

## Confluence

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All that came to an end on March 10, 1957, when the US Army Corps of Engineers completed the Dalles Dam, blocking the course of the river, inundating the falls and drowning the settlement of Celilo. Congressional hearings had concluded that the dam was needed to generate electricity and wouldn't violate tribal treaty rights.

In practice, the dam ruined the salmon runs while destroying tribal economies.

It was the end of a whole way of life, Minthorn says. "It decimated the salmon until action was taken by the government to restore the runs."

To make sure the history is never forgotten and to honor the legacy of the tribes, the Confluence Project has chosen Celilo to host a large public art installation. Artist Maya Lin has designed "Celilo Arc," a curved walkway that will overlook the Columbia at the site of the falls, where the fishing platforms used to be.

Started in 2002, the Confluence Project brings together the history, ecology and culture of the Columbia River through art

Land Bridge, which links Fort Vancouver to the banks of the Columbia, and seven story circles at Sacajawea Park, where the Snake River meets the Columbia. Understanding the past may make us better stewards of the environment for the future.

Knowing what your ancestors contributed to the story of our world is crucial because it tells you who you are. Yet it comes with a cost. When he learned about all those broken treaties, land thefts and destroyed lives, Minthorn became overwhelmed with grief and anger.

"I was very angry. It takes you a long time to get over that as a young man," he says.

Nevertheless, Minthorn went on to serve six years in the US Marine Corps. He also earned an urban and regional planning degree and lived in the Bay area with his family for a decade where he was active in civil rights protests, before returning to the Umatilla Indian Reservation in 1973.

Before long, he was elected to leadership roles, serving as general chairman for Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and later as chairman of the



PHOTO BY HELEN SILVUS

Antone Minthorn and Colin Fogarty discuss the history of Northwest tribes at Celilo Park where the Celilo Arc will be installed.

a tributary of the Snake River. After catching several large salmon, he realized one of the fish was leaking eggs. They stopped immediately, and he told the boys.

"We should not be doing that. The salmon are spawning so this is the wrong time to fish."

At Celilo, Confluence will invest \$8.2 million to install "Celilo Arc," and to restore and redesign the land, improve facilities at the site, and promote access to tribal treaty fishing. The project is scheduled for completion in 2016.

As for the salmon, Minthorn hopes restoration efforts will restore their populations. Fish ladders and spillways at dams have helped more fish survive their arduous journey, and improving the habitat of streams and estuaries also helps. And some small dams have been removed.

Maybe someday, we'll be ready to let the larger hydroelectric dams go too.

"The falls may one day come back," Minthorn says. "Breaching the dams is not off the table."

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installations that tell visitors the story of the land and its people.

"Even today the Native people's perspective is often left out of our family story," said Colin Fogarty director of the Confluence project. "People don't know about Celilo Falls."

Minthorn, chair of the Confluence Project's board of directors, has helped guide its vision from the start.

tribes' board of trustees. He helped the tribes push for salmon restoration, while struggling to create a sustainable economy for Native peoples.

The introduction of tribal casinos and gaming has helped, he says.

"We are always looking for ways to sustain our tribal economy, because it's always changing."

Sustainability has always been part of



PHOTO CREDIT U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Tribal fishermen continued the tradition of catching salmon from platforms next to Celilo Falls during the 1950s.

"I was thinking about justice", Minthorn says. "Can art be part of justice? Yes it can.

"We need to recognize this area, not just for the general public, but also for our own people. Indian children don't know about this history and they need to."

Lin collaborated with Pacific Northwest tribes, civic groups and other artists to create the 438-mile-long art project, along the route of the Lewis and Clark expedition from Clarkston, Washington, to Cape Disappointment, where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean.

Other artworks include the Vancouver

tribal ways of living.

"The Celilo Falls Fishery was managed by the native fishermen when the salmon were running, and they would stop at certain times to let fish pass upriver to spawning grounds," Minthorn says.

"When the salmon runs were decimated in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, in the 1970s, the Umatilla Tribes closed the fisheries. Today, they are still rebuilding those salmon runs but from time to time salmon fishing is allowed."

One day, when Minthorn took his young son and another boy fishing on the Lostine,

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

### PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS & MEMORIES

The Oregon Black Pioneers are currently planning their next exhibit, **A Community On The Move**, opening at the Oregon Historical Society in February 2015. The exhibit will focus on the experiences of African Americans from WWII until the early 1960s.

- Did you work at the Kaiser shipyards?
- Do you remember the Albina community of the 1940s and 50s?
- Did you live in Vanport?
- Did you experience the flood?
- Were you or your family displaced by urban renewal plans during this period?
- Were you involved in city planning efforts?

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

If you have photographs, artifacts or memories to share, please contact us before July 31. Gwen Carr, [gweccar@comcast.net](mailto:gweccar@comcast.net) or 503-949-5142.

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BLACK HISTORY ALIVE!**

**OREGON BLACK  
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