OPB

Tribes And Feds Celebrate End To Their Salmon/Dam Fights

By Tom Banse

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Four Columbia River tribes and the federal government have made peace regarding dams and salmon. Electric ratepayers across the Northwest will foot the bill for a legal settlement that was at the center of an elaborate signing ceremony Friday. Correspondent Tom Banse has more.

The significance of this $900 million settlement was apparent in the pomp and circumstance.

It happened upstream of The Dalles, Oregon by an ancient petroglyph called "She Who Watches."

Leaders signed agreements on buckskin and were serenaded by singers.

Yakama Nation elder and councilwoman Lorena Sohappy says the tribes secured long-term funding to use on tribal hatcheries and salmon habitat repair.

Lorena Sohappy: "We have finally come to one mind and we're going to walk together and we're going to help one another. That's the biggest thing that I see."

The Yakama, Umatilla, Colville, and Warm Springs tribes agreed not to sue the federal government over river operations. They also withdraw their support for dam breaching.

Wholesale electricity rates may rise 2 to 4 percent to supply the increased salmon funding the tribes receive in return.