



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

Colville Tribes Sues Opioid Manufacturers, Distributors

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For Immediate Release

Nespelem, WA-- The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation has filed a lawsuit on against major manufacturers and distributors of opioids, alleging devastating public health effects on Tribal communities. The Tribes has sued over 25 opioid-industry defendants in the action, which seeks both compensation for costs associated with the epidemic and injunctive relief.

National mass torts litigation firm Skikos, Crawford, Skikos, & Joseph LLP has filed the lawsuit in conjunction with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation Office of the Reservation Attorney on behalf of the Tribes. The Tribes' complaint, filed in federal court today, asserts claims against the defendants for allegedly marketing prescription opioids in a manner that fraudulently concealed and minimized their abuse and addiction risks, and failing to comply with federal prescription drug laws intended to prevent the diversion of prescription opioids and prevent their abuse. It seeks relief for the defendants' alleged violation of federal RICO laws, deceptive trade practices, and fraudulent and negligent conduct.

"The Colville Reservation has seen enormous devastation to our people due to opioid addiction," Rodney Cawston, Chairman of the Colville Business Council, said today. "We intend to hold these companies accountable for the great harm we have experienced here."

The complaint describes the severe and devastating impact of the opioid epidemic on Native American communities that threaten the cultural sustainability of Tribal nations. All generations have been affected including the tribes' most precious resource, the youth. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control reported that 1 in 10 Native Americans over the age of 12 used prescription pain medication. And from 1999 to 2015, drug overdose deaths rose by more than 500 percent among Native Americans. In 2014, the death rate from opioid overdose for Native Americans was 8.4 per 100,000 in population. These rates are higher than all other populations. Also, American Indian women are more likely than other populations to be diagnosed with an opioid dependency during pregnancy, impacting the next generation of Native American communities. The prescription opioid crisis has led to fentanyl and heroin use, resulting in further devastation within Native communities.

“Unfortunately Native people have suffered disproportionately in this epidemic,” Cawston said. “We have joined with other Tribes across the country demanding justice for their people.”

Defendants in the case include pharmaceutical manufacturers Purdue Pharma L.P., Teva Pharmaceuticals, and Allergan PLC, pharmaceutical distributors McKesson Corp., Cardinal Health Inc., and AmerisourceBergen Corp., and retail pharmacy chains such as CVS and Walgreens. The Colville Tribes’ complaint against these defendants was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

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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.