



2024 Annual Convention Ridgefield, Washington

RESOLUTION #2024 – 32

“RECTIFYING THE DEHUMANIZATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN STATE LEGAL SYSTEMS”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for natural, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and Tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of ATNI; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people in what is now known as the United States have been dehumanized since before the United States was a country; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people were unjustly incarcerated by the United States and Washington state governments in the 1800s and 1900s, including Indigenous youth who were

first mass incarcerated through U.S. Indian boarding schools, where they suffered severe abuse; and

WHEREAS, the historical, inter-generational trauma caused by the historical incarceration of Indigenous people and youth, as well as the separation and division of Indigenous families and communities and the destruction of Indigenous kinship systems, is felt deeply by Indigenous peoples; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1896, when Tribal citizens were not considered U.S. citizens, the U.S. Supreme Court has excluded Tribal citizens from universal protection under the U.S. Constitution Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, the American legal system's failure to universally venerate Indigenous humanity correlates to endemic rates of state juvenile incarceration, missing and murdered Indigenous people, and suicide; and

WHEREAS, the mass incarceration of Indigenous people in Washington state continues today; according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington state incarcerates Indigenous people at more than six times the rate of white people; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2021 report on "Race and Washington's Criminal Justice System" issued to the Washington State Supreme Court, Indigenous people are more likely to have force used against them by law enforcement, arrested more frequently, received felony sentences at a higher rate, and incarcerated at a higher rate, as compared to white people in Washington state; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Patrol stops and searches Indigenous people at a rate more than five times higher than white people, including on Tribal reservations; and

WHEREAS, due to systemic discriminatory state and local law enforcement practices, Indigenous juvenile are three times more likely than white juveniles to be referred into the Washington state criminal system for juvenile adjudications, rather than to be deferred away from that system; and

WHEREAS, by 2023, as much as 41% of the Indigenous persons incarcerated by the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) suffer overly long sentences because of state court sentencing enhancements for mistakes they made while they were juveniles; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, the Washington State Supreme Court issued a letter to Members of the Judiciary and the Legal Community in Washington state, decrying the historical "devaluation and degradation of black lives" as "a persistent and systemic injustice that predates this nation's founding"; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Supreme Court's words in that letter ring true for Indigenous people in Washington state: "The injustices faced by Indigenous Americans are not relics of the past. We continue to see racialized policing and the overrepresentation of

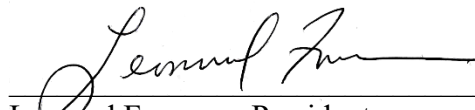
Indigenous Americans in every stage of our criminal and juvenile justice systems. Our institutions remain affected by the vestiges of colonization”; and

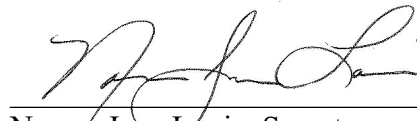
WHEREAS, the injustice still plaguing Tribal and Indigenous people in Washington state “has its roots in the individual and collective actions of many, and it cannot be addressed without the individual and collective actions” of those who create, steward, and enforce the law; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the Washington State Supreme Court to issue a proclamation that urges action by those in the legal and judicial system to rectify the historical and continued dehumanization of Indigenous people in Washington state.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2024 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians, held at ilani Casino Resort, Ridgefield, Washington on September 29 – October 3, 2024 with a quorum present.


Leonard Forsman, President


Norma Jean Louie, Secretary