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YAKAMA NATION PRESS RELEASE

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YAKAMA NATION SUES KLICKITAT COUNTY OVER UNLAWFUL EXERCISE OF JURISDICTION.

On Friday, November 3, 2017, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation sued Klickitat County in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington. The suit arises from Klickitat County's recent arrest, detention, prosecution, and conviction of an enrolled Yakama Member and minor for alleged crimes arising within the exterior boundaries of the Yakama Reservation. Under Federal Indian Law, the Yakama Nation and the United States exercise exclusive jurisdiction over crimes committed by Yakama Members in Indian Country (i.e. within the Yakama Reservation).

"The issue here is purely one of jurisdiction," said Yakama Nation Tribal Council Vice Chairman Delano Saluskin. "The Yakama Nation and United States have jurisdiction over these alleged crimes, not the State of Washington or Klickitat County. Yakama Nation Police have been directed to investigate the alleged crimes and if warranted, refer the matters for prosecution. We will not allow the County to exercise unlawful jurisdiction over Yakama Members within the Yakama Reservation."

The Yakama Nation ceded certain rights within more than 10 million acres of land, roughly 1/3 of the State of Washington, for the rights reserved in the Treaty of 1855, including the right to the exclusive use and benefit of our Reservation lands. The State of Washington unilaterally assumed partial civil and criminal jurisdiction over Yakama lands under Public Law 83-280, which the Yakama Nation fought until 2014 when Governor Jay Inslee retroceded the State's jurisdiction over the Yakama Reservation back to the United States.

Klickitat County's law enforcement officials and prosecutor incorrectly maintain that Yakama Nation does not have authority over a 100,000 acre tract of land known as Tract D, which they contend is not part of the Yakama Reservation. The County sued the United States over this issue last year and lost. Beyond that failed 2016 litigation, the United States has repeatedly confirmed over the better part of a century that Tract D was indeed promised to the Yakama Nation in the Treaty of 1855, and that promise of retained inherent sovereignty over Tract D has never been abrogated by Congress in more than 160 years since the Treaty was negotiated.

For additional information or comment, please contact Yakama Nation Executive Secretary Athena Sanchez-Yallup at (509) 865-5121, or lead attorney Ethan Jones at (509) 865-7268.