

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



June 3, 2024

Sent via Electronic Mail
tobiah.mogavero@bia.gov

Bryan Mercier, Regional Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Northwest Region
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232

Re: **NOI Comments, Colville Tribes Fee-to-Trust and Casino Project - Respecting Tribal Territories When Siting Casinos**

Director Mercier,

It has come to our attention that the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation are pursuing a gaming project in Yakama Nation ceded territory. We take tribal sovereignty and respect for tribal treaty rights very seriously, which is why we have chosen to weigh in on this matter.

We have several concerns, which include the inevitable impact on casino revenue of the nearby Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Yakama Nation, each of whom depend on patrons from the Tri Cities area to sustain their casino operations at Wildhorse Casino and Legends Casino respectively. Each of these tribes operates just one casino, which generates revenue to fulfill their government service obligations to their members. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation operate three already.

Additionally, we are concerned about the fundamental unfairness of authorizing operations of one tribe to encroach into another's treaty-ceded territory without the express consent of the tribe with historical and legal history in said territory. The Yakama Nation has an established relationship with the United States government through their 1855 treaty, which included the ceded the territory in question here.

We urge you to reject authorizing expansion of gaming in Yakama treaty territory without the Yakama Nation's express consent. Doing otherwise would set a harmful precedent regarding fundamental concepts of sovereignty for other Indian tribes as well.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Representative Skyler Rude in black ink.

Representative Skyler Rude
16th Legislative District

Handwritten signature of Representative Mark Klicker in black ink.

Representative Mark Klicker
16th Legislative District

Handwritten signature of Representative April Connors in black ink.

Representative April Connors
8th Legislative District

Cc: Governor Jay Inslee
Kathryn Leathers, Governor General Counsel
Craig Bill, Director, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
Alicia Levy, Chair of the Washington State Gaming Commission
Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior
Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs
Bryan Mercier, Northwest Regional Director Bureau of Indian Affairs