

**EXHIBIT NO. JT-1T
DOCKET UE-210829
WITNESS: JEREMY TAKALA**

**BEFORE THE
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,**

Complainant,

v.

**PACIFICORP dba PACIFIC POWER &
LIGHT COMPANY,**

Respondent.

Docket UE-210829

**RESPONSE TESTIMONY OF
JEREMY TAKALA
ON BEHALF OF
COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION**

AUGUST 21, 2024

1 **Q. Please state your name and business address.**

2 **A.** My name is Jeremy Takala. My business address is 401 Fort Road, Toppenish,
3 Washington 98948.

4 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

5 **A.** I currently serve as a Tribal Councilman of the Yakama Nation and am from the
6 Kahmiltpah Band (Rock Creek) of the Columbia River area. I also serve as Chair
7 of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (“CRITFC”). I am testifying
8 as the Chair of the CRITFC and as a citizen of the Yakama Nation. My testimony
9 includes my knowledge of and reflections on the rights and interests of the
10 Yakama Nation and those of CRITFC’s other member tribes.

11 **Q. Please describe your current position and background.**

12 **A.** I was elected to the Yakama Nation Tribal Council (Tribal Council) in 2020 and
13 am now serving my second term. As an elected official, I perform many duties for
14 the Yakama Nation and its members, including serving on the Council’s Fish and
15 Wildlife Committee, Legislative Committee, Law and Order Committee, and the
16 Veterans Committee. I also serve on the Council’s Executive Committee as its
17 Executive Assistant Secretary and as the Yakama Nation’s representative at the
18 National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Affiliated Tribes of
19 Northwest Indians (ATNI), and serve on the Seattle Indigenous Advisory Council.
20
21 Prior to my election to the Tribal Council, I worked for the Yakama Nation’s
Fisheries Program and spent 12 years stationed at its Yakima/Klickitat River

1 Research Monitoring & Evaluation Facility (RME) in Cle Elum, Washington.

2 Over the last 20 years, I have witnessed declining harvest rates for native fishers
3 and a steep reduction in the returns of most anadromous species in the Columbia
4 River Basin, despite the efforts of the Yakama Nation and other tribal government
5 to restore and protect anadromous species and their habitat.

6 **Q. Please provide a brief description of CRITFC and its work to protect and**
7 **restore the Columbia Basin's natural resources.**

8 **A.** CRITFC's fundamental purpose is to support the Yakama Nation and the other
9 member tribes to realize the promises made by the U.S. Government in the *Treaty*
10 *of 1855*. The restoration of Columbia Basin fisheries to healthy and abundant
11 levels is central to this mission as it is both demanded by our treaty rights and
12 necessary for the economic and ecological health of our region.

13 CRITFC member tribes recognize that, to protect these rights and restore the
14 fisheries, we need to rebalance our energy system away from its current over-
15 reliance on dams and fossil fuel energy sources. At the same time, the transition to
16 renewable energy must address the historic inequities tribes have faced, and
17 cannot be built on the backs of salmon and cultural resources.

18 **Q. Please describe the importance of the *Treaty of 1855* to the Yakama Nation.**

1 A. On June 9, 1855, the leaders of 14 confederated tribes and bands of Indians signed
2 the *Yakama Treaty of 1855*.¹ The Treaty ceded vast tracts of land they had
3 occupied and stewarded since time immemorial to the United States government.
4 The Treaty was negotiated by our people in an effort to protect and reserve lands
5 and resources for our sole occupation and use and to protect our access to and the
6 taking of anadromous fish and other traditional foods and medicines at locations
7 known to and protected by them since time immemorial.

8 A critical clause of the Treaty protects our right to take “fish at all usual and
9 accustomed places,”² including the mainstem and tributaries of *Nch’i - Wa’na*
10 (the Columbia River). This provision allows us to carry on our customs and
11 ceremonies associated with the salmon and lamprey catch as well as the gathering
12 of foods and medicines throughout our ceded lands. To this day, First Foods are
13 essential to honor our customs and religions and to preserve traditional
14 ceremonies that teach our young people of their history and culture.

15 **Q. The Yakama Nation is often referred to as a “salmon culture.” Please briefly**
16 **describe what “salmon culture” means to you.**

17 A. The health of the Columbia River and the fish runs it supports is one of the
18 Yakama Nation’s highest priorities. This is particularly so for *river people* such as
19 myself and my family group – the Kahmiltpah Band. We know the river. We live

¹ Treaty with the Yakima Tribe, June 9, 1855, 12 Stat. 951.

² Treaty of 1855, Art. 3.

1 near the river, and most every member of my family has worked one way or
2 another with the harvest and processing of salmon taken from the river.

3 Salmon are deeply imbedded in our culture and traditions. These fish have
4 nourished and sustained the Yakama people since time immemorial, and our
5 traditions and culture are dependent upon the annual returns of these fish.

6 Salmon or “*wy-kan-ush*” - our Sahaptin word for salmon – was given to us by the
7 Creator along with Water as a home for the salmon. As these were the first gifts
8 given to our people, they are given the highest honor at our traditional and
9 religious ceremonies such as *First Foods*. We bless both the Salmon and Water
10 with deserved reverence at such ceremonies and pray for the Salmon’s return to
11 our waters. Salmon were given to us by the Creator as sustenance and we honor
12 this gift in our prayers of thanksgiving and by our actions to protect this special
13 gift from further harm.

14 The first fish taken in the spring are honored and celebrated as a *First Food* –
15 representing the hope for a new year and a good harvest season bringing
16 sustenance for human and other life naturally connected to the river. A *First*
17 *Foods* celebration is also a learning place for our young people.

18 Tribal elders and leaders speak to and celebrate each traditional food offered and
19 its importance to the natural world and the tribe. They also speak to the history of
20 the Yakama people and its traditions, language, and the importance of salmon to
21 every generation. At every ceremony, the importance of salmon is highlighted,
22 along with the oral history recounting the historic Columbia River and the

1 seemingly infinite runs of fish in the river. Historically, the Columbia River saw
2 between 10 and 16 *million* salmon return each year.³ But today, in some
3 tributaries, we are told to expect as few as 0.1% of what the river historically
4 held.⁴

5 **Q. Please describe how Washington’s clean energy goals relate to these impacts.**

6 The decimation of Columbia River fish runs as a result of the hydroelectric
7 system is well documented. In recent history, the river’s hydropower operations
8 continue to cause enormous harm to salmon survival. The destruction of tributary
9 habitat and the infestation of invasive species, particularly in waters warmed
10 behind the dams, have also contributed to reduced number of juvenile fish
11 reaching the ocean and the quality and quantity of adult spawning grounds.

12 As a result of hydropower development, we also witnessed the disappearance of
13 traditional fishing sites, villages, and shoreline access locations, such as the highly
14 productive Celilo Falls area that was drowned by the Dalles Dam in 1955 as well
15 as numerous other fishing sites throughout the Columbia Basin. These
16 inundations constituted an enormous transfer of wealth away from our
17 communities, destroying not only villages and fishing grounds but the basis for
18 our continued economic and spiritual wellbeing.⁵

³ U.S. Department of Interior, *Historic and Ongoing Impacts of Federal Dams on the Columbia River Basin Tribes* (2024), at 9.

⁴ *Id.* at 48.

⁵ *Id.* at 39-53.

1 Today, with CRITFC’s support, the Yakama Nation advocates for fish-friendly
2 changes to the Columbia Basin’s hydroelectric and energy systems for the
3 protection and restoration of treaty resources and ecosystems. Recently, as co-
4 manager with CRITFC tribes and the states of Washington and Oregon, Yakama
5 Nation entered into a historic agreement with the federal government to restore
6 salmon in the basin by investing in comprehensive solutions to build a more
7 resilient and sustainable energy system.⁶ As testified to by Ms. DeCoteau, our
8 position is consistent: reduce demand on the Columbia River hydroelectric system
9 and operate the dams in a manner that minimizes harm to aquatic species; protect
10 tribal fishers and the harvest they depend upon; and respect our salmon culture
11 and Treaty rights as fundamental benefits of a more equitable energy future.⁷

12 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

13 **A.** Yes.

⁶ Press Release, The White House, Biden-Harris Administration Announces Ten-Year Partnership with Tribes & States to Restore Wild Salmon, Expand Clean Energy Production, Increase Resilience, and Provide Energy Stability in the Columbia River Basin (Dec. 14, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/news-updates/2023/12/14/biden-harris-administration-announces-ten-year-partnership-with-tribes-states-to-restore-wild-salmon-expand-clean-energy-production-increase-resilience-and-provide-energy-stability-in-the-col/>.

⁷ Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, *Energy Vision for the Columbia River Basin* (2022), <https://critfc.org/energy-vision/>.