



2017 Mid-Year Convention Portland, OR

RESOLUTION #17 - 23

“SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN INDIANS/ALASKA NATIVE STUDENT RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AT COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES AND EVENTS”

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 to 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 national, 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 the ATNI; and

WHEREAS, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act is a U. S. federal law and a joint resolution of Congress that was passed in 1978 to protect and preserve the traditional religious rights and cultural practices of American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, federal law, long standing policy and inherent sovereignty have long recognized the religious and cultural significance of ceremonial items to Native peoples; and

WHEREAS, Congress exempted American Indians and Alaska Natives from the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1962, which prohibited the take, transport, and possession of bald and golden eagles, and thus allowed tribal members to continue to include eagle parts in their religious ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native students seek to express and practice their religious and spiritual beliefs and celebrate their personal academic achievement, leadership, and transition into adulthood, among other things, by wearing items of religious significance including but not limited to, eagle feathers, cedar hats, bead work, headdresses, stoles and other traditional regalia at their commencement ceremony; and

WHEREAS, graduation is an especially significant occasion for Native students and families, considering that the American Indian and Alaska Native high school graduation rate is 67 percent, the lowest of any racial or ethnic demographic across all schools in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, according to many Native religious and spiritual traditions, eagle feathers, head dresses and other sacred items are worn only in times of great honor and often to mark significant personal achievement; and

WHEREAS, during the past academic year a number of media outlets across the country covered stories of Native American students not being allowed to wear their eagle feathers or other items of cultural and spiritual significance during their commencement celebrations in certain school districts which has caused unnecessary distress on students and families; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the ATNI supports the right of American Indian and Alaska Native students to practice and express their traditional religious and spiritual beliefs and honor their academic and other achievements at commencement ceremonies and events; and

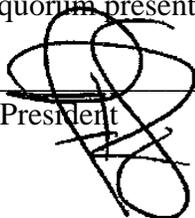
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges all schools to respect traditional tribal religious and spiritual beliefs by allowing Native students to practice their religious freedom; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2017 Mid-Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Double Tree by Hilton - Portland, Oregon, on May 23-26, 2017, with a quorum present.

Fawn Sharp, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary

