

Russell Jim's Oral History

By Michael O'Rourke, Oral Historian

Russell Jim, a Yakama elder, was interviewed by Michael O'Rourke of the Oregon Historical Society as part of the Columbia River Dissenter Series, an oral history collection commissioned by the Center for Columbia River History. In this transcribed excerpt of the interview, he recalls his first dip net fishing experience at Celilo Falls, on the Columbia River near The Dalles, Oregon.

Prior to being inundated by water from the completion of The Dalles Dam in 1957, Celilo Falls was one of the most productive salmon fisheries in the Pacific Northwest. The site was so highly productive because of the many constricted river channels that poured between large outcroppings of rocks. Indian fishers typically constructed wooden platforms on the rocks from which they lowered dip nets into the fast-moving waters. The dip nets were large, hooped nets attached to the end of a long, sturdy pole.

Indian fishers still continue to dipnet for salmon in a limited number of "usual and accustomed" places in the Columbia River's tributaries.

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