



# PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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## **Colville Chairman Disappointed by State Department's Exclusion of Columbia River Indian Tribes From Columbia River Treaty Negotiations**

(Nespelem, WA)---The Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation today expressed disappointment that U.S. State Department has apparently excluded 15 Columbia River Indian Nations from re-negotiation of the US-Canada Columbia River Treaty.

On Tuesday, the State Department issued a media release listing the US entities that will be joining it in negotiations to modernize the treaty: the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division, the Department of the Interior; and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“The Department of State, in announcing the parties to this important treaty re-negotiation, has excluded the Tribal Nations of the Columbia River Basin,” Dr. Michael E. Marchand said. “These are the people with the longest and deepest connections to the Columbia River, the people who have respected and depended upon the river and its salmon and other natural and cultural resources for thousands of years.”

Marchand emphasized that he was speaking only as Chairman of the Colville Tribes, noting that Colville and fourteen other Columbia River Tribes have spent months attempting to secure a seat for Tribal Nation representation at the negotiating table, an effort which he fully supports. The same 15 Tribes participated extensively in the multi-year Treaty Review process involving the US Entity and regional sovereigns and culminating in the Entity's Regional Recommendation in December 2013.

“These Tribes need and deserve to have meaningful input into the treaty re-negotiation process,” he said. “This is a necessary and important negotiation which will affect all of us and Columbia River Tribes should have representation at these talks.”

Marchand said that Solicitor's Opinions from the US Interior Department have confirmed that the 1.5 million-acre Colville Reservation includes a portion of the Columbia River from its confluence with the Okanogan River to near Kettle Falls. He also noted that two of the largest hydroelectric dams in the country – Grand Coulee Dam and Chief Joseph Dam – and the large reservoirs they created were built by the US on the Reservation and impact Colville members on a daily basis.

He said that, for millennia, the Columbia River has been a crucial component in the economies, subsistence, and cultures of Columbia River Tribes, and remains so to this day. Before the construction of Grand Coulee and other dams downstream which blocked all

passage of salmon to the upper Columbia River Basin, it was once the source of enormous runs of these culturally and nutritionally vital fish. Kettle Falls was an economic hub for Tribal trade routes from all over what is now the United States.

“The US government has routinely adopted policies and made decisions which were destructive to the health of the Columbia, disastrous for its fish, and detrimental to Columbia River Basin Tribal cultures and traditions,” Marchand said. “This river was the center of Native trade and commerce, and a touchstone for our cultures and traditions.

“It is unfortunate that Tribal Nations, who know the Columbia better than anyone, are excluded from the treaty re-negotiation process.”

The Columbia River Treaty was originally signed by Canada and the US in 1961 and implemented beginning in 1964; certain significant provisions of the agreement will expire in 2024 if not re-negotiated.

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About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9, 520 descendants of 12 aboriginal tribes of Indians are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of the Colville. The tribes, commonly known by English and French names, are: the Colville, the Nespelem, the San Poil, the Arrow Lakes, the Palus, the Wenatchi (Wenatchee), the Chelan, the Entiat, the Methow, the southern Okanogan, the Moses Columbia and the Nez Perce of Chief Joseph's Bands.