



2013 Mid-Year Convention Airway Heights, Washington

“RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE TRANSFER OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS, PERSONNEL, AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION”

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 _____ (Name of Tribe) signed a binding treaty with the federal government that includes certain responsibilities, such as education;

WHEREAS, education is a high priority for our people; so much so that our tribes have chartered the Northwest Indian College and Salish Kootenai College;

WHEREAS, the federal government has a direct moral and legal responsibility – as yet unfulfilled -- to each of the federally recognized American Indian tribes with which it signed treaties;

WHEREAS, the federal Trust Responsibility to American Indian tribes establishes a political distinction; not a race-based distinction;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of the Interior, within which reside the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education, has the primary responsibility for the federal role in American Indian/Alaska Native education – which derives directly from the above mentioned treaties;

WHEREAS, the responsibility for Indian programs has rested with the Department of the Interior since its inception in 1849; and over the years, an understanding of the Trust Responsibility has become something with which the Interior's employees at all levels have some familiarity;

WHEREAS, the Department of Education is one of the newest, smallest, and most often threatened federal departments;

WHEREAS, through no fault of their own, Department of Education staff at the programmatic level know little or nothing about American Indians, Tribal Sovereignty, or the federal Trust Responsibility; the responsibility for Indian programs has rested with the Department of the Interior since its inception in 1849; and over the years, an understanding of the Trust Responsibility has become something with which the Interior's employees at all levels have some familiarity;

WHEREAS, the Department of Education is one of the newest, smallest, and most often threatened federal departments;

WHEREAS, through no fault of their own, Department of Education staff at the programmatic level know little or nothing about American Indians, Tribal Sovereignty, or the federal Trust Responsibility;

WHEREAS, the fundamental role of the federal Trust Responsibility and respect for Tribal Sovereignty in Indian education require that the Bureau of Indian Education stay within the U.S. Department of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, to move the BIE to the Department of Education would pose a great risk to American Indian people.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT REOLVED that _The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians stands opposed to any effort to transfer the Bureau of Indian Education to the US Department of Education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, rather than moving from one department to the other, we request that the federal government focus attention on providing adequate resources necessary to ensure high quality *tribal* education at all levels, pre-K to college.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2013 Mid-Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Northern Quest Resort Casino, Airway Heights, Washington on May 13 – 16, 2013 with a quorum present.

Fawn Sharp, President

Norma Jean Louie, Secretary