

After the flood: Remembering Celilo

On the sixty-fifth anniversary of the tragic flooding of Celilo Falls by The Dalles Dam, the River People gathered to remember, revisit, and look ahead.

On a sunny day in March, tribal members gathered on the green stretches of Blue Lake Regional Park. They were baking salmon, and had moose and deer on the grill. A canoe was in the water and canopied shelters were scattered on the grass. Tribal elders and veterans from several tribes of River People were on hand, greeting one another with open arms. Lots of gifting was going on: blankets and other items of friendship and relationship.

Their singing and dancing were enlivening the atmosphere. Kids were watching and learning and cutting loose. “The young people got to dance, and listen to the prayers, and listen to the messages,” said Aurolyn Stwyer, Celilo, Warm Springs and Wasco member.

Aurolyn is a master beadwork artist who was one of the gathering’s main organizers.

It was a celebration, and a remembrance, and also an act of determination. Sixty-five years to the day earlier—on March 10, 1957—the floodgates of the newly completed The Dalles Dam were closed.

Within hours the mighty Celilo Falls, river-broad and forty feet high and about thirteen miles upstream on the Columbia River, disappeared.

The river flattened, the waters opened for barges and closed for salmon, electricity began its flow to urban areas and irrigation water to vast parched agricultural fields. And a way of life that had survived and thrived for since time imme-



Canoeists welcomed the ceremonies and the day at Fairview’s Blue Lake Regional Park.

morial disappeared along with the falls.

Brilliant beadwork and other traditional designs brought a sense of celebration to the gathering.

It’s difficult for people who never saw the falls flowing freely to comprehend what was lost. “Our falls flowed three times greater than Niagara Falls,” Ms. Stwyer said. And the river was thick with fish: “Twenty-two thousand salmon a day was the marker. And now the count is so low.”

The dam changed everything. Celilo Falls had been the center of river life. People fished there, gathered there, traded there, on routes that extended into present-day British Columbia and California and eastward to the Great Plains.

They celebrated there, arriving from up and down the river that linked their lives. No more.

The flooding of the falls followed by a century the U.S. government breakup of the river tribes and scattering of their people to reservations on either side of the Columbia River—some, including the thousand-plus-square-mile reservation of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs—on lands far from the river and what had been their primary food for thousands of years,

requiring a completely different relationship to the water and land.

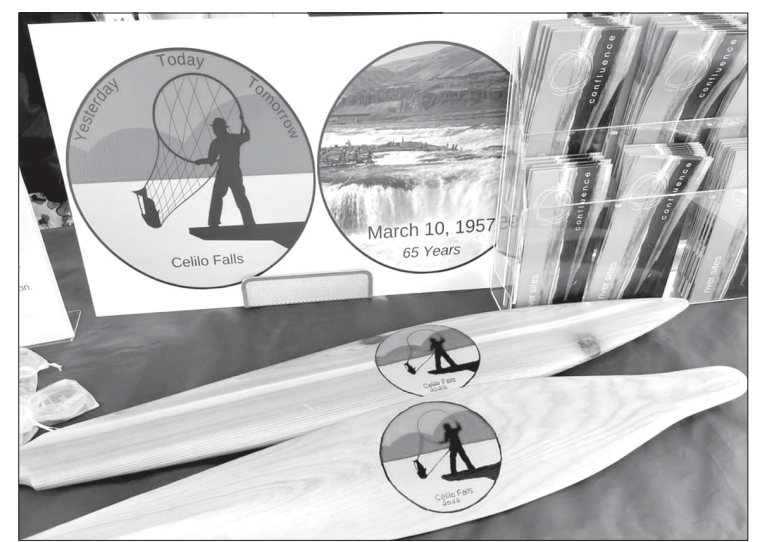
The Middle Oregon Treaty of 1855 also transferred ten million acres of traditionally Indigenous land to the United States government; land that was then opened to white settlement and exploitation, including industrial harvesting of salmon rather than the Natives’ one-on-one relationship with the fish.

On the anniversary day last month, all of that history was in the background. But the emphasis was on now, and on this re-gathering of Celilo, Rock Creek, Warm Springs, Umatilla, Yakama, Nez Perce, Colville people. “All of the river tribes were in the lineup, equally,” Stwyer said.

It was the river, in a way, gathering back its own: roughly 400 people, many of whom hadn’t seen one another for a long time, in large part because of the long covid isolation.

“It was just really good to be out together,” Aurolyn noted. “We haven’t done much for over two years.”

The gathering began in the morning with sacred ceremonial greetings and continued through the day, with everything from the traditional preparation of salmon



Items from *Celilo—Never Silenced*.

Confluence attended the opening reception for a new exhibit at Beaverton’s Patricia Reser Center for the Arts. The exhibit is called *Celilo—Never Silenced*.

The exhibit features Confluence interviews and short films about Celilo Falls.

You can also see art by Lillian Pitt of Warm Springs,

and hear poetry by Ed Edmo, Shoshone-Bannock.

The Confluence video includes an interview from Native American Youth and Family Center executive director, Paul Lumley, Yakama.

The exhibit will be on display through early June 5, open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

over flames to veteran honor guards. (“The veterans came out and totally stole the show,” Aurolyn said.)

Tribal elders were honored. A grand piano sat onstage. Thomas Morning Owl, a Umatilla storyteller, musician, tribal leader and beadwork artist, who also was an actor in the musical-theater drama *Ghosts of Celilo*, was master of ceremonies.

Grants from Metro and the City of Portland helped underwrite the gathering, and everything was done by volunteers.

“We didn’t want anyone to pay for a meal,” Aurolyn noted. A golf cart was on hand to help those who needed it get around the park grounds. The salmon and moose and deer meat were donated.

At the end of the day, kids

folded up and collected 150 chairs, and picked up and deposited all the garbage. And the Confluence Project, which connects the Indigenous cultures and lands throughout the Columbia River system, donated 500 commemorative coins. “That was a big hit,” Aurolyn said. “Everybody loved those coins.”

The gathering was a memorial, but it was also, she emphasized, about the future—a statement that “We are still here. The echo of the water was lost sixty-five years ago, but we won’t give up. We’re still looking for the return of our falls.” Maybe, she added, in ten years, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the inundation, the people can be celebrating the falls’ return.

Story by Bob Hicks, Oregon ArtsWatch, courtesy Confluence.

In the Tribal Court of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

KENNETH SMITH, Petitioner, vs ARLENE SMITH, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO16-22. TO: KENNETH SMITH, ARLENE SMITH:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a MODIFICATION has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 9TH day of MAY, 2022 @ 9:00 AM

MONA COCHRAN, Petitioner, vs JOHNNY E. SMITH, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO19-22. TO: MONA COCHRAN, JOHNNY E. SMITH, AUSTIN SMITH SR., LOIS SQUIEMPHEN, LEANDER SMITH SR., JASPER SMITH SR., AUSTIN SMITH JR., PASHA SMITH:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CONSERVATOR GUARDIANSHIP has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 25TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 3:00 PM

COLTON DAVID, Petitioner, vs JORDIN DAVID, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO11-22. TO: COLTON DAVID, JORDIN DAVID:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CONSERVATOR GUARDIANSHIP has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 25TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 9:00 AM

COLTON DAVID, Petitioner, vs JORDIN DAVID, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO18-22. TO: COLTON DAVID, JORDIN DAVID:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 25TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 8:00 AM

CTWS, Petitioner, vs MARY DOMINGO, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO44-21; DO45-21. TO: MARTHA ALVAREZ, MARY DOMINGO, JOSE ALVAREZ SR.:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CONSERVATOR GUARDIANSHIP REVIEW has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 21ST day of APRIL, 2022 @ 9:00 AM

CTWS, Petitioner, vs ANTIONETTE TALLBULL, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO101;102-20. TO: ANTIONETTE TALLBULL, CIGANY SQUIEMPHEN, CPS, JV PROSECUTION:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a JURISDICTIONAL HEARING has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 3RD day of MAY, 2022 @ 9:00 AM

CTWS, Petitioner, vs GLENDA FISHER, RESPONDENT; Case No. DO159-06. TO: GLENDA FISHER, ANGEL DEJESUS MEDEL, CPS, JV PROSECUTION:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a PERMANENCY has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter

at a hearing scheduled for the 23rd day of MAY, 2022 @ 10:00 AM

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Plaintiff, vs Victor Becerra Jr., Defendant; Case No. CR316-21. TO: Victor Becerra Jr.:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE HEARING has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for APRIL 26, 2022 @ 8:00AM

Warm Springs Ventures, Petitioner, vs Jasmine Caldera, Respondent; Case No. CV3-19. TO: Jasmine Caldera:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 26TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 08:00AM

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Plaintiff, vs Victor Becerra Jr., Defendant; Case No. CR30-22. TO: Victor Becerra Jr.:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CRIMINAL ARRAIGNMENT has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for APRIL 26, 2022 @ 8:00AM

Summons: Ernestine Ruiz-Switzler, PETITIONER, vs Orvie & Sheila Danzuka, RESPONDENT; CASE NO. DO36-13; DO37-13. TO: Ernestine Ruiz-Switzler/ Orvie & Sheila Danzuka/ Jayce Allen:

This is notice that a MODIFICATION HEARING has been scheduled with the Tribal Court. By this notice, you are summoned to appear in this matter at the hearing sched-

uled for 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 10:30AM

CTWS, Petitioner, vs MATHEW VOGT, Respondent; Case No. CV3-22. TO: MATHEW VOGT:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CIVIL ARRAIGNMENT has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 26TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 08:00AM

Kelly Muniz Wewa, Petitioner, vs Amy Martinez Wewa, Respondent; Case No. DO10-22. TO: Kelly Muniza Wewa, Amy Martinez Wewa:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CONSERVATOR GUARDIANSHIP HEARING has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 3:30PM

Warm Springs Ventures, Petitioner, vs Aurolyn Stwyer, Respondent; Case No. CV4-22. TO: Aurolyn Stwyer:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CIVIL COMPLAINT has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 27TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 02:00PM

Warm Springs Ventures, Petitioner, vs Juanita Smith-Lopez, Respondent; Case No. CV42-19. TO: Juanita Smith-Lopez:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 26TH

day of APRIL, 2022 @ 08:00AM

Ernestine Ruiz- Switzler, Petitioner, vs Orvie & Sheila Danzuka, Respondent; Case No. DO36,37-13. TO: Ernestine Ruiz-Switzler, Jayce Allen, Orvie & Sheila Danzuka:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a MODIFICATION HEARING has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 10:30AM

Gayleen Adams, Petitioner, vs Lei Calica, Respondent ;Case No. DO67-08. TO: Lei Calica:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a MODIFICATION HEARING has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 3:00PM

Ernestine Ruiz- Switzler, Petitioner, vs CTWS, Respondent ;Case No. DO150-21. TO: Ernestine Ruiz-Switzler, Orvie & Sheila Danzuka:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a CONSERVATOR GUARDIANSHIP HEARING has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 10:00AM

Whitley Ruiz, Petitioner, vs Victor Switzler Jr., Respondent; Case No. DO118-15. TO: Whitley Ruiz, Victor Switzler Jr.:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Modification & Conservator Guardianship has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 29TH day of APRIL, 2022 @ 2:00PM

Notices continue on 9