



**2024 Annual Convention  
Ridgefield, Washington**

**RESOLUTION #2024 – 31**

**“PREVENTING INDIGENOUS LOSS OF LIFE IN WASHINGTON JAILS”**

**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 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 physical and sexual violence and emotional 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 Northwest Indigenous peoples today; and

**WHEREAS**, Indigenous people in Washington state suffer a suicide rate 34% higher than the general population; 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**, the human brain does not fully develop until age 25, and due to health afflictions associated with historical, inter-generational Indigenous trauma, many Indigenous people are especially vulnerable to alcohol and drug use and addiction in their youth, which according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, affects substance abuse disorder risk into adulthood; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington state lawmakers, including Governor Jay Inslee, have recognized that Indigenous populations are disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis, with Indigenous people in Washington state dying at five times the state average and at among the highest rate in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal nations in the Pacific Northwest are facing an unprecedented public health crisis with the rise of highly addictive and deadly illicit synthetic opioids, including the drug known as Fentanyl; and

**WHEREAS**, at least 1 in 4 people with an opioid use disorder had contact with the criminal justice system in the preceding year, and the rates of lifetime opioid use disorder increase as people are pushed further into the justice system, and the likelihood of criminal justice involvement increased with greater severity of opioid use; and

**WHEREAS**, according to a 2022 U.S. Bureau of Justice report titled “Managing Substance Withdrawal in Jails,” “Jail administrators, public health officials, and other stakeholders recognize that jails have become the default health care system for individuals with complex behavioral health and chronic medical conditions”; and

**WHEREAS**, that U.S. Bureau of Justice report recognizes deaths attributable to substance use and withdrawal in jail are preventable, and failing to manage withdrawal symptoms in correctional facilities can lead to serious and fatal health complications, including contributing to suicide, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempts; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Centers for Disease Control, Indigenous persons have the highest suicide rate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States, and suicide is the leading cause of death in jails according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics; and

**WHEREAS**, Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth, are dying in Washington jails from substance use and opioid use-related deaths, including suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, among those Indigenous relatives tragically lost to suicide in Washington jails are: Ivan Howtopat (age 24, Yakama Nation, Klickitat County Jail); Kimberly Bender (age 23, Quileute, City of Forks Jail); Jimi Johnson (age 27, Skokomish Tribe, Mason County Jail); Shannon Jefferson (age 36, Lummi Nation, Whatcom County Jail); LaCrisha Cate (age 34, Colville Tribes, Okanogan County Jail); Paula Jefferson (age 48, Lummi Nation, Whatcom County Jail); Jeana Rogers (age 33, Suquamish, Kitsap County Jail); and Amber Marchand (age 35, Colville Tribes, Okanogan County Jail); and

**WHEREAS**, there are no minimum state standards in Washington state for substance use and substance withdrawal screening, monitoring, or treatment; substance use disorder treatment; or suicide risk screening and prevention policies; and

**WHEREAS**, many jails in Washington state rely on correctional officers to notify medical or mental health professionals if an inmate needs medical assistance despite that many jails do not have on-site medical providers; and

**WHEREAS**, there is no mandatory training for correctional officers in Washington state related to basic substance withdrawal management, including how to recognize substance use withdrawal symptoms, when to refer an incarcerated person to a medical provider, or the increased risk of suicide in individuals in withdrawal; and

**WHEREAS**, there is no mandatory training for correctional officers in Washington state related to Tribal or Indigenous cultural competency; now

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATNI calls upon the Washington State Legislature to pass legislation in 2025 that sets minimum enforceable standards for jails in Washington state related to substance withdrawal management, and suicide prevention; and


**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that ATNI call upon the Washington State Legislature to pass legislation in 2025 that mandates the Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission to develop substance withdrawal management, suicide prevention, and Tribal and Indigenous cultural competency curriculum for its correctional officer training program by 2026; and


**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that ATNI calls upon the Washington State Governor and Attorney General to pass the afore-mentioned legislation in 2025; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that ATNI shall monitor the political activity of members of the Washington State Legislature, as well as the Washington State Governor and Attorney General, until the aforementioned legislation is passed.

**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.

  
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Leonard Forsman, President

  
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Norma Jean Louie, Secretary