

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation

## Linking a Generation to Grand Coulee Dam

[music]

**Donna DeWinkler:** Power generation is the best place to go to be an electrician. It produces electricity, so that's where you want to go.

[power lines crackle]

Here at Grand Coulee there are around 45 electricians. Out of the 45 there are two female electricians, and I'm one of them. Grand Coulee is the largest concrete dam in America. Why would anybody not want to come work here? As an electrician, there's so much for you to turn around and work on. The variety of work that you're able to do is amazing. You could be working on transformers one day. You could work on governors the next day. You could work on just basic wiring and installing something new the following day. You don't get put in a rut.

[vehicle passes]

Being an electrical foreman is planning, organizing, and getting the work ready for the regular electricians that will be working on the particular job. Estimating materials, laying out the plan, going through the prints, making term sheets which [are] for the electricians to say where the wires go. Building the RTU cabinet, going over the prints for that to make sure they're OK, and installing them.

[music]

I'm a direct descendant of Chief Jim James who is the last chief of the Sanpoil for the Colville Confederated Tribes. He happened to be the person who turned around and closed the first disconnect at Grand Coulee Dam to produce power to begin with. I'm his great granddaughter. From my grandparents' perspective, they didn't like Grand Coulee in the sense of not being able to get salmon anymore. They would travel up to Kettle Falls to get their yearly supply of salmon.

I'm proud of the fact that the man realized that Grand Coulee Dam is here to stay and that he needs to work together with people to turn around and make it better for tribal members by being involved. And to become an electrician as a Native American and as a female, it's pretty impressive to be able to make it and meet the challenges and turn around and still come home with a paycheck that you can use to help the rest of the family with.

[music]

I have that pride of my family when I'm working here at Grand Coulee. I know that he was here, and I feel like I'm somewhat walking in his footsteps. I'm walking in the same place that he walked.

[music]