were erected every year at the narrows of the Columbia, known as The Dalles, where, as the salmon passed up the river in the spring, in incredible numbers, they were caught and dried. After drying, the fish were then pounded fine between two stones, pressed tightly into packages or bales of about a hundred pounds, covered with matting, and corded up for transportation. The bales were then placed in storehouses built to receive them, where they awaited customers.”

In his autobiography, Daniel Lee, a Methodist missionary in the Dalles area in the 1840s, gives this description of the Columbia River at The Dalles:

Two miles below the Large Dalles . . . is a dike extending from the south shore three-fourths across, which is bare in low water, turning the current into a deep bay on the north side; but the high water pours over it, and forms a dangerous rapid. Reaching the foot of the Dalles, our attention is arrested by several rocky islands that for ages have borne unmoved the shock of the mighty billows which at an earlier period severed them from their neighboring rocks. One of these is a depot for the bodies of the dead. . . . at the Dalles, the whole volume of the river, half a mile wide, rushes through a deep narrow channel, which the action of the water has formed in the course of ages, through an extended tract of the hardest basalt. . . . A mile brings us to the head of the chasm, which, diminishing in breadth to this point, is here

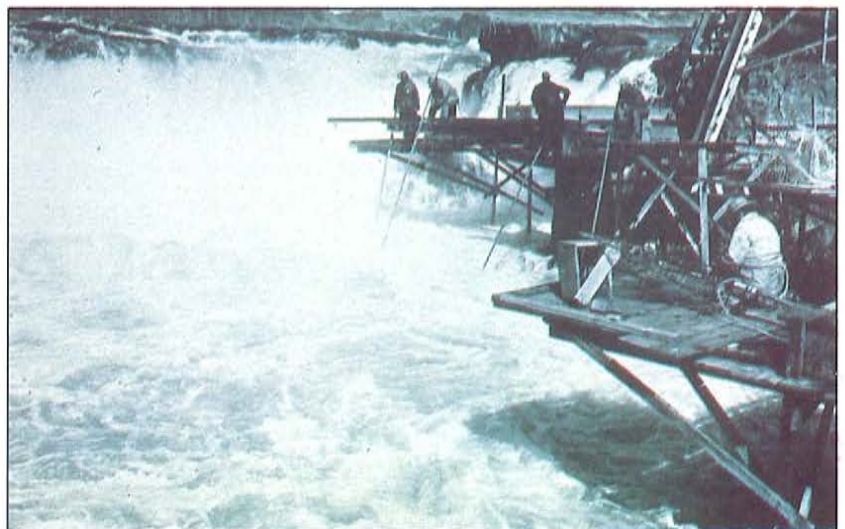
Figure 91. Many fishing areas at Celilo were characterized by swift white water. Photo courtesy of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

only from thirty to fifty yards broad. . . . More than one thousand Indians, of all ages, pass from May to September on these rocks. . . .

The next object to be noticed is the Small Dalles, two miles further up. Here the river passes through a very deep and narrow cut in the basaltic rock, which rises some twenty or thirty feet above its surface. The water pours through this channel with great velocity, except at high water, when it spreads out over the sands to the eastward. . . . Three miles further we arrive at the Shoots. They are, on the south side, close to the shore, and less than fifty yards over, to a point of rocks widening into an extensive bed, and extending thence across the river to the bank on the north side. This rocky bed, in low water, is mostly dry, but cut here and there with small streams which have opened for themselves a way on its surface. The shoot is nearly perpendicular and from fifteen to twenty feet tall Here is an excellent salmon fishery, and from two hundred to three hundred Indians spend one third of the year at these Shoots.

In the 1860s salmon packer Francis Seufert described the river near The Dalles this way:

Through and down Fivemile Rapids the river when high or in flood was wild, with whirlpools as much as twenty feet across constantly to be seen. I have seen huge bridge timbers used in railroad trestles come floating down the river, enter Fivemile Rapids, and be sucked into one of those whirlpools. The whirlpools would stand the timber on end, and then suck it down and out of sight. Then these huge whirlpools would break and a huge boil would rise from the center of the pool



and the water would boil up and above the flooding river. Sometimes the boiling river was five or more feet higher than the surrounding water. Huge back eddies would form along the shore, and would actually rush upstream. The current must have been rushing downstream at least twenty miles an hour.

Coyote Breaks the Fish Dam At Celilo

Once Coyote was walking up the river on a hot day and decided to cool himself in the water. He swam down the swift river until he came to the waterfall where the Wasco people lived. Five maidens had dwelt there from ancient times. This was the place where the great dam kept the fish from going up the river.

While he was looking at the great waterfall, Coyote saw a Maiden. Quickly he went back upstream a ways and said, "I am going to look like a little baby, floating down the river on a raft in a cradle board, all laced up." As Coyote was drifting down the river, he cried, "Aaaaa, aaaaa." The Maidens, hearing this, quickly swam over, thinking that a baby might be drowning.

The eldest Maiden caught it first and said, "Oh, what a cute baby."

But the youngest maiden said, "That is no baby. That is Coyote."

The others answered, "Stop saying that. You will hurt the baby's feelings."

Coyote put out his bottom lip as if he were about to cry.

The Maidens took the baby home and cared for it and fed it. He grew very fast. When he was crawling around one day, he spilled some water on purpose. "Oh, Mothers," he said, "Will you get me some more water?"

The youngest sister said, "Why don't you make him go and get it himself? The river is nearby." So the Maidens told Coyote to get the water himself.

He began to crawl toward the river, but when he was out of sight, he jumped up and began to run. The oldest sister turned around and said, "He is out of sight already. He certainly can move fast."


"That is because he is Coyote," the youngest said.

When Coyote reached the river, he swam to the fish dam and tore it down, pulling out the stones so that all the water rushed free. Then he crawled up on the rocks and shouted gleefully, "Mothers, your fish dam has been broken!"

The sisters ran down and saw that it was true. The youngest Maiden just said, "I told you he was Coyote."

Coyote said, "You have kept all the people from having salmon for a long time by stopping them from going upstream. Now the people will be happy because they will get salmon. The salmon will now be able to go upriver and spawn."

This is how Celilo Falls came to be, where the Wasco people are today. As a result of Coyote tearing down the fish dam, salmon are now able to come up river to spawn on the upper reaches of the Great Columbia River and its tributaries.

—Allen Slickpoo Sr. (Nez Perce) 

My dad told me a humorous story about an old man at Celilo who had fallen in the water. He was carried a long ways and was swept under water several times. Many feared that he was going to drown. Someone was finally able to help drag him in with the aid of a dip net. He appeared to be unconscious and several people kept asking him how he was doing and whether or not he was all right. Someone asked him if he needed anything and with a great effort the man finally replied, "Water, I need water." Everyone laughed. We were glad the man was all right and still able to have a sense of humor.

—Wilfred Scott (Nez Perce)

The Maiden and the Salmon

A well-behaved maiden lived near the river. Salmon decided he wanted her for his wife. He traveled up the river. The maiden lived in the young woman's hut, and Salmon knew that she was there. It happened that everybody from the young women's hut had gone to the main lodge to eat, and the maiden was left alone. Salmon came to her there.

A short distance away the wolves were tending a fire and taking sweat baths, and from there they saw him. "Behold," the wolves said, "who comes to visit at the young women's hut? It is a strange man."

Salmon had a very red head-adornment of feathers, and when he walked to the door of the hut, his footsteps squeaked. The maiden heard him from inside. Then she saw him stick his feet inside. "It is a man," the maiden said to herself. Salmon dangled his legs back and forth for a short time, but he did not come in.

"Well," said the maiden, "It seems to be that he comes to me." She smelled the sweet fragrance of his love-perfume.

Salmon dangled his feet within for a short time and then withdrew and started to walk away.

"Who may he be? I am going to peep at him." She laid aside those things which she had been working on and stood up. She climbed up the ladder and stuck her head far out. She watched him going away. "Who may he be?" She looked around. She saw the wolves by the fire looking at her. She became very much abashed. "I must go with him now." She wrapped up her various possessions and followed him.

The wolves had recognized him by this time. "It is Salmon." "The maiden is following him." But now the wolves had become angry because they wanted the maiden for their own wife.

Somewhere nearby Salmon and the maiden stayed for a few days at one of the lodges. From there Salmon announced to the people, "Soon, I will take her down the river." Meanwhile, the well-behaved maiden's mother prepared her for their departure. Then the morning came that they had set for their departure. The wolves ran about distractedly. "We are angry," they told the people.

They went to the rattlesnake, "Help us, grandfather. Salmon is taking her away. Bite him so that he will die."

"No, he is my nephew," he replied to the wolves. "Why should I do that to my nephew?"

They went to the spider, "Grandfather, we wish that you would go and kill Salmon. He is about to take our maiden away."

"I could not do that," replied the spider. "Salmon is my nephew. How could I be so treacherous to a friend?"

From there the wolves went to the stubby, brown rattlesnake. "We are angry," they said to him. "Help us kill Salmon."

"But he is a friend dear to me," replied the stubby rattlesnake. "He is my nephew."

Nevertheless, the wolves persisted. "We will reward you handsomely." At last they persuaded him. The wolves instructed him, "You will hide yourself where the bow of the canoe is, and when Salmon steps in, you will bite him.

The wolves began to load the maiden's things in the canoe while Salmon just stood apart watching them. He had already begun to fear for himself because he knew that the wolves strongly disapproved of his carrying the maiden away. Salmon was somewhat afraid to approach the canoe. He said to the maiden, "I fear for myself. If they kill me, they may pound me to a pulp. Nevertheless, you must throw my body into the water. Though they may mix my flesh with sand, find even a small piece of my body and throw that into the water."

When the wolves had finished loading, the maiden got into the canoe. Salmon, too, started to get aboard. He stepped exactly under the bow, and there was a sharp click of teeth. The stubby rattlesnake had bitten him. Salmon writhed in mortal agony and fell dead. The wolves pounded him to a pulp with stones and ground him underfoot. They splashed some of his blood into the water, and that was the reason Salmon got his life back.

Then the wolves took the woman. But they were afraid. They said to each other, "We must take her all the way to the headwaters, where Salmon can never arrive." The stubby rattlesnake became frightened too, and he fled to the most dangerous and inaccessible bluffs along the river. The wolves took the maiden to the headwaters where the water is very, very clear, and where no spawning fish could arrive.

At the bluff the stubby rattlesnake sang with bravado, "With this one single tooth, I caused the salmon to die." The stubby rattlesnake sang constantly in bravado while he held his hand on the tooth. But he was afraid. He knew that without fail Salmon would come seeking revenge.

After Salmon came back to life, he went up the river seeking revenge. He would swim along for awhile; then he would go ashore and walk along up the valley. While he was thus walking he saw a lodge with smoke wafting from it. He entered noiselessly. There sat an old man spinning. It was Spider. Salmon said to him, "Why are you spinning, Old Man?"

"Oh, just to sew my clothes," Spider replied. But Salmon knew well enough what Spider was doing. He was making a fishnet. The old man had told him this, because from the very beginning he had identified him, by smell, as Salmon.

Salmon went outside and said to all the other salmon, "You must swim past here, all of you salmon, and stop for this old man."

Salmon continued on up the river. Again, he saw a lodge. He entered noiselessly to find a lively old man spinning away. It was Coyote. This spirited old man whistled as he worked. His nose must have been stopped-up not to have smelled Salmon. Then Salmon said to him, "Old man, why do you spin?"

Coyote replied, "Oh, you have been philandering around, devoting your time to women! I'm going to ravage the salmon with my net."

"Oh, is that so?" replied Salmon. "So be it that you do this." With this Salmon went outside and said to all the salmon people, "Do not swim past here, for this old man will catch you in a net."

From there, Salmon traveled far upstream. There, upstream, he stepped on Meadowlark and accidentally broke her leg. Salmon said, "Aunt, tell me where my wife is. If you tell me, I will make a leg of brushwood for you."

"Okay," said Meadowlark, "It is just that they live very far upstream and they are always afraid. They are never off guard. The stubby Rattlesnake is also afraid. He fears you. Even though he is there where the bluffs are very inaccessible, he is still frightened. He always sings with bravado about you."

"Thank you, Aunt. You have informed me well," Salmon said to her. Thereupon he made her a leg of brushwood. He was about to leave her when she gave him some flint. "You will deal with Rattlesnake with this. He fears you greatly."

Salmon left Meadowlark and continued on his way upstream. He came near the Rattlesnake's hiding place by the bluffs. Salmon said, "Somewhere Rattlesnake is hiding." Then Salmon invoked his powers. He talked to himself. "A cloud shall quickly extend across the sky toward the headwaters." A cloud appeared there. He again talked to himself and invoked his powers. Now the wind blew, and it rained very hard. The wind drove the rain into the crevices, swept it among the rocks, and made it muddy inside.

The poor stubby rattlesnake, whose home was in a cave, just lay in the water. The water poured in. Suddenly, the rain stopped and the sun started to shine. The stubby rattlesnake hesitantly approached the entrance to his cave and looked outside. "Oh, so good!" He was intensely cold, and he thought, "I wish that I could warm myself in the sun." He became stiff from the cold.

Salmon looked for him carefully. "When will he come out?" Salmon wondered. "It was right here, Meadowlark told me, that he is in hiding."

"At last," the stubby rattlesnake thought, "I'm going to curl up in the sunshine outside." He had a rock in front in the sun. He went out slowly and curled up. He looked all about. "Where could Salmon come from?" he kept asking himself, but he was still afraid. In a little while he went back inside, only to get very cold again. "I'm going outside again," he decided.

By now Salmon had seen him from above. The stubby rattlesnake was basking comfortably in the sun. Salmon pounded and shattered the flint and let it fall on the rattlesnake. The falling fragments of flint cut rattlesnake, and he writhed in agony.

Rattlesnake pleaded, "Nephew, if you let me go I will give you my teeth. I will give you the teeth that I bit you with. You can use them later to bite the wolves. Let me remain a person." Then the rattlesnake went on to inform him, "The wolves are very far upstream, at the headwaters where not even you have ever traveled. They are very much frightened—so afraid that they do not even go to drink. A woman carries water for them. They are afraid. I do not know how you can avenge yourself."

"Okay," Salmon said. "I am going to spare you." Then Salmon fitted together all the pieces into which the stubby rattlesnake had been cut, and in turn Salmon accepted the set of teeth. Salmon left rattlesnake and traveled far upstream, because it was there, at the far distant headwaters, where the wolves were.

He arrived. "This is where they are." But the water was very clear, and it was a shallow, pebbled beach where hiding oneself would be impossible. He lay there in the water and treaded water as the woman began to dip the water. Salmon said to her, "Oh! You are pulling my hair, you friend of the wolves."

She almost plunged in because she was so glad to see him. "No, do not plunge in." Salmon told her, "I am just seeking revenge."

The woman said, "The wolves will be very difficult to deal with. They fear for themselves and they are always vigilant. Nor do they ever come here to this water."

"Then hide me," Salmon told her. She hid him in a good place that would be almost impossible to discover.

Then Salmon instructed her, "Now bandage your foot, for you must tell them, 'I was gathering firewood, and I struck my foot. I hurt myself.'" The eldest wolf would be the first to arrive, and then one by one the others would arrive until all five had come from the hut, the youngest arriving last.

The woman observed, "I am afraid that we shall be thwarted by the youngest one. He is to be feared. He has a keen sense of smell and keen vision." But now she bandaged her foot and lay down inside in the lodge. She stayed there. After awhile she heard one arrive.

The eldest wolf came right in and went straight to the water. Lo! There was none. The wife said to him, "There is no water. Soon after you went out this morning, I hurt myself while wood-gathering. Why are you so afraid? Where could he come from? Go get yourself a drink."

The wolf went out and went toward the water. He began to stare at it, to stare at the river. He would take a step forward and then stare again at the water. Slowly, he approached the water. He would almost thrust his head down to the water, then he would shy away and throw his head back in fright. He would look into the water, but he couldn't see anything.

At the lodge, the woman unwrapped her foot and peeped at him from within. At last, she saw the Wolf thrust his head forward into the water and drink. He suddenly threw himself backwards because Salmon had bitten him on the mouth with the stubby rattlesnake's teeth. The eldest wolf just writhed in mortal agony and suddenly fell dead.

The woman ran over and quickly hid his body. Then she hid Salmon again and obliterated all the footprints. She bandaged her foot and lay down again.

Then she heard another wolf approaching. He came in. "Where is the water?"

"There is none. This morning I hurt myself, and I was not able to go after water," the woman replied.

"Where is the other one?" the wolf asked.

"He is not here," she replied.

"But there are footprints of his coming!" insisted the wolf.

"Nevertheless, he has not arrived. Why are you so afraid? Go get a drink." Now the wolf went along in fear and began to stare at the water even from afar. He approached slowly. At last he thrust his head into the water. Soon he fell backwards, writhing in agony, and fell dead.

As she had done before, the woman dragged the body away, then hid Salmon, and obliterated the tracks. In the same manner as before, she bandaged her foot and lay down. Now the third wolf arrived. They killed him as they had the other two. They did the same to the fourth wolf.



Figure 92. Sam Watters.

Then the woman said to Salmon, "The youngest wolf is to be feared. There is no way to kill him. He will escape us. He is too powerful." But she confined herself again. Presently she heard him approach.

The youngest wolf walked in noiselessly. "Where is the water? Where is the water?"

"There is none. This morning I hurt myself and was unable to fetch water," the woman replied.

"Where are the others?"

"They are not here yet."

"But their footprints are everywhere" the wolf insisted.

"They are not here yet," said the woman.

Now the Wolf went out. Right from the first he began to stare ahead. He stared intently as he advanced. He scrutinized everything as he approached. He came to the water. He stared at it. He gazed intently at it. Then he even bent his head down. But at once he threw back his head and he leaped away, backwards.

The woman saw him from the lodge. "He has discovered Salmon." The woman now ran forward and plunged into the water. And there they were, the two of them, suddenly treading water. (She had become a salmon.)

And now the youngest wolf ran away, yelping as he sped along.

—Sam Watters (Nez Perce) 