

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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UTPD Exhausts Leads, No Further Searches Planned for Missing Wesley Jones

MISSION – The Umatilla Tribal Police Department's (UTPD) lead investigator in the case of missing Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) member Wesley Dixon Jones said no further searches are planned because the department has depleted all its leads.

UTPD Det. William Morris said without new information there are no plans to conduct any more searches for the 71-year-old Jones who went missing Oct. 5.

"At this point we've exhausted all of our leads, and we will, of course, continue to follow up on any new leads that to come in," Morris said. He added that he's unaware of any searches planned by Jones's family or any independent entity. "I am still in touch with the family, and they are aware that we have exhausted all of our leads."

Morris said the UTPD would be open to the possibility of outside help on the investigation, but without new information there are no leads to follow.

He said the UTPD investigation team would assess the case later this month to determine if there is any further action that can be taken. If not, he said, there is a possibility the case could become a cold case.

A cold case is an unsolved investigation that remains open but is not active pending the discovery of new information.

"An open investigation and an active investigation are not exactly the same thing," Morris said. "I can't say the investigation is closed because we haven't discovered the truth, so it's open but functionally inactive."

That's why he is still encouraging the public to bring forth any new leads to the UTPD. Anyone with information can call the UTPD at 541-278-0550.

Jones was last seen along east Short Mile Road on the Umatilla Indian Reservation in a gray 2003 Ford Escape with Oregon license plate SM15454. When the vehicle returned west on the same road Jones was no longer visible in it. The driver's identity hasn't been disclosed because of the investigation.

He is described as a 5-feet, 8-inch-tall Native American weighing approximately 140 pounds with long black hair and brown eyes. Jones was last seen wearing a black and red Tiger Scott jacket, black shirt, black sweatpants and boots.

Since Oct. 6, the UTPD has conducted searches with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Search & Rescue, aerial drone searches over parts of the Umatilla River and searches on foot. Other areas included in the investigation are between Cayuse and Bingham roads as well as Short Mile Road to Cayuse Road, including River Road.

From Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, the MMIW Search & Hope Alliance used sonar at deeper spots in the Umatilla River. That search also included an area east of Sampson Lane and Short Mile Road along the railroad right-of-way, as well as upriver around the Cayuse community.

On Nov. 18, the UTPD, with the help of CTUIR's Geographic Information Systems, conducted an aerial drone search in three previously unsearched locations. Citing the investigation, Morris did not specify the locations other than they were farther away from the Umatilla River.

On Dec. 3, a five-member FBI dive team searched Johnley Pond near Cayuse with boats using specialized equipment, including an underwater drone. However, the search yielded no results.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption: Wesley Dixon Jones