



Confederated Tribes and Bands  
of the Yakama Nation

Established by the  
Treaty of June 9, 1855

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For immediate release:

December 10, 2021

### **YAKAMA NATION PRESS RELEASE**

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation understands that Okanogan County will not make further improvements to its draft comprehensive plan because of a looming deadline to approve the plan. The County contends that making additional edits and approving the plan by the end of the year is simply impossible. This deadline arises from litigation with the Yakama Nation, and the County is now leveraging it to either infer or expressly blame the Yakama Nation for the County's failure to meaningfully consider public comments on this important development plan for the people of Okanogan County.

In fact, the County itself chose the current deadline in negotiations for a litigation stay, just as it chose the last deadline it failed to meet three years ago. In March of 2017, the Yakama Nation and the County negotiated a court-ordered settlement in which the County agreed to adopt a new comprehensive plan and new zoning ordinance no later than December 31, 2018. Okanogan County chose this 2018 deadline.

After the Yakama Nation was forced to go back into court to hold the County to its settlement obligations, the County argued that it did not have to fulfill its promises. Ever. Division III of the Washington State Court of Appeals disagreed, and rebuked the County:

"This appeal concerns one of endless broken promises by American government authorities toward Native Americans. The breach of an agreement in this instance also encompasses a violation of a court order. . . . We expect municipal corporations [i.e., counties] to obey court orders, just as we expect private citizens to comply with court orders. If Okanogan County deemed it needed more time to meet the December 31, 2018 deadline, the county could have and should have requested, before the end of 2018, the court to modify the order. Instead, Okanogan County has flouted the order."

Okanogan County has had nearly five years to fulfill its promises and release a new comprehensive plan and zoning code. The Yakama Nation did not choose December 31, 2021 as the current deadline for enacting a new comprehensive plan – the County chose this deadline as it did the ones before. The County's choice to release a final draft comprehensive plan one month before its current deadline and then ignore substantive comments that the County itself solicited based upon a deadline that the County chose is disingenuous. The Yakama Nation is not to blame for the County's failures and delays.



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Okanogan County must carefully consider all comments submitted in response to its draft comprehensive plan and draft environmental impact statement, and it must make changes where appropriate to comply with applicable law. Rather than make excuses and point fingers, the County should get to work.

*For additional information or comment, please contact Yakama Nation Executive Secretary Athena Sanchey-Yallup at (509) 865-5121, or staff attorney Shona Voelckers at (509) 865-7268.*

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