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April 12, 2012

*Via E-mail and UPS*

Mr. David Danner, Executive Director and Secretary  
Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission  
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Re: Docket No. UT-100820 – CenturyLink Response to the Commission in connection with correspondence from the Colville Tribe.

Dear Mr. Danner:

CenturyTel of Washington, d/b/a CenturyLink, hereby provides this response to the issues raised by the Colville Tribe in various letters sent to the Commission in March 2012. Pursuant to the Commission's Notice, this response is provided by April 12, 2012. An original and 12 copies are enclosed.

CenturyLink states that it believes that these issues are not directly connected with this docket, or that they have been demonstrably resolved. Thus, to the extent that new issues are raised, or ongoing issues that have not been determined in the merger docket are raised, CenturyLink has no objection to these issues being handled in a separate proceeding, or even, potentially, in a more informal matter. In that regard, CenturyLink notes that it also has no objection to having the Commission Chairman discuss these issues with tribal representatives.

**Response to the letter of Mr. Finley:** Mr. Finley raises two merger-related issues in his letter, and refers to the four other attached letters for detailed service quality complaints. CenturyLink is aware of only three such letters, and will respond to those below.

With regard to the merger-related issues, Mr. Finley claims that CenturyLink has failed to comply with the requirement to appoint a tribal liaison, and that CenturyLink has failed to adequately comply with the requirement to deploy DSL in Nespelem, based on the number of DSL ports activated.

CenturyLink has appointed two individuals to the position of Tribal Liaison, and has notified the Commission and the Tribe of both appointments. On September 12, 2011, CenturyLink filed a letter with the Commission stating that John Fryling had been appointed as the Tribal Liaison. However, the Tribe had been notified of this appointment in April 2011, shortly after the merger closed. Mr. Fryling was the Area Manager for the area covered by the Colville reservation, and he had decision-making authority on various network configuration and deployment issues.

Thereafter, Mr. Fryling retired and CenturyLink appointed a new liaison, Thomas H. Novotney, who still holds that position. Mr. Novotney is the vice-president and general manager for CenturyLink operations in Eastern Washington. Both the Commission and the Tribe were notified of this change on January 4, 2012. There is no basis whatsoever for Mr. Finley's claim that these individuals did not have any substantive decision-making authority.

CenturyLink also committed to make DSL service available in the Nespelem central office. This commitment was contained in Condition 14 of the Settlement Agreement with Staff and Public Counsel. That Agreement was already filed with the Commission before the Tribal representatives appeared at the public hearing in this case. The Tribe neither negotiated this provision, nor did they give anything in exchange for it.

As previously noted in the Service Quality Report filed on September 28, 2011, the Nespelem wire center area covers 600 square miles, with less than one access line per square mile. Given that the limiting distance from the central office for DSL is just under 3.5 miles (18,000 feet), it is understandable that a central office based DSL deployment would not touch all customers in that vast area.

Nevertheless, in the Broadband Report filed by CenturyLink with the Commission on March 30, 2012, CenturyLink reported that DSL deployment in Nespelem was completed in 2011 and that a significant percentage of living units that were previously unserved had broadband made available to them. The number of DSL ports activated correlates to the number of orders for the service, and does not indicate anything about the number of living units that are enabled for the service. To the best of CenturyLink's knowledge, there are no orders for DSL in Nespelem that have not been filled, though not all living units have the service available to them due to their distance from the central office. Thus, the commitment to deploy DSL in the Nespelem central office has been fully met.

**Response to the letter of Mr. Haney:** Mr. Haney is the Chief of Police for the Colville Tribal Police Department. He raises four issues: CenturyLink's alleged use of "partyline" service; the availability of Caller ID; the reliability of his own home phone service; and, certain issues around 911 call-handling. Mr. Haney is served from the Keller hut, which is served by the Nespelem central office, and, as noted above, lives in a very sparsely populated area.

Partyline service: CenturyLink's tariff provides that partyline services are provided as an interim solution only, and that all customers will be provided single line service. See, CenturyTel of Washington's tariff, WN U-10, Section 5.1.3.A.3 and Section 5.1.10.A. CenturyLink has researched Mr. Haney's account and has found that he has single party service. CenturyLink does not believe there are any customers who still have multiparty service in Washington.

Caller ID: CenturyLink's tariff provides that Caller ID is available where facilities permit. WN U-10, Section 5.4.2.A.6.b.4. There are some areas in the state where Caller ID is not enabled, and Mr. Haney's line is in one of those areas.

Repair issues: Mr. Haney states that his telephone service has been out many times, and that most recently it was out for a month. CenturyLink has researched this issue and has found that on September 14, 2011, Mrs. Haney reported they could not receive incoming calls and also a chirping sound on the line. The trouble ticket was closed on the same day with notes that a line serving module was replaced.

Further trouble was reported on September 23, 2011 with an issue of no dial tone. The trouble ticket was closed the same day with notes that the cable was repaired. Finally, on March 22, 2012, CenturyLink received a trouble report involving intermittent dial tone and noise on the line. The trouble ticket was closed on the next day with a note that there was a bad channel on a CM8 carrier system – this is a system that is particularly suited for remote areas with low density and long loops. The system enables multiple communications paths to be established simultaneously on a single loop through frequency division multiplexing. When one of the channels is bad, appropriate repairs are made to bring the customer back into service.

CenturyLink also found and reported the first two of these issues in connection with its Service Quality Report, and in particular in the Supplemental Information filed on November 18, 2011. The root cause analysis that CenturyLink conducted led the company to discover that a pedestal had been crushed by a fallen tree, and as a result there were intermittent service problems in the area served by that pedestal. Further investigation led to the discovery of a section of deteriorating cable, which was also subsequently repaired and is scheduled to be replaced once permitting and other requirements are complete.

**Response to the letter of Ms. Peasley:** Ms. Peasley's letter raises service quality issues with her landline service, and a complaint about Caller ID. Her discussion of partyline service has been addressed above in connection with Mr. Haney's letter.

Service Quality: Ms. Peasley complains that she has had ongoing, unresolved service quality issues, including chirping on the line. CenturyLink has researched this issue and found that on December 12, 2011 Ms. Peasley called to report a chirping noise on all phones in the home. The trouble ticket was closed the following day by CenturyLink testers. The account notes reflect that the tester talked to Mr. Peasley, who reported that there was no problem. Ms. Peasley's

account reflects that she called again on January 5, 2012 reporting a loud chirping noise and that she sometimes cannot hear the caller. The ticket was closed the following day with notes that a bad CM-8 Field Unit was replaced.

Caller ID: Ms. Peasley also reports that one of her constituents, Gail Kuehne, has advised her that she cannot get Caller ID. As noted above, this is one of the areas in the state where Caller ID is not available due to limitations with the CM8 system.

**Response to the letter of Native Link:** Finally, Mr. Paul Walk of Native Link has written to complain about the condition of CenturyLink's outside plant on the Colville reservation. He specifically complains about damaged, unrepaired pedestals, and aerial drops. He enclosed three pictures of damaged pedestals. He states that some homes in the area do not have access to telecommunications services, and "most" do not have access to data services. He concludes that CenturyLink has not made an adequate investment in the tribal areas for either deployment or maintenance of facilities.

Mr. Walk's assessment, made based on a drive around the reservation, is lacking in many respects:

First – CenturyLink has a repair and maintenance process under which a trouble report will trigger an investigation and inspection, and of course repair activity as necessary. When defective or damaged facilities are discovered in connection with a repair call, even if those facilities are not the cause of the trouble, the repair or replacement will be made at that time, or within a week of discovery if it cannot be done at that time.

Second – CenturyLink has investigated the particular pedestals that were in the photographs. In fact, it did appear that they had been hit by cars or snowplows. This is not particularly remarkable in February in a snowy area such as Nespelem. In addition, there had apparently not been any trouble associated with the damage. In any event, they have since been repaired.

Third – CenturyLink has reviewed the confidential data reported to the Commission with regard to the number of trouble reports per 100 lines. The standard is no more than 4 reports per 100 lines. Frequently, small wire centers might experience a disproportionately high number of reports, because of the small number of lines, and the fact that trouble on a single cable can impact a relatively large number of customers. In this case, however, the trouble reports for Nespelem are within the standard for all months, and are not disproportionately high compared to other wire centers.

Fourth – Mr. Walk fails to recognize the challenges posed by serving such a remote and sparsely populated area. The longest loop in Nespelem is 27 miles, and in nearby Omak the longest loop is 40 miles – distances unheard of in most wire centers.

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Fifth – in response to the issue of homes without access to telecommunications – without further information, we cannot know which homes are at issue, but CenturyLink did discuss this issue in the Service Quality Report and Plan and described the line extension policy that is available to all customers who want an extension of service.

Based on the information provided herein, CenturyLink respectfully suggests that there is no longer any linkage between the Colville Tribes' issues and the merger docket, and asks that the Commission either open another docket or address these issues informally, if any further action is to be taken.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions on any of these issues, or to contact Mark Reynolds at 206-345-1574; [mark.reynolds3@centurylink.com](mailto:mark.reynolds3@centurylink.com).

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Anderl