



2023 Annual Convention Grand Mound, Washington

RESOLUTION #2023 – 44

“SUPPORT FILING WITH THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON ENFORCED AND INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES OF MISSING INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL CHILDREN”

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 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 ATNI; and

WHEREAS, the United States attempted deliberate eradication of Native American culture and forced assimilation through its Indian Boarding School Policy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children were required by law to attend boarding schools with the stated purpose of “Kill the Indian, Save the Man”, and families were frequently coerced into sending their children to boarding schools, and some children were reportedly taken from their families by force to attend boarding schools; and

WHEREAS, the Policy's deliberate intention was the separation of Native American children from their families, cultures, and Tribal communities through removal, cutting their hair, taking their clothing and issuing uniforms, forbidding them to speak their language or engage in any cultural practices, and carrying out severe and often brutal punishments constituting, in some cases, physical, emotional and mental torture for non-compliance; and

WHEREAS, the failure of the United States to provide for adequate physical, emotional and medical care for the children taken into their custody under United States law resulted in inadequate nutrition, illness, neglect, and emotional, physical, mental, sexual and spiritual trauma, all contributing to mortality rates significantly in excess of those of contemporary non-Indian children; and

WHEREAS, the information collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the Indian Residential Schools in Canada documented that thousands of Native children, approximately 4000 children taken into custody under that policy, which was modeled on the US Boarding School Policy, perished in the Residential schools as a result of inadequate nutrition, untreated illnesses, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and despair; and

WHEREAS, the United States has never provided an accounting for the actual number of American Indian and Alaska Native children removed to Boarding schools between 1869 and 1972, or the identities, numbers, Tribal identities or causes of death of the children who passed away while in the custody of the schools; and

WHEREAS, many of these children are buried in cemeteries at or near former school sites and significant numbers are in graves marked as "unknown"; and

WHEREAS, having taken these children from homes and communities and held them in federal custody, the United States is obligated to account for their fate under federal responsibilities pursuant to treaties and agreements with the Tribes, the federal trust obligation to honor and protect the children of the Tribes, and principles of international human rights law regarding Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances that require governments to account for the fate of all persons taken into governmental custody who have not yet been returned to their families and communities, and pursuant to principles of justice and common decency; and

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the United States to account to the individual victims, the families, communities and Tribal Nations concerning the identity of each student taken into federal custody whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and the fate of each student; and

WHEREAS, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) submitted a FOIA request in February 2016 and several follow-up requests since that time to the Bureau of Indian Education requesting documentation including identities, fates and final resting places as well as steps that were taken to inform the impacted parents, families and Tribes about children that did not survive in boarding schools, and have not to this date received the requested documentation; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID) was established by the Human Rights Council in 1980, with a mandate to accept submissions on individual cases of missing persons detained under the authority of a state, as well as general allegations, and to engage with states to resolve disappearances and promote the right to truth of individuals, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, an enforced disappearance is a continuous act, beginning at the time of abduction, extending through the time when a state acknowledges the detention or releases information pertaining to the fate or whereabouts of the individual detained; and

WHEREAS, NABS, IITC, NARF, and others have conducted research that indicates that an undetermined number of Indigenous children who were taken by the United States or parties acting pursuant to the authority of the United States to attend Indian Boarding Schools, remain unaccounted for, and their ultimate fate, resting place, or whereabouts remain unknown; and

WHEREAS, NABS, IITC, NARF, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and several Tribal Nations and individual Indians filed a submission to the UNWGEID in April 2019, and presented to the UNWGEID in May 2019, regarding the undetermined number, fate, location of interment, or whereabouts of Indigenous children who were never returned home or accounted for by the United States pursuant to its Indian Boarding Schools Policy; and

WHEREAS, ATNI passed resolution #17 - 24, "Call to Collect Testimony About the American Indian and Alaska Native Children Who Went Missing Under the U.S. Boarding School Policy"; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) supports the filing of an updated submission to the UNWGEID on the issue of missing indigenous children who were abducted and detained by the United States to attend Indian Boarding Schools; and

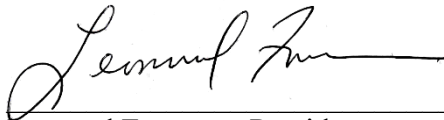
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI supports the efforts by Tribal Nations, families, individuals, and organizations seeking information and resources to empower reconciliation and healing in making a request to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to assist Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous citizens within the United States with addressing the ongoing impacts and the continuing gaps in information surrounding the United States' Indian Boarding School policies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI calls on its membership to gather testimony and share information, where appropriate, with NABS and the coalition of Tribal Nations, organizations, and individuals in submitting an update to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances filing, with the objective of persuading the United States to provide a full accounting of American Indian and Alaska Native children who were taken into government custody under the U.S. Boarding School Policy and whose fates and whereabouts remain unknown; and

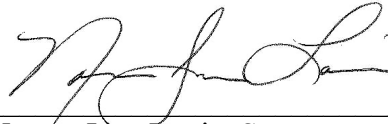
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2023 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, Great Wolf Lodge, Grand Mound, Washington on September 18 - 21, 2023, with a quorum approving.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary