

WE NEED CHERRY POINT'S WORKING-CLASS JOBS
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The Northwest Jobs Alliance exists to foster the growth of family-wage jobs. Our membership includes over 100 labor organizations, businesses and individuals from across the political spectrum. And it saddens us to observe that the current leadership of the Lummi Nation has embarked upon a campaign against the working families of Whatcom County. These are some of the very families that patronize the Silver Reef Casino and other Lummi enterprises. Some thanks.

This poke-in-the-eye strategy is just plain wrong-headed and is fostering unnecessary ill will. Respect is a reciprocal concept and we ask the Lummi political leaders to demonstrate concern and respect for all of the people of this region, just as they deserve with regard to Lummi culture and rights.

Recent pronouncements of Lummi policies against existing and new industry at Cherry Point speak of a shift toward radicalism that couldn't come at a worse time, just as hundreds of Intalco families are facing layoffs. The last thing that the community needs is a diminishment of opportunity and hope. Specifically, we are troubled by a letter sent on behalf of the Lummi Nation to Whatcom County Planning and Development Services on Dec. 10 asking that the following language be included in county land-use policies:

"The shipment of coal, or crude oil, from any new shipping terminal or pier, or from any existing terminal or pier, is prohibited."

This echoes previous requests that the Lummi have made to Whatcom County to begin phasing out the Cherry Point heavy industrial zone. It is also well-documented that Lummi leaders seek to take over privately owned industrial land at Cherry Point for annexation to the reservation. (Months ago, as a courtesy, we presented documents evidencing this Lummi plan to tribal leaders for their authentication or denial, but have received no response.)

Let's be clear what is being proposed here. Out of 7,000 employers in Whatcom County, the 11 employers at Cherry Point generate 15 percent of the county's wage base, according to a study by experts at Western Washington University and the University of Washington. These are some of the best jobs around and the tribe's leaders are proposing their elimination, despite these facts:

- Whatcom County ranks 30th out of 39 counties for personal income growth [Bellingham Herald 11/19/15].
- Whatcom County is rated as one of the least affordable housing markets in the state when looking at income in relation to housing costs [Washington State Department of Commerce].
- Major county employers like Intalco, CH2M Hill, Haggen and the Nooksack Casino are shedding jobs like crazy.
- Less than a majority of Washingtonians are now in the middle class [Pew Research].

It should also be noted that the three largest Cherry Point industries alone carry 5 percent of the county's property tax load and are the source of approximately one-third of annual donations to United Way. And Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery just announced a stunning \$700,000 donation to upgrade county soccer fields. So plans to kill the goose that laid the golden egg may need rethinking.

"Beggaring thy neighbor" is never a recipe for goodwill. On the other hand, "a rising tide lifts all boats." Let's get on the same page as neighbors and work for the common good, rather than divisive, win-lose propositions. We would like to be partners with the Lummi leaders in promoting the welfare of all Whatcom County residents.

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