

Celilo's future on the drafting board

by Marsha Shewczyk

"There was consensus and positive feelings from all three tribes" involved in the Wyam meeting held in Yakima on January 31 according to Uren Leonard, Warm Springs technical assistant. This was the latest of many meetings concerning Celilo since the establishment of the Wyam board in May of 1976. The purpose of the meetings is to clarify the responsibilities the three tribes, Yakima, Umatilla, and Warm Springs have towards Celilo.

On the agenda at this particular meeting was the examination of the Appropriations Acts designating Celilo as a three-tribe land holding. The BIA has upheld its side of the agreements as defined in the acts and it was resolved that the future of Celilo is in the hands of the tribes.

Prior to the Yakima meeting technical assistants from each of the tribes met in Warm Springs in an attempt to further identify the problems existing at Celilo and to try to formulate a plan of action to present to the board. Dale Hile from Umatilla, Carol Olden, technical assistant from Yakima and Leonard from Warm Springs met with Shirley Inman, executive director of the Wyam Board, to compose a draft. They identified the problems at Celilo as: substandard housing, maintenance, roads, the longhouse, no fire-safety codes, heating, no facilities for HeadStart or Day Care, no cultural education available, no recreational activities, no adult education and health and social problems. Celilo does have an Indian Health contract which began August 1, 1979 to help identify some of the health problems in the Celilo community. The technical assistants are concerned with what needs to be done immediately and in the future. It is no small matter to rebuild a community; economic, social, and cultural aspects must be considered.

34.5 acres allotted for Yakima, Umatilla and Warm Springs tribal members.

The history of the tribes is going to play the most important part in unifying the three tribes for this enterprise at Celilo. All three tribes were originally Columbia River tribes. The Yakima, Umatilla and Warm Springs people all accepted placement on reservations as part of the 1855 treaties. However, the tribes retained ties with The Dalles area and Celilo because of its being native soil and because it remained the source of salmon fishing which provided an income. It was also a part of the traditional way of life. Celilo Falls was the place, where for thousands of years, Indian fishermen speared and netted salmon during the spring and fall runs.

In 1947 when plans for The Dalles Dam were being made Celilo Village was established by an act of Congress. The Appropriations act reads, "in the name of the United States in trust 34.5 acres of land at Celilo Falls, Oregon, for the use of the Yakima...Umatilla and Warm Springs (tribes)." The following year an act was passed granting \$125,000 for "construction, repair or rehabilitation of buildings and utilities at Celilo Falls, Oregon." And then in 1954 another appropriations act to "compensate Indians for their loss" was enacted. \$8.25 million went to the Warm Springs and Umatilla tribes with compensation later being made to the Yakimas. But in the end, even though monetary indemnity was made, much heritage was lost with the flooding of Celilo.

What's to be done?

Celilo is the reason the Wyam Board was created: what is to be done with that 34.5 acres of land which is the responsibility of three tribes? The board was appointed "to protect and maintain the rights of Celilo and of the three tribes, to establish and enforce rules and regulations." The goals of the board are, "to coordinate the planning and implementation of program development for the benefit of Celilo village and residents and Indians in the vicinity."

It is up to the board to find a way to do this and that's what they are trying to do. They need ideas from those people who are a part of Celilo. Jacob Frank, alternate Wyam board member comments that "if we were making money from Celilo we'd be the first to help; now we sort of back off." He feels that the board needs the support of the tribes "before we step in and take on the other responsibilities" involved in Celilo. He feels too that the "Celilo people should carry more weight." Jim Cornett, Warm Springs superintendent made a similar comment. He says "the Celilo people should be more involved, they need to have a change of attitude, a sense of pride and a sense of responsibility for what is happening in their community." Jacob Frank says, "We are all a part of Celilo, we must follow through."

We're all trying to do

What is right for the Celilo people

Must keep politics out of Celilo

One problem facing the board is keeping politics out of Celilo. The problem is not political according to Frank, "there is a need for complete honesty before anything can be accomplished." He says it is necessary to stay within the guidelines established by the board. The problem will come in creating a form of government when there are three tribes involved. Progress in the area of Celilo is slow but it is ongoing. There have to be some concrete proposals made

before anything can be accomplished. Frank again says, "we need a composite set of guidelines in taking care of our responsibility toward the land the people, who are holding this land for us and keeping the rights of this land alive for us." Definition of the problems and explicit recommendations are necessary to get things going.

The next meeting of the Wyam board will take place in Umatilla on February 29. Hopefully, the tribes will have some definite plans to propose so work can begin at Celilo. In Warm Springs a meeting is

planned with the Senior citizens of the "sahaptin" culture to get background information and ideas for Celilo.

The Wyam Board is endeavoring to get all tribal members involved. The future of Celilo depends on involvement by the Warm Springs Tribe as well as that of Yakima and Umatilla. The board feels "it will take time, energy, patience, and many people's thoughts to develop a plan for Celilo which will truly reflect the values of the people who once lived there and who still live there today." It can be done.



Celilo Falls before its flooding in 1958 embodied the traditional way of life of the "Sahaptin" culture. The Wyam board is attempting to memorialize this heritage in the renewal of Celilo. It would be a place where the three river tribes, Yakima, Umatilla and Warm Springs, could come together once again.