



## Washington State University Celilo Falls Exhibit

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### Celilo Falls Exhibit on Display at WSU Museum of Anthropology

by Rio Fernandes

WSU's Museum of Anthropology kicked off its new Celilo Falls exhibit by bringing Mr. Allen Pinkham, a tribal historian, to share his memories of this special place.

Celilo Falls, a fishing area on the Columbia River east of the Cascades, straddled the border of Washington and Oregon. It was a vital location for fishing for various tribes, especially the four tribes who reserved their treaty rights to fish there; the Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and the Warm Springs.

Pinkham, a member of the Nez Perce tribe, spent countless summers in the 1950's down at Celilo Falls. During his presentation, he shared his memories while also explaining what each of the exhibit photos meant and the strategies the various tribes at Celilo Falls used to fish. He even shared his story of the first fish he caught there.



*(l-r): Museum of Anthropology Director Shannon Tushingham, Allen Pinkham, and his son Josiah Pinkham at the Celilo Falls exhibit opening in November.*

"Celilo Falls are important. It's the life ways, the flavors, of the Indian people around these sites," said Pinkham.

Like many tribal fishing locations, Celilo Falls fell under attack after the overharvesting by commercial fishermen led to stricter regulations by the federal government. These regulations disregarded the treaties that had been signed by the four treaty tribes and led to various battles in court. Eventually, the tribes prevailed and their rights to fish were recognized. The treaty tribes would no longer need a license to fish such as the state had tried to impose and fishing by outsiders was limited, Pinkham said.



*Shay Workman (Cowlitz), Environmental Science major and intern at the Museum of Anthropology, in front of a display of a Chinook button blanket in the Celilo exhibit.*

The exhibit and guest presentation were possible through a partnership among several departments as well as contributions by student interns under the leadership of Dr. Shannon Tushingham, Assistant Director of the Museum of Anthropology.

Earlier this fall, the Legacy of the Columbia River Fishery Exhibit opened in the Museum, however, the tribal presence and story was absent in this traveling exhibit. Dr. Tushingham wanted to expand the exhibit to feature a tribal voice as well and was thrilled when photos of Celilo Falls were located in the WSU Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections. These photos spanned decades of fishing seasons at Celilo Falls and depicted the experiences and joys occurring there.

Sadly, not much was known about these photos so Dr. Tushingham reached out to Pinkham for help. Working with Mr. Pinkham and his son Josiah, Shay Workman, a Cowlitz tribal member and an intern for Dr. Tushingham, transcribed their reflections into text for the photos. Kyra Christiansen,

another WSU student, designed the exhibit working under the supervision of Dr. Tushingam and Dr. Kathleen Ryan, an Assistant Professor of Interior Design. The exhibit includes replicas of the tools used at Celilo Falls, various photos and interesting facts about the special place.

Following the presentation, guests were treated to a reception and a chance to experience the exhibit. Pinkham attended the reception and admired the work the University had put into making the exhibit historically accurate.

"I am pleased with Dr. Tushingam's commitment to create an exhibit that shares the story of Celilo Falls, a place of such great significance to the tribes of the Pacific Northwest, especially the Columbia River tribes," said WSU Native American Programs Director, Barbara Aston, a co-sponsor for the exhibit and presentation. "Mr. Pinkham's reminiscence of the falls was powerful and we are appreciative of the opportunity to have heard his first-hand accounts."

The Celilo exhibit will remain up until the end of the school year.



*(l) Kyra Christiansen, Interior Design student, and Dr. Kathleen Ryan, an Assistant Professor of Interior Design at the Celilo Exhibit opening.*

[Native American Programs](#), PO Box 641046, Washington State University, Pullman WA 99164-1046, 509-335-8618, [Contact Us](#)

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