



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

For Immediate Release
May 26, 2021

Contact: Neeka Somday
509-634-2213

The Colville Tribes Wins Fuel Tax Lawsuit

(Nespelem, WA) — The Colville Tribes won yesterday in a lawsuit brought against the Tribes in Colville Tribal Court. The State of Washington’s fuel tax is collected on non-tribal members who purchase fuel on the Colville Reservation, and a significant portion of the State’s fuel tax comes back to the Colville Reservation to finance road improvements and maintenance. Two convenience store and gas station owners, Gene Nicholson of Gene’s Native Smokes and Michael Finley of the Inchelium Short Stop, sued the Tribes over this practice in January, 2021, alleging that the Tribes were collecting this tax unlawfully and owed them in excess of \$800,000.

The Colville Tribal Court dismissed Nicholson and Finley’s lawsuit against the Tribes in regard to fuel tax issues. The Tribal Court ruled it is, in fact, Nicholson and Finley who have violated tribal law during the past year by refusing to pay and collect the taxes as required by law. The Tribal Court ordered both Nicholson and Finley to immediately come into compliance with tribal law by paying and collecting the proper fuel taxes.

The Chairman of the Colville Tribes, Rodney Cawston, said, “The Colville Tribes is dedicated to the fair and full enforcement of its law and regulations. No one is above the law, and the Tribes will not allow any individual to damage the tribal community as a whole to benefit themselves. This lawsuit was always without merit and we are proud that the Tribes’ sovereign law is properly enforced on our tribal land.”

###

About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9,450 descendants of 12 aboriginal tribes of Indians are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of the Colville. The twelve tribes which compose the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation include: ščəlám̓xəx^w (deep water) or Chelan; wálwáma (Wallowa people) or Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce; s̓x̓^wyʔiɫp (sharp pointed trees) or Colville; šnt̓iyátk^wəx^w (grass in the water) or Entiat; sn̓áyc̓kst (speckled fish) or Lakes; m̓ətx^wu (blunt hills around a valley) or Methow; škwáxčənəx^w (people living on the bank) or Moses-Columbia; nspilm (prairie) or Nespelem; uknaq̓in (seeing over the top) or Okanogan; palúšpam (people from Palouse) or Palus; s̓ənp̓^wilx (grey mist as far as one can see) or San Poil, and šnp̓əšq^wáwsəx^w (people in between) or Wenatchi.