



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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The Colville Tribes Clarifies its Role in the Bear Gulch Investigation

(Nespelem, WA) Social media content has wrongly associated two Colville Confederated Tribes Natural Resources Enforcement Officers with an incident on the Bear Gulch fire on August 27, 2025. The Colville officers were assigned to the Bear Gulch fire on the Olympic peninsula as SEC1 law enforcement security officers for the fire as part of regular interagency cooperation.

Two crews working on the fire were being investigated by the Incident Management Team for possible fraudulent time reporting and questions about whether some work visas were valid. The U.S. Customs and Border Patrol came to assist in the investigation of the work visas at the request of the Bureau of Land Management. Based on the reports Colville Tribal Natural Resource Enforcement officers received, there were no Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents involved.

The two Colville Tribal Natural Resource Enforcement officers were not part of the operation to investigate the alleged problems with the legal status of crew members to work in the United States. The Colville Tribal officers were asked to standby as backup in the fraud investigation and to assist with communications through their Star Link satellite connection. Both crews were demobilized while the investigation into the fraudulent time reporting continued. Information associated with any detained members of the crew was not shared with the Colville Tribal officers.

Colville Tribal Chairman Jarred Erickson said, “We are confident our officers were working within the scope of their responsibilities on the Bear Gulch fire and would not participate in any illegal or inappropriate activity that targeted tribal people or any other people. We recognize the importance of supporting interagency fire efforts, which protect communities and minimize impacts to the natural resources. We appreciate the dedication our officers demonstrate in supporting these efforts.”

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About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9,132 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: ščəlám̓xəx̌w (deep water) or Chelan; walwáma

(Wallowa people) or Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce; sǰʷyʔilp (sharp pointed trees) or Colville; šntiyátkʷəxʷ (grass in the water) or Entiat; snʔáyckst (speckled fish) or Lakes; mətʰu (blunt hills around a valley) or Methow; škwáxčənəxʷ (people living on the bank) or Moses-Columbia; nspilm (prairie) or Nespelem; uknaqin (seeing over the top) or Okanogan; palúšpam (people from Palouse) or Palus; sənpʔilx (grey mist as far as one can see) or San Poil, and šnpəšqʷáwsəxʷ (people in between) or Wenatchi.