

Tribe, Teck continue court battle

NESPELEM — The Colville Confederated Tribes have filed a final brief in its latest 9th Circuit Court of Appeals battle with Canadian mining company Teck Metals.

The company dumped toxic waste in the upper Columbia River for decades. In the past several years, Teck has suffered a series of losses in federal court battles with the tribe while attempting to avoid liability for polluting the Columbia from its Trail, B.C., smelter.

Most recently, Teck asked the 9th Circuit to overturn several lower court decisions in the case.

The tribe filed its brief June 30. Teck must submit a final reply brief by Aug. 14. Oral argument likely will be in early 2018, the tribe said.

The tribe and state initially sued Teck in 2008 to force the company to participate in investigation and cleanup of the upper Columbia. Since then, federal courts have found that Teck is liable under U.S. environmental law and responsible for costs of investigation and any cleanup of a 150-mile stretch of the river, and that the mining company must pay the tribe's legal costs in the suit.