

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

Kettle Falls

Janette Timantwa: Keller was the first place the salmon came to, and that was in May and June; and then Kettle Falls was in July and August until late November. My name is Janette Timantwa, and I was born and raised in Kettle Falls. I'm a Lake Indian. I grew up more around Kettle Falls and salmon. Below it was the Inchelium and Keller camps and across the river was the Spokane Indians campground. On an island above Kettle Falls, it still shows, I think, was the burial ground for everybody that died. My great-grandmother was buried there.

There was about 500-600 people where we camped, the Lake Indians. Below, the Keller and Inchelium camps were about the same. Across the river was the same amount, 700 to 800 where the Spokane and Montanas camped. They had their own fishing place over there. Above that was the salmon rafts. They had big rafts out there and they'd spear the salmon; and they had a tribal net to catch fish to pass out to the elders. That was our main food. We had a lot of salmon. We got enough salmon to last us a year. We were the Lake Indians, we were raised on salmon.

Ambrose Adolph: Before the dam come in, Kettle Falls, my dad and my folks, we caught salmon there. We'd camp down there all summer, they sold salmon, they had baskets there...and they'd catch 150-200 salmon a day. They'd give each of the campers a salmon, and sell the rest. Yeah, I fished there, but I had a fish pole. Most of the time I lost them, they were too big, they'd break my line. Once in awhile I'd catch one. Oh, they were about 35 to 40 pounds. Those were big salmon in them days.

Alice Irey: Sometimes one of the guys would catch one pretty near 50 pounds. To me they were huge; and you know, we saved everything. Mom even took the heads and split them and dried them—and oh, they're good!

Janette Timantwa: My dad caught the biggest salmon. My dad stood over 6 feet tall and it was still taller than him.