

# American Indian, consumer groups: Stop dental mercury on reservations

WASHINGTON (PRNewswire-USNewswire) – The International Indian Treaty Council and Consumers for Dental Choice filed a petition in February calling on the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs and the Secretary of Health and Human Services (who runs the Indian Health Service) to end the use of amalgam – a dental filling that is 50 percent mercury – in Indian Health Service clinics and on Tribal lands.

In 2013, the U.S. signed the legally binding Minamata Convention on Mercury, which requires the government to phase down dental amalgam use. The convention specifically calls for “discouraging

insurance policies and programmes that favour dental amalgam use over mercury-free dental restoration” and “encouraging insurance policies and programmes that favour the use of quality alternatives to dental amalgam for dental restoration.”<sup>1</sup>

Violating the government’s promise to phase down amalgam use, the U.S. Indian Health Service (IHS) continues to favor mercury fillings for American Indians. Dental amalgam is disproportionately used in racial minorities, including American Indians.

A 2011 study published in the Journal of the American Dental Association found

that dental amalgam is used for 73 percent of dental restorations in patients of “other” race (defined as American Indian/Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander). Meanwhile, dental amalgam is used for only 51 percent of restorations in white patients.<sup>2</sup>

IHS’s continuing use of dental amalgam for American Indians contributes to separate-but-“equal” dental treatment – mercury fillings for American Indians, increasingly mercury-free fillings for everyone else.

IHS still uses amalgam in American Indian children even though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) acknowledges there is minimal evidence that amalgam is safe for children and the unborn: “Very limited to no clinical information is available regarding long-term health outcomes in pregnant women and their developing fetuses, and children under the age of six, including infants who are breastfed.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, FDA’s dental amalgam rule concedes that “The developing neurological systems in fetuses and young children may be more sensitive to the neurotoxic effects of mercury vapor.”<sup>4</sup>

1 Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013), [mercuryconvention.org/](http://mercuryconvention.org/)

2 Sonia K. Makhija, Valeria V. Gordan, Gregg H. Gilbert, Mark S. Litaker, D. Brad Rindal, Daniel J. Pihlstrom and Vibeke Qvist, Practitioner, patient and carious lesion characteristics associated with type of restorative material: Findings from The Dental Practice-Based Research Network, J Am Dent Assoc 2011;142:622-632, [jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(14\)65564-1/pdf](http://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(14)65564-1/pdf), p.629

3 FDA Special Controls Guidance Document on Dental Amalgam, [fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/ucm073311.htm](http://fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/ucm073311.htm)

4 FDA Special Controls Guidance Document on Dental Amalgam, [fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/ucm073311.htm](http://fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/ucm073311.htm)

## Time to apply for Siletz Tribal Head Start’s 2016-2017 school year

It’s time to apply for your child to attend the Siletz Tribal Head Start program for our upcoming 2016-2017 school year.

If your child will be age 3 or 4 as of Sept. 1, 2016, he/she is eligible to enroll in the Siletz Tribal Head Start program. Call us at 800-922-1399 or 541-444-2532 and ask for Head Start to request an application.

There are new enrollment requirements that all Head Start programs must meet. All Head Start programs are now required to conduct either a face-to-face or telephone interview with all applicants to verify the information on their child’s application. So when you return your application, we will be calling to verify the information with you.

This new requirement must be met before we can select your child for enrollment into our program. If we are unable to reach you, we will leave a detailed message asking you to call us back. Please call us back as soon as possible so we can finish processing your child’s enrollment application.

This is a mandatory requirement we must meet and we are unable to enroll any child until we complete this verification process. If you have questions about our program, call either number above and ask for Head Start.

### Art camp in Portland accepting applications

The Journeys Art Camp is a free pre-college artist-in-residence camp on the Oregon College of Art and Craft campus (Portland, Ore.) specifically designed for American Indian (and Native Hawaiians/indigenous youth) age 15-19.

The deadline to submit materials is May 1. Only 12 students will be accepted. For more information, visit [ocac.edu/community-programs/journeys-program](http://ocac.edu/community-programs/journeys-program).



Save the Date

## AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

“I will bring honor to my heritage” —Howard Rainer

**APRIL 8, 2016**

8:15am–5pm  
Salem Campus  
Bldg. 6 Auditorium

For more information  
please contact:

**LINDA RINGO-REYNA**  
509.399.5143

**SONYA MOODY-JURADO**  
503.390.9494



No cost conference featuring Honored Teacher and Elder Howard Rainer, as well as several other outstanding Native American Educators. The focus is on students grades 8–12 who identify as Native American or Alaskan Indian.



Discover  
**Chemeketa**  
Community College

### 2016 Standing Committee Vacancies

Applications Due by April 13, 2016

For Tribal members interested in serving on a Standing Committee, please fill out this form and return it prior to April 13, 2016.

Please mail or fax your application to Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Attn: Executive Secretary to Tribal Council, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549; fax: 541-444-8325.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Roll No: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Day ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Evening ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

If you only want to be considered for one committee, please indicate by inserting the number 1 next to the committee of interest. If you have interest in more than one committee, please indicate by numbering your preference 1 (first choice), 2 (second choice) and 3 (third choice).

- Education Committee (2 vacancies)
- Natural Resources Committee (1 vacancy)
- Enrollment Committee (1 vacancy)

Committee appointments will be made at the Regular Tribal Council meeting in April.

If you have any questions, please call Tami Miner, executive secretary to Tribal Council, at 800-922-1399, ext. 1203, or 541-444-8203.