

# Celilo Falls: Historic photos document what was lost

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Aja DeCoteau, CRITFC executive director, expressed deep gratitude for the gift. She spoke of showing the pre-release copy of the book series earlier at the CRITFC commission meeting, and the profound impact the photos had on tribal commissioners and elders.

“The interest and excitement were incredible,” Ms. DeCoteau shared. “Seeing themselves or their relatives in these photos spurred memories and emotions, allowing them to relive those precious moments and share their stories.”

Gene Maltzoff, the son of one of Raymond’s federal co-workers and a subject in several of the photographs, also attended the ceremony.

He added personal anecdotes about his time spent at Celilo Falls with his father. Maltzoff described the falls as the “eighth wonder of the world,” and the “lungs of the Columbia River,” emphasizing the loss felt by many when the area was flooded.

### The way of life

The Matheny family’s gift is a significant addition to CRITFC’s archives, offering a rare glimpse into a way of life that was profoundly altered by the dam’s construction. These photos, now preserved for future generations, serve as a historical record of obstacles the tribes have worked to overcome and thrive in spite of.

Jeremy FiveCrows notes the unique value of Matheny’s work.

“Raymond saw the fishers as people, not just as part of the scenery. He interacted with them, got their names, and took detailed notes, making these photos incredibly special.”

Donella Miller, CRITFC



*The falls disappeared nearly three-quarters of a century ago. It is still an emotional subject, particularly for those elders who were on the riverbanks that day...*



These Raymond Matheny photos, of tribal fishing at Celilo Falls, are courtesy of the Matheny family, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.



Raymond Matheny’s photos of Celilo Falls in the early 50’s were treasured by his children and family.

It was his wish, his children said, that the collection be gifted to those tribes the photos depicted.

Fishery Science manager, reflects on the importance of the collection:

“It means so much to us as tribal members to see how our ancestors lived. These photos are a connection to our past, and they help us remember and honor those who came before us. Many of them never left and continue to live this way to this day.”

Ms. Miller also noted the inclusion of other fishing sites near Celilo Village. She said:

“I appreciated the books also included other surrounding fishing areas such as Spearfish and Big Rapids. Pictures of those sites are far less common than Celilo.”

### Attention to detail

Raymond Matheny’s 1952 article, shared by the

Matheny family with the digital photos in 2007, vividly described the significance of the Celilo Falls fishery, detailing the traditional fishing methods used by the tribes and still used by fishers today:

“They use nets sewn around an iron ring attached to a wooden or aluminum pole of varying length. Fishing is done from wooden platforms weighted down with rocks and natural dipping places or rocky ledges.”

Raymond also expressed the cultural and economic impact of the fishery:

“The Indians fish by themselves or frequently in companies, dividing the

money resulting from the fish sold. It is a ruling set up and enforced by the various tribal councils that the Indian who is fishing must wear a safety rope around his waist.

“Many Indian fishermen have drowned at Celilo by slipping into the swiftly flowing Columbia River.”

Raymond’s attention to detail regarding the fishery and tribal life were reflected in the notes he kept for each photo, many of which he knew by name.

His dedication to documenting this historically significant period before the inundation of the falls has left the tribal fishers and their descendants with an invaluable gift.

Despite the fact that the falls disappeared nearly three-quarters of a century ago, it is still an emotional subject, particularly for those elders who were on the riverbanks that day. The somber event and historic was foreshadowed in Raymond’s writing as well.

His relationship with the falls and its community members is illustrated in his article, shared with CRITFC by his family.

Reflecting on the impending changes three years before the inundation, he wrote, “The construction of The Dalles Dam will eventually flood all the present fishing sites. These historic grounds will be covered by 75-80 feet of backwater from another one of the ‘White Man’s

dams.” The slide collection will be securely stored at CRITFC’s Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Library.

After it is fully cataloged, the library plans to make a searchable database of the images available for viewing on its website.

The images will be used to help educate current and future generations about life at Celilo Falls.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a Pendleton blanket and other gifts to the Matheny family, symbolizing the deep appreciation and respect from CRITFC and the tribes.

This article is courtesy of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

### Community notes...

The Warm Springs Thursday Market is from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. under the Campus Pavilion. Vendors are welcome to set up. Contact KWSO for more information:

kwsos@wstribes.org

Or call 541-553-1968.

Warm Springs Behavioral Health is now taking applications for the Permanent Supportive Housing program. This program provides affordable housing with tenant support services to members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs who are experiencing chronic homelessness, limited income, and mental or physical health issues, disabilities or substance use disorder.

The Warm Springs Community Action Team is hosting the financial education series ‘Pathways Home: A Native Homeownership Course,’ via Zoom.

The course starts Thursday, August 15; and then meets every Thursday through September from 5:30-7:30 online.

This course is required for anyone in the IDA program for home ownership.

To sign up, email to: mallory@wscat.org

WS PREVENTION PRESENTS

## Wings Invitational

JCP/SUICIDE PREVENTION

### Youth Track Meet

AUGUST 13TH, 2024  
6 PM

AGES: 2-5, 6-9, 10-12 YRS

EVENTS:  
50M-100M-200M-400M  
STANDING LONG JUMP-LONG JUMP  
SOFTBALL THROW-T-BALL THROW

WARM SPRINGS K-8 ACADEMY

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WS PREVENTION EVENT

SEPTEMBER 3RD

5:52 P.M.

IT'S BACK

## 2024 SOBRIETY & SUICIDE PREVENTION POW WOW

WS BEHAVIORAL BUILDING LAWN BOOM!

EAT 5:08 PM

SPECIAL 11TH ANNUAL

MACKIE BEGAY

# WASCO COUNTY FAIR & RODEO

## American Flair at the County Fair

Queen Audreyona Gilbert

Grand Marshal Frank Roeder

- ★ DRONE LIGHT SHOW Friday & Saturday after the Rodeo - Sponsored by Google
- ★ INTERACTIVE GAMES - by Bounce N Battle
- ★ POW WOW & TEE PEES Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs
- ★ 4H/FFA LIVESTOCK
- ★ GODFREY "THE MAGICIAN"
- ★ MASTERS FAMILY CIRCUS
- ★ FARMERS FUN DAY
- ★ BEER GARDEN - By Mt Hood Brewing Company
- ★ DEMOLITION DERBY
- ★ NPRA RODEO

Live Music After the Rodeo  
Friday Night "Got your Six"  
Saturday Night "Smock Dogs"

August 15-18, 2024 Gates open at 9am  
Celebrating 110 Years at Hunt Park  
Wasco County Fairgrounds • Tygh Valley, OR

Admission: 13 & older: \$10 • 6-12: \$8 • 5 and under: Free  
Season Pass: 13 & older: \$20 • 6-12: \$12  
Get your tickets early at [www.wascocountyfair.com](http://www.wascocountyfair.com)

Tickets on Sale Now Online!

Sponsored by

The Dalles Disposal Underriner Ford Crestline Construction  
Peterson Cat Fred Meyer Discover Rentals  
Safeway Wasco Electric Cooperative, Inc. Oregon Healthcare

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