



ATNI Annual 2025 Convention Suquamish, Washington

RESOLUTION # 2025 – 48

“INCARCERATED RELATIVES CALL FOR SECOND CHANCES FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE”

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 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 the representatives and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, the ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and Indian tribal governments 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 Washington State suffer a suicide rate 34% higher than the general population; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people account for 1% of Washington State’s population, and 5.95% of the State’s prison population; and

WHEREAS, the mass incarceration of Indigenous people in Washington continues in 2025, and according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice and Statistics, Washington State incarcerates Indigenous people at more than six times the rate of white people; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of Tribes, Indigenous-led organizations, and advocates including Superior Court Judges, the Washington State Supreme Court's Minority and Justice Commission, and Washington State Sentencing Guidelines Commission are fighting to end Indigenous dehumanization in state systems; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2021 report titled "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, are arrested more frequently, receive felony sentences at a higher rate, and are incarcerated at a higher rate, as compared to white people in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, according to the Washington State Department of Corrections, nearly 50% of its current population are people serving life and long sentences with no mechanism for review; and

WHEREAS, Washington State effectively ended parole in 1984 and has since enacted numerous policies that have led to the mass incarceration of Indigenous people; and

WHEREAS, ATNI has approved numerous resolutions seeking to reduce the harm that state systems of criminalization and policing on Indigenous people, to restore hope, and to save countless lives, including ATNI Resolutions #2023-51, #2024-31, #2024-32, and #2024-33; and

WHEREAS, currently incarcerated Indigenous relatives drafted, proposed, and championed legislation to restore judicial discretion to review life and long sentences and resentence individuals who have demonstrated remarkable rehabilitation and served significant periods of incarceration, which would particularly benefit Indigenous people; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, the Washington State House of Representatives passed this Judicial Discretion Act in the form of House Bill 2001; and

WHEREAS, In response to ATNI Resolution #2024-32, the Washington State Supreme Court on June 11th, 2025 heard testimony from currently and formerly incarcerated relatives about intergenerational trauma, where these brothers called for second chances for Indigenous people, and Chief Justice Debra Stephens in her closing remarks stated "You lift up a person, you lift up a family, you lift up a family, you lift up a community, you lift up a community you lift up a Nation"; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people have the capacity to change and rehabilitate, even prior to the completion of their sentences; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the Washington State Legislature to pass the Judicial Discretion Act (HB 1125/SB 5269) in the 2026 Session and establish a mechanism for sentence review; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the Washington State Governor and Attorney General to support the aforementioned legislation in 2026; and

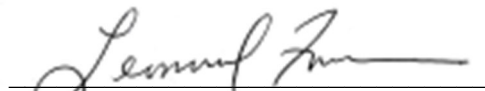
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ATNI calls upon the Washington State Judiciary to support the aforementioned legislation in 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI shall monitor the political activity of the Washington State Legislature, as well as the Washington State Governor, Attorney General, and Judicial Branch until the aforementioned legislation is passed and faithfully implemented; and

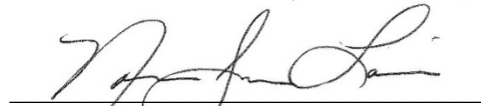
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this will be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolutions.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2025 Annual Convention held at the Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort in Suquamish, Washington on October 12-16, 2025, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary