



Bill Wolfe DDS

Another Broken Promise

Excerpted from an article by Charlie Brown, attorney for Consumers for Dental Choice

The U.S. government is breaking a treaty that would protect Native American rights. This time, it's the *Minamata Convention on Mercury*, which requires the phase down of amalgam use and specifically urges "discouraging insurance policies and programs that favor dental amalgam use over mercury free dental restoration".

Therefore, the *International Indian Treaty Council* and *Consumers for Dental Choice* have filed a petition calling to end the use of dental mercury in Indian Health Service clinics and on tribal lands.

"Citizen Petition" to Phase Out the *Indian Health Service's* Dental Mercury Use/February 11, 2016—To: The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State/U.S. Department of State

Dear Secretary Kerry:

Dental amalgam, a material for filling tooth cavities, is approximately 50% mercury—a neurotoxin, a reproductive toxin, and a pollutant. Nonetheless, the U.S. government's Indian Health Service (IHS) still uses dental amalgam in American Indians. In its 2013 resolution, the *National Congress of American Indians* calls on the IHS to "phase down, then phase out on a timetable...the use of dental amalgam in IHS programs; favor the use of non-mercury alternatives to dental amalgam in HIS programs in the interim;

and provide information to patients and parents regarding the impacts of mercury from amalgam.

Nevertheless, the IHS has failed to take any action or even to respond. This breaks the U.S. Government's commitments under the *Nation to Nation/Government to Government relationship*, as established under *Nation to Nation Treaties, US Laws and Executive Orders of this Administration; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Minamata Convention on Mercury*; and federal sustainable acquisition policies.

Action Requested:

1. Phase down, then phase out in accordance with a clear timetable, the use of dental amalgam in Indian Health Service (IHS) programs.
2. End the use of mercury-containing dental amalgam in *American Indian* and *Alaska Native* children in IHS programs immediately.
3. Provide information to *American Indian* and *Alaskan Native* patients, parents, communities and Tribal leaders immediately regarding mercury from dental amalgam (including the risks to environment, children, and culture) and the availability of mercury-free fillings.

Petitioners call on the *Secretary of the Interior* to support these actions in order to protect American Indian land, water, fish, other resources from dental mercury pollution caused by the pro-amalgam policies of the Indian Health Service and to enforce the *Minamata Convention on Mercury* and uphold the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Dental amalgam is disproportionately used in racial minorities, including *American Indians* and *Alaska Natives*. A 2011 study published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association* found that dental amalgam is used for 73% of dental restorations in patients of "other" race (*American Indian/Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander*), therefore exposing *American Indian* and *Alaska Native* children to more mercury, in addition to poisoning their diet and threatening their culture. After amalgam enters the environment, microorganisms can change elemental mercury into methylmercury, a highly toxic form of mercury that accumulates in fish, shellfish, and people that eat fish.

"Mercury from dental amalgam and other sources has a profound effect upon traditional Native lifestyles, which value fish as an integral part of tribal culture."(*International Indian Treaty Council*).

In 2013, the *National Congress of American Indians* called on the IHS to "phase down, then phase out...the use of dental amalgam in IHS programs; favor the use of non-mercury alternatives to dental amalgam in IHS programs; and provide information to patients and parents regarding the impact of mercury from this and other sources. The IHS has ignored this request.

The U.S. government itself is among the largest amalgam users. It is time for our government to stop its own use of this destructive mercury product—and it can start with the *Indian Health Service*.

SILVER FILLINGS ARE APPROXIMATELY 50% MERCURY!

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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Academy Award Winning Movie Actress

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