



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

United States Attorney
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Woman Sentenced to One Year for Embezzling \$100,000 from the Spokane Tribe's Division of Child and Family Services

Spokane, Washington – First Assistant United States Attorney Pete Serrano announced that on January 21, 2026, United States District Judge Rebecca L. Pennell sentenced Tawhnee Willow Colvin, of Davenport, Washington, to one year and a day following her conviction on twenty-six counts of bank fraud and embezzlement from a tribal organization. Colvin will also serve five years of supervised released and is required to pay \$100,830 in restitution to the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

Colvin was convicted by a jury on all twenty-six counts charged following a trial in September 2025. As evidence presented at the trial established, Colvin was employed as Assistant Director of the Spokane Tribe of Indians' Department of Health and Human Services and Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). As part of her position as Assistant Director of DCFS, Colvin had access to the Spokane Tribe of Indians bank account which held per capita funds to be used for the care of needy children who were in temporary custody of the Tribe. Between October 2019 and November 2023, Colvin abused her position of trust to make more than seventy fraudulent money transfers, starting with small transfers until she eventually transferred thousands of dollars at a time, totaling over \$50,000, from the DCFS bank account to her own personal bank account. She also took out over \$50,000 cash from the same bank account. Colvin was terminated from her position at the Tribe on October 23, 2023, but even after her termination she continued to fraudulently transfer funds to her personal account.

During the sentencing hearing, Judge Pennell noted that the evidence of Colvin's guilt was overwhelming and showed that instead of using the money for the benefit of children in foster care, Colvin took it for herself.

"In an egregious breach of trust and solely for her own personal interest, Ms. Colvin exploited her position as the Assistant Director of DCFS for the Spokane Tribe of Indian to steal thousands of dollars from vulnerable children over a period of years," stated First Assistant Pete Serrano. "Brazenly, Ms. Colvin continued her crimes even after the Tribe terminated her employment. Sadly, it remains unknown how many children Ms. Colvin harmed through her crimes. The

United States Attorney's Office is grateful for the diligent efforts of the FBI who investigated this case, the trust and collaboration of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the prosecutors and staff at our office who ensured Ms. Colvin was brought to justice."

"For years, Ms. Colvin abused the faith placed in her as a public servant to steal tribal funds intended to care for children in foster care," said W. Mike Herrington, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Seattle field office. "For her own personal gain, she stole more than \$100,000, leaving the account almost completely drained. Every one of these dozens of transfers diverted resources away from the most vulnerable members of our society and into her pockets. The FBI is committed to holding accountable fraudsters who choose greed instead of safeguarding the funds under their stewardship."

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Frieda K. Zimmerman and Jeremy J. Kelley.

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