THE GOVERNMENT BREAKS ITS PROMISE TO THE PEOPLE OF CELILO

Overview
In Episode 6, students explore what happens when promises are broken and how this can cause relationships to change. They find out what happened when the people of Celilo were relocated and how this affected their lives.

• Students will define in lieu fishing sites and explain how promises were broken concerning these sites.
• Students will explain the role of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) and explain how the fishing sites are managed today.
• Students will summarize an article describing the events leading up to the relocation of the people of Celilo and the aftermath of the flooding.
• Students will interpret a video that gives first-hand accounts of the relocation and the effects of promises made by the government that were not fulfilled.
• Students will empathize by writing about a time when an adult broke a promise to them.
• Students will compare their personal experience of broken trust with the experience of the people of Celilo by completing a Venn diagram.
• Students will synthesize information and their thinking by writing a poem that captures their emotions after their belongings are moved from their village.

Materials
Texts:
• Article: “Relocation and the Celilo Village Community” (from the Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. 108, No. 4)
• Article: “In Lieu and Treaty Fishing Access Sites” (from CRITFC)
• Primary source documents: notes and letters concerning the negotiations

Fact Sheets:
• The Relocation of Celilo Village
• Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)

Video:
• “See Through the Water” (at Indian-Ed.org)

Episode 6 Lesson Plan

Read and Discuss: Days 1–2
1. The Relocation of Celilo Village Fact Sheet on the will provide background information you can use in the discussions with your students. It’s important that your students understand what a life-changing event the relocation was to the people of Celilo.

2. Review with students the meanings of the terms “in lieu fishing sites” and “usual and accustomed fishing grounds.” (See the glossary from Episode 1.) Show students the map of the in lieu fishing sites. Call attention to the fact that establishing the sites was still in progress when this map was prepared. Ask students what this says about broken promises.

3. Give students a copy of the article “Relocation and the Celilo Village Community” by Carol Craig. Read it aloud as students follow along. Stop at places indicated in the article and use the question prompts to involve students in a discussion. For advanced students, you might want to assign the article as a small group reading and discussion activity. Sample responses to the prompts are included below:

Q1: Help students become aware of phrases such as “general fishing problem,” “problem has been pretty much solved,” and “other…problem” that provide clues that the government did not see the relocation and loss of the falls as a serious problem. For the people of Celilo, however, it was a life-changing issue. This indicates a general lack of understanding about, and respect for, the people of Celilo and their way of life.

Q2: Students should recognize this as an example of a “non-choice” choice. The people had no say in whether they could stay or leave their village. The government didn't appreciate the cultural value the people of Celilo attributed to their village.
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Video:
• “See Through the Water” (at Indian-Ed.org)

Map:
• Columbia River Treaty Fishing Access Sites

Reproducibles:
• Venn Diagram Worksheet (1 per student)
• Planning My Writing Worksheet (1 per student)
• Poem Template (1 per student)
• Glossary (1 per student)

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Q2: Students should recognize this as an example of a “non-choice” choice. The people had no say in whether they could stay or leave their village. The government didn't appreciate the cultural value the people of Celilo attributed to their village.
After nearly twenty years, the government acquired five sites or about forty acres for the ancillary sites. Remind students that the promise from the settlement was 400 acres.

The judgment called for legislation that would provide additional sites and upgrade all sites. While the legislation was passed on to Congress, no action was taken. Discuss with students the significance of this.

There was an increase of public activities on the Columbia River and Congress wanted to establish the area as a national scenic area. The tribes still hadn't been given the promised acreage from the 1939 settlement, and they reminded the government of this.

During hearings held before the Senate Select Committee, the ACE testified that it needed additional legislation before it could provide additional sites. The 1988 legislation provided the ACE with this authority. Discuss with students the long, drawn out effort by tribes to get what had been promised to them years before.

After reading the article, have groups of students identify the different times that promises were broken concerning the in lieu fishing sites. Then ask them to create a time line that shows this information.

5. As background, use the CRITFC Fact Sheet to provide information about how the in lieu fishing sites are managed, or have students explore the CRITFC website at www.critfc.org.

Primary Source Documents: Day 2

6. View or download the PDF of scanned primary source documents here. Students can read and discuss the various notes and letters that provide background into the negotiations that took place to discuss the problems facing Celilo.

View the Video: Day 3

7. Watch and discuss the video “See Through the Water” (http://tribalsov.ospi.k12.wa.us/mod/resource/view.php?id=314) with students to reinforce for them the contrast of life before and after the building of The Dalles Dam and the importance of Celilo Falls to the people.

Broken Promises: Day 4

8. Provide “thinking time” for students to consider the impact of broken promises. Ask them to think about a time when an adult broke a promise to them. Have them consider how they felt and whether their relationship
Paragraph 4: After nearly twenty years, the government acquired five sites or about forty acres for the ancillary sites. Remind students that the promise from the settlement was 400 acres.

Paragraph 5: The judgment called for legislation that would provide additional sites and upgrade all sites. While the legislation was passed on to Congress, no action was taken. Discuss with students the significance of this.

Paragraph 6: There was an increase of public activities on the Columbia River and Congress wanted to establish the area as a national scenic area. The tribes still hadn't been given the promised acreage from the 1939 settlement, and they reminded the government of this.

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8. Provide “thinking time” for students to consider the impact of broken promises. Ask them to think about a time when an adult broke a promise to them. Have them consider how they felt and whether their relationship
with the adult changed as a result of the breach of trust. Ask students to jot down words that come to mind and/or draw sketches that represent their feelings as they think about what happened.

Talking Circle: Day 4

9. After students have had time to think about their experience, set up a talking circle to allow volunteers to share with the class what happened to them and their feelings about the incident. Have students sit in a circle and give the first volunteer speaker an artifact from their village to hold as he or she talks. No one is allowed to interrupt the speaker holding the artifact. When a student wants to share or respond, the artifact is passed to him or her. As students talk in their circle, have them consider how the people of Celilo must have felt about the broken promises that concerned their homes and livelihood.

After the class discussion, give students the Venn Diagram Worksheet. Have them compare their experience with a broken promise to what the people of Celilo experienced with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Write a Poem: Day 5

10. Before students come to the classroom, and without their approval, move their "belongings" in their village to different places in the classroom. Discuss with students how it feels to have their village broken up and their things placed haphazardly around the room. Open up discussion with the question: "Is this still my home?"

You may want to provide a personal experience as a way to get students talking. For example, you might say, "When I was eleven, I was so proud of my bedroom. I had it set up just the way I wanted it—the perfect place for my desk, my bed, my pictures. I had posters and other things that meant a lot to me pinned up on the walls. Then one day I came home to find that my mom had rearranged everything. She had taken down my posters, she had moved my desk, and she put all the things on my desk away in drawers. I remember feeling angry and frustrated. My mom had moved MY things. They weren't where they were supposed to be. It didn't feel like my room anymore."

Ask students to write a poem that expresses their feelings about having their belongings from their village displaced. Give them the Planning My Writing Worksheet to help them get started. They can use the Poem Template to write their poem when they are ready. Ask volunteers to share their poems with the class. Give students the option of using the template or creating their own page with their own title.

Fact Sheet: Relocation of Celilo

- Congress appropriated funds to cover the cost of new homes at about $4,700 per home.
- A committee formed of both local non-Indians and people of Celilo to determine who was eligible to get the funds for housing. In order to qualify, people needed to be able to prove they lived year-round at Celilo.
- The criteria for housing didn't take into account the Indian tradition of seasonal life at Celilo. For about six months of the year, around 5,000 Indian people lived at Celilo, taking advantage of the salmon runs. The federal government had created the Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Warm Springs reservations in the 1800s, through treaties with the Indians of the Columbia Plateau. These reservations were located considerable distances from Columbia River fishing sites. By the 1880s, the U.S. government had removed most Columbia River Indian people to inland reservations, though some continued to live at traditional fishing villages, including those near Celilo Falls. Through treaties, however, Indian people were given the right to leave reservation communities to harvest and dry fish at their usual and accustomed places, such as Celilo Falls.
- In the 1950s, thirty-six families were moved from the village of Celilo to substandard homes built from World War II army surplus materials. There were no paved streets or sidewalks. Many people felt that relocation by the Army Corps of Engineers was badly handled and that the government's main concern was to just get the people out of the way so the dam could be built.
- For Indians and also many non-Indians, the relocation was viewed as yet another example of the government's practice of removing Indians and appropriating their wealth. The people of Celilo lost their income with the inundation of Celilo Falls and had to live at or below poverty level in the homes allocated to them by the government.
- Congress didn't authorize money for repairs to the homes until 2004. The Celilo Village Redevelopment Project was formed to bring the living conditions at Celilo to an acceptable level by installing new water systems, relocating sewage systems, and improving homes and cultural facilities. The first building to be completed was the Long House. The project was completed in 2009.
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- For Indians and also many non-Indians, the relocation was viewed as yet another example of the government’s practice of removing Indians and appropriating their wealth. The people of Celilo lost their income with the inundation of Celilo Falls and had to live at or below poverty level in the homes allocated to them by the government.
- Congress didn’t authorize money for repairs to the homes until 2004. The Celilo Village Redevelopment Project was formed to bring the living conditions at Celilo to an acceptable level by installing new water systems, relocating sewage systems, and improving homes and cultural facilities. The first building to be completed was the Long House. The project was completed in 2009.
George Miller was the project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He stated that “the tribes lost so much when we built The Dalles Dam”…with “significant economic and cultural impacts.” He felt that the redevelopment project was “minimally necessary to address those concerns and sustain the people.”

The inundation of Celilo Falls was more than just moving people into different houses. Salmon have always played an integral part of the religion, culture, and nutritional health of the Indian people. The people believe that they were placed in Celilo to protect the place where the salmon return each year. The annual salmon run assures the renewal and continuation of human and all other life.

“Without salmon returning to our rivers and streams, we would cease to be Indian people.”
–from “The Importance of Salmon to the Tribes,” CRITFC

“We don’t ‘come from’ anywhere; this is where we were born, this is where we lived all our lives and we don’t want to leave.”
–Arita Davis, Celilo Village resident

In Lieu and Treaty Fishing Access Sites

HISTORY OF COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY FISHING ACCESS SITES

Before non-Indians came to the Pacific Northwest, the native American Indians of the region had a thriving fishery on the Columbia River. In return for the peaceful cession of the Indian title to most all of the territory within which this fishery was located, the United States assured these Indians by treaty that it would protect their rights to continue this fishery to provide them with the opportunity to keep their self-reliance and cultural dignity. After these treaties were signed in the 1850s, the Indians living in the Columbia Basin continued to fish at numerous places along the Columbia River and its tributaries.

By the late 1880s, many of the treaty tribes’ usual and accustomed fishing grounds had been encroached upon and access to the fishing grounds had been blocked. During 1888–89, George Gordon, Special Indian Agent, investigated the Indian fisheries along the Columbia River and several tributaries and found that Indian fishers were being excluded from many of their traditional fishing grounds. Agent Gordon submitted his findings (in a document now known as the Gordon Report) and recommended that the U.S. government purchase or withdraw from entry approximately 2,300 acres along the Columbia for use by tribal fishers. Although the government never acted on Agent Gordon’s recommendations to acquire lands for tribal fishers, the United States did file several lawsuits seeking to protect the tribes’ right to take fish at usual and accustomed fishing grounds. As a result of these lawsuits, the tribes’ treaty-protected right of access to usual and accustomed fishing grounds was firmly established as a matter of law.

During the 1930s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in response to congressionally mandated studies, proposed that a series of dams be built along the Columbia River. The Bonneville Dam was the first dam to be built in accordance with the Corps of Engineers proposals. Construction of the Bonneville Dam inundated the tribes’ ancient fishing grounds from the dam site to above The Dalles, Oregon. In 1939, a settlement agreement was reached between the tribes and the United States. This agreement, approved by the Secretary of War in 1940, provided that the Corps of Engineers would acquire approximately four hundred acres of lands along the Columbia River and install ancillary fishing facilities to be used by the treaty tribes.
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After Congress approved the agreement in 1945 (P.L. 79-14), there were numerous disagreements among and between the Corps, the BIA, state and local governments, and the tribes regarding the acquisition and development of the sites. It took the Corps nearly twenty years to acquire five sites, totaling slightly more than forty acres, for use as fishing support sites. These sites are currently referred to as “in lieu” sites.

Over the next seventy years, other dams were built, destroying access to other treaty fishing grounds, and other development occurred, leading to other fishing conflicts and restrictions. In 1973, as a result of litigation initiated after the Corps proposed to alter the water levels of the pools behind the dams, a settlement order was entered by the U.S. District Court for Oregon. The judgment and order in that case, CTUIR v. Calloway, noted that the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior agreed to propose legislation for the acquisition and improvement of additional sites and the upgrading of all sites to National Park Service standards. Legislation was forwarded to Congress in 1974, but no action was taken by Congress at that time.

During the late 1970s and 1980s several things occurred that influenced treaty fishing site issues. Greater participation in the fishery increased the pressure on the existing in lieu sites and the highlighted the need for improvements and additional access to fishing sites. Increased pressure on the existing in lieu sites and other public camping/boat launching sites also resulted from the increase in recreational activities along the Columbia River. In addition, between 1982-86 numerous bills seeking to establish a Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area were considered by Congress. During consideration of the Gorge legislation, the tribes once again brought attention to the in lieu site issue, specifically the fact that the tribes were still owed significant acreage for fishing support sites from the 1939 agreement. Although the congressional delegation believed that the Gorge legislation was not an appropriate mechanism to address the in lieu site issue, several offices indicated that they would consider providing additional fishing access and support sites during the next sessions of Congress.

In 1987 and 1988, at the request of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, the tribes identified a number of locations which could be suitable for additional access and support sites. Nearly all of the identified sites were already being used by tribal fishers. During hearings held before the Senate Select Committee in April 1988, representatives from the Corps of Engineers testified that the Corps required additional legislation before the Corps could provide the tribes additional sites along the Columbia. The 1988 legislation (P.L. 100-581) provides the Corps with the authority to acquire and develop sites for additional treaty fishing access and support sites during the next sessions of Congress. SUMARY OF P.L. 100-581

Public Law 10-581, Title IV Columbia River Treaty Fishing Access Sites was enacted in November 1988. The primary purpose of the legislation is to provide an equitable satisfaction of the United States’ commitment to provide lands for Indian treaty fishing sites in lieu of those inundated by construction of Bonneville Dam. The legislation has six major elements:

1. § 401(a) designates certain federal lands along the Columbia River between Bonneville and McNary dams to be administered by the Corps of Engineers to provide access to usual and accustomed treaty fishing places and other ancillary fishing activities for member of the four tribes.
2. § 401(b) requires the Corps of Engineers to (1) identify and acquire at least six additional sites adjacent to Bonneville Pool from willing sellers; (2) improve the federal lands and acquired lands to provide facilities for treaty fishing and ancillary activities and then transfer those lands and facilities to the Department of Interior; and (3) make improvements at the five existing (original) in lieu sites.
3. § 401(c) specifies that the Corps shall treat the costs of implementing the §§ 401(b)(2) (b)(3) as project costs of the Columbia River projects and allocate such costs in accordance with existing principles of allocating Columbia River project costs.
4. § 401(d) authorizes appropriation of $2 million to acquire the Bonneville Pool sites from willing sellers.
5. § 401(e) provides the Secretary of Interior with the right of first refusal to accept any excess federal lands adjacent the Columbia between Bonneville and McNary dams.
6. § 401(f) contains a savings provision to protect existing treaty and other rights.

Several post authorization amendments have been enacted that modify the legislation. These amendments provide the Corps with flexibility on technical boundary adjustments at the § 401(a) sites, increase the authorization for appropriations to acquire sites in Bonneville Pool to $4 million, authorize the Corps to transfer capitalized funding for operations and maintenance to the BIA, and authorize the Corps to make improvements at Celilo Village.
After Congress approved the agreement in 1945 (P.L. 79-14), there were numerous disagreements among and between the Corps, the BIA, state and local governments, and the tribes regarding the acquisition and development of the sites. It took the Corps nearly twenty years to acquire five sites, totaling slightly more than forty acres, for use as fishing support sites. These sites are currently referred to as “in lieu” sites.

Over the next seventy years, other dams were built, destroying access to other treaty fishing grounds, and other development occurred, leading to other fishing conflicts and restrictions. In 1973, as a result of litigation initiated after the Corps proposed to alter the water levels of the pools behind the dams, a settlement order was entered by the U.S. District Court for Oregon. The judgment and order in that case, CTUIR v. Calloway, noted that the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior agreed to propose legislation providing for the acquisition and improvement of additional sites and the upgrading of all sites to National Park Service standards. Legislation was forwarded to Congress in 1974, but no action was taken by Congress at that time.

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**SUMMARY OF P.L. 100-581**

Public Law 10–581, Title IV Columbia River Treaty Fishing Access Sites was enacted in November 1988. The primary purpose of the legislation is to provide an equitable satisfaction of the United States’ commitment to provide lands for Indian treaty fishing activities in lieu of those inundated by construction of Bonneville Dam. The legislation has six major elements:

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3. § 401(c) specifies that the Corps shall treat the costs of implementing the §§ 401(b)(2) (b)(3) as project costs of the Columbia River projects and allocate such costs in accordance with existing principles of allocating Columbia River project costs.
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Fact Sheet: Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)

- Tribal authorities such as the Celilo Fish Committee ensured that fishing practices protected the salmon so that it would flourish and always exist.
- The development of the West, overfishing, construction of dams, and expansion of human populations decreased salmon runs and the ecosystem of the Columbia River Basin.
- In response to this decline, the Warm Springs, Yakama, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes created the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.
- Established in 1977 as an extension of tribal sovereignty, CRITFC’s mission is to “ensure a unified voice in the overall management of the fishery resources, and, as managers, to protect reserved treaty rights through the exercise of the inherent sovereign powers of the tribes.” CRITFC works to restore salmon in the streams, protect the watersheds where salmon live, and ensure the tribes’ treaty reserved fishing rights are retained.
- The CRITFC staff consists of scientists, biologists, policy specialists, enforcement personnel, and many others.
- CRITFC and the tribes have taken a gravel-to-gravel management approach to restoring salmon and are concerned with every influence affecting salmon’s entire life cycle. Scientists work on improving fish passage through the hydrosystem, conducting state of the art research on a wide variety of projects, monitoring tribal harvest, restoring lamprey, improving water quality issues, advising tribal staff of legal and technical matters, and enforcing tribal fishing regulations established by the tribes.
- Visitors can purchase fresh salmon during permitted sales times. The sales are based on returns and are regulated by the tribes to protect the fish runs and ensure future salmon populations.
- For more information about CRITFC, go to their website at http://www.critfc.org.
Tribal authorities such as the Celilo Fish Committee ensured that fishing practices protected the salmon so that it would flourish and always exist.

The development of the West, overfishing, construction of dams, and expansion of human populations decreased salmon runs and the ecosystem of the Columbia River Basin.

In response to this decline, the Warm Springs, Yakama, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes created the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Established in 1977 as an extension of tribal sovereignty, CRITFC’s mission is to “ensure a unified voice in the overall management of the fishery resources, and, as managers, to protect reserved treaty rights through the exercise of the inherent sovereign powers of the tribes.” CRITFC works to restore salmon in the streams, protect the watersheds where salmon live, and ensure the tribes’ treaty reserved fishing rights are retained.

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Relocation and the Celilo Village Community

ON FEBRUARY 15, 1955, the tribal people who resided at Celilo Falls, about fifty in all, began conducting weekly meetings to discuss their eventual relocation to the new village across the highway. Celilo Village would be disrupted by both The Dalles Dam and a railroad right-of-way relocation that resulted from the dam’s construction. The Celilo people wanted to remain by the bones of their ancestors — a cemetery on top of the high bluff overlooking the falls. They wanted to restore their worship pole, which had been destroyed by white vandals, and place it in front of the longhouse. The bird on top of the pole was a symbol of the chief of the village and carried the chief’s messages to the Creator.

At a March 16, 1955, meeting, the group adopted the name Celilo Community Club and elected Edward Edmo, Sr., as chairman, Bill Tahkeal as vice-chair, Shirley Bacon, as Secretary/Treasurer, and Edwin Edsall as Sgt-at-arms. Abe Showaway served as interpreter for tribal elders, including the last fisheries chief at Celilo, Tommy Thompson, at whose house many of the meetings were held. Chief Thompson had worried for a long time about what would happen to the people who wanted to stay by the river and not go to the reservations. The meeting minutes and records of correspondence document the people’s determination to maintain control over the ancient village, which is located ten miles east of The Dalles, on the Oregon side of the Columbia River. Only a sign on Interstate 84 designates the location of the falls now silent and gone.

This essay is adapted from a talk Carol Craig gave at the "Celilo Stories" conference in The Dalles, Oregon, in March 2007.

The Celilo Community Club invited officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Indian Affairs as well as their own attorneys to meetings, where they discussed what was going to take place and how it would affect them. Being un-enrolled on any reservation, many people living at Celilo Falls were considered non-reservation Indians. At a March 8, 1955, meeting, Percy M. Othus of the Corps of Engineers discussed how the agency would address the general fishing problem:

You have rights by treaties. That problem has been pretty well solved by virtue of tribal rights. We have signed settlement with the Warmsprings [sic], Umatilla and Yakima tribe. They signed with the engineers. We have agreed to pay the tribes $3,750 for each member. So all the Indians in this room and anywhere else take part in that settlement. Now the Indians who are not enrolled and who live here and have interest in the fishing rights will be settled with individually.

He went on to explain that the “other . . . problem, namely the acquisition of Indian properties, houses, etc. . . . is being handled by our Real Estate Division.”

1. Think about the way Othus talks about the issue of the dam and compensation at the meetings with the Celilo Community Club. What does this tell you about the attitude of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers towards the issue? How is this perception different to the perception the people of Celilo had about the issue?
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This April 1955 photograph of Celilo Village and longhouse shows the Oregon Trail Highway 30 (now Interstate 84) and the Oregon Trunk Railroad bisecting the village. The reservoir created by The Dalles Dam inundated homes closest to the river, north of the highway.

This essay is adapted from a talk Carol Craig gave at the “Celilo Stories” conference in The Dalles, Oregon, in March 2007.
One week later, Othus told the group: “We have got to build that dam and railroad. You have got the problems of fishing and relocation. ” He emphasized that the five or six families in the way of the new railroad right-of-way would have to be moved by July 1955 and the rest would have to be moved by October 1956. At the same meeting, J.W. Elliott, BIA superintendent at Warm Springs, told the Celilo Community Club that if their homes were in the proposed right-of-way of the railroad, then the procedure for buying the houses would take place and, if the government didn’t agree with the Celilo people’s price, then their property would be condemned and the matter would be taken to court. Othus said that his agency had no legitimate authority to give relocation funds beyond the market appraisal of the buildings themselves. Henry Thompson, Tommy Thompson’s son, noted that “the drying sheds are valuable. They butcher salmon, dry it and trade it for cash, blankets, or dry goods. They seem to you to be tumbling down; but they are part of the Indian’s livelihood. They’re valuable.” He went on to ask why so little money was offered for the drying sheds.

On February 25, 1955, Senator Wayne Morse introduced a bill in Congress to provide funds for the relocation of tribal families being flooded out of their traditional homes at Celilo Falls. Steward Whipple, an attorney who represented several members of the Celilo Community Club, read the bill and an accompanying letter from Senator Wayne Morse at the March 8 club meeting. The bill would provide the Corps with authorization to compensate Indians at Celilo who were not enrolled with any tribe. To give the bill a better chance of passing, the Celilo people wrote to their congressmen and senators and enlisted the Yakama and Warm Springs tribes to support their effort.

The club worked to get support from influential people and groups so that the appropriation bill would be passed in Congress. Many people living in the areas surrounding Celilo were appalled that the U.S. government would destroy the tribal fishery and pay enrolled members of the Yakama, Umatilla, and Warm Springs tribes, but those who wanted to stay at Celilo would receive nothing. Wasco County Judge Ward Webber attended several meetings, and the Wasco County Democratic Central Committee helped the group to arrange a meeting with Senator Wayne Morse. A resolution was passed during the 41st Annual State Conference for the Oregon chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, on March 1, 1955, and other women’s clubs and civic groups took similar action supporting the Celilo people. “The resident Indians at Celilo Falls,” wrote Martha Ferguson McKown of the Daughters of the American Revolution, “under the leadership of venerable Chief Tommy Kuni Thompson, ask to be housed in a separate village beside the river. They ask that the longhouse, worship pole, and the Chief’s dryshack be moved, if necessary for their preservation.” Congress eventually appropriated the money necessary for relocation. Celilo Falls was drowned by closing the gates at The Dalles Dam two years after the Celilo Community Club began its meetings. When the fatal day occurred on March 10, 1957, some of the people at the village did not want to witness the drowning and left. Others could be heard wailing at the village with loud moans and crying. Some stood on the hillside, dressed in their regalia, pounding the drums, singing, praying, crying, and mourning the loss of the falls.

As federal agencies, the Corps and the BIA had a duty to protect and uphold the treaties made with the Mid-Columbia tribes, including their 2. What kind of choice were the people of Celilo offered? How do you explain the difference in opinion about the value of the Celilo Village homes?

3. Why do you think groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution spoke up for the people of Celilo? What do you think might have happened without this kind of support?
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reserved rights to fish at all “usual and accustomed places” in perpetuity. Those rights remained intact but, after 1957, almost all of the original places had been blasted away or flooded by dams. The Corps’ and the BIA’s breach of trust continued.

Karen Jim Whitford, who was raised at Celilo Village, said the many promises her parents and the others heard were never fulfilled. “They told us we’d have free train rides all of the time,” she said. “That never happened. They told us we’d never have to pay for our electricity, but we still pay our light bill.”

The other promise was constructing a new longhouse for the village, but that never took place, either. So, in 1974, the people at Celilo Village began building their own longhouse. They solicited neighboring cities for donations and built the longhouse by hand, putting the shingles on nail-by-nail. One row of shingles took two days to put in place all around the longhouse. Bobby Begay, who still lives at Celilo Village, was three years old at the time they were constructing the longhouse. “I’d get to carry the shingles that covered the building,” he remembered. “And grandma Maggie Jim [made sure everyone was fed breakfast, lunch and dinner.” According to Begay, Maggie Jim was always cooking something. No one went hungry. Her husband, Howard Jim, was the Wy-Am Chief and Begay’s grandfather. Olsen Meanus was twelve years old at that time. Today, at forty-seven, he is the Wy-Am Chief following his late grandfather, Chief Jim.

With the longhouse completed, residents now had a place to conduct the Wash’ut service on Sundays. Over the years, they held many powwows and Sunday services at the longhouse, and when the spring Chinook came back upriver, they conducted the First Foods Ceremony. Many tribal people attended the ceremony, coming from as far away as New Mexico. That yearly gathering continues today.

Although the new longhouse was a substantial improvement in the village, by the early 1970s, the houses were in disrepair and most were still without proper water and power. Over the years, the four tribes — Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce — would hear from the Celilo
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people, who asked for assistance in rebuilding homes there. Finding funds was the biggest problem.

Finally, in the late 1990s, the new Northwestern Division Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, Gen. Carl Strock, arrived from Washington, D.C., and was taking a tour of the Columbia River. There, he learned a lesson when he listened to villagers talk about the unfulfilled promises. “Is this true?” questioned General Strock to the local Corps office in Portland. “Yes it is,” was the reply. General Strock promised the Celilo people he would go back to Washington, D.C., and look into the issue. He traveled back and forth several times and instructed the local Corps office to begin building trust and to communicate with the local tribes and Celilo people by doing their homework in gathering a multi-discipline team, building for the future and fixing past mistakes, and building partnerships for success and then celebrating that success.

When funding was finally found to build the new homes, Strock instructed the Corps to begin construction, and the elders at the village responded by saying they would like the longhouse built first and then the houses. They wanted to conduct their Wash’ut services first. In the spring of 2005, construction began on the new longhouse and the First Foods Ceremony was conducted next to the Columbia River because of the construction. A canvas longhouse was in place at Celilo Park and, as usual, hundreds of people arrived to take part. The new longhouse was completed in July 2005, and a blessing ceremony was conducted. General Strock and other officials were special guests. Brightly colored wing dresses and scarves were worn by the women while the men dressed in their best regalia, beaded vests and moccasins.

It was a memorable day for the Celilo people, and the federal government finally kept its word.

NOTES

This history is drawn mainly from records kept by the Celilo Community Club. For more on relocation, see Katrine Barber Death of Celilo Falls (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

1. Typewritten minutes, March 8, 1955, in possession of the author.
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4. Martha Ferguson McKewon, Memo Regarding Non-reservation Indians living in the Columbia River Gorge, in author’s possession.
5. Personal communication with the author, March 2007.
6. Personal communication with the author, 2005.
Lt. Gen. Carl Strock — center, with head to the side — looks over construction work being done on the new longhouse at Celilo Village. Strock made two visits to the village while the longhouse was being built, and he talked at length with tribal leaders about the project.

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Storypath: Living in Celilo - Episode 6
Venn Diagram: Broken Promises

Directions: Compare your experience of having someone break a promise to you with the broken promises the people of Celilo experienced. In the overlapping circles, write similarities about the experiences and the feelings.

My Experience

Similarities

People of Celilo

Planning My Writing

Directions: You are going to write a poem about your feelings about having your belongings moved from your village. Use this worksheet to help you get ideas.

Step 1: What were your belongings? Why were they special to you?

Step 2: Think of words that best describe how you feel. Write your words here.

Step 3: Circle the words that especially describe your emotions.

Step 4: What words from your word bank could you include in your poem?

Step 5: Write three or four sentences that use some of the words you’ve written above.

Step 6: Reread your sentences and circle words that seem most descriptive, are your favorite, or sound interesting or important.

Step 7: Use these words (and others that you think of) to write a poem about what it feels like to be relocated against your wishes. You can use the Poem Template to write your poem.
Venn Diagram: Broken Promises

Name: ____________________________ Date: __________________

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Is This Still My Home?

By ______________________

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
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Glossary: Episode 6

accordance: an agreement
acquisition: the act of taking possession of something
allocate: to assign or set aside for a specific purpose
ancillary: extra, additional
appalled: to be horrified, dismayed
appropriation: a sum of money set apart for a specific purpose, especially by a legislature
cession: act of surrendering something, especially territory or legal rights
compensate: to repay or make up for something
encroached: to trespass upon the property of another, especially by gradual advances
equitable: fair
litigation: a matter coming before a court of law; a lawsuit
mandated: ordered or required
market appraisal: an estimate of how valuable something is according to current sales
perpetuity: the state of being endless
solicited: asked for something
Is This Still My Home?

By ______________________

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