



**2026 Winter Convention
Portland, Oregon**

RESOLUTION # 2026 – 008

**“PROTECTING INDIGENOUS CIVIL RIGHTS FROM VIOLATION BY
STATE ACTORS”**

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, since Washington state became a state in 1889, Washington state agents and actors have dehumanized, taken, or destroyed the lives of the Indigenous peoples of Washington state; and

WHEREAS, Washington state agents and actors, including those with the Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) and Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), have displaced Indigenous children from their families and kinship structures and placed them into white homes where they have suffered physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by white people; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2021 report on “Race and Washington’s Criminal Justice System” issued to the Washington State Supreme Court, Indigenous people in Washington state have had force used against them and are incarcerated by Washington state and local law enforcement agents at disproportionate rates, as compared to white people; and

WHEREAS, according to that 2021 Washington State Supreme Court report, from 2013 to 2020, Indigenous people in Washington state were killed by Washington state and local law enforcement agents at a rate 3.3 times greater than that of white people; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people have been killed by Washington state and local law enforcement agents, including in the cities of Seattle, Everett, Poulsbo, Lakewood, and on the Tulalip, Muckleshoot, and Puyallup Reservations; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth, have died in Washington prisons and jails from substance use and opioid use-related deaths, such as suicide, including in the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) and the counties of Clallam, Kitsap, Klickitat, Mason, Okanogan, and Whatcom; and

WHEREAS, many of the families of those abused Indigenous children and lost Indigenous relatives have sought or obtained justice or healing by pursuing state tort claims associated with those human and civil rights violations, against Washington state or its local governments and subdivisions, before federal and state court judges and juries in Washington; and

WHEREAS, through those state tort claims, the families of those abused Indigenous children and lost Indigenous relatives have sought or obtained monetary compensation against Washington state or its local governments and subdivisions from federal and state court judges and juries and have secured non-financial state and local reforms that are intended to prevent the loss of life of other Washington citizens, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with pursuing those state tort claims, the families of those abused Indigenous children and lost Indigenous relatives have successfully advocated for Washington state and local legislative and policy reforms that are intended to prevent the destruction or loss of life of Washington citizens, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, including for civil rights violations by DSHS, DCYF, DOC, and state and local police and jail officers; and

WHEREAS, Washington State Governor Bob Ferguson and members of the Washington State Legislature are seeking to limit the state’s liability exposure for personal injuries or civil rights violations caused by Washington State or its local governments and subdivisions, including limiting access to juries and attorneys, which would deepen the harms suffered by Indigenous people and victims; and

WHEREAS, through Senate Bill 6239, members of the Washington State Legislature proposed to limit or eliminate the ability of Washington citizens to pursue state tort claims against Washington state local governments and subdivisions before Washington federal and state courts and juries, including for civil rights violations by the likes of DSHS, DCYF, DOC, and state and local police and jail officers; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ATNI calls upon the Washington State Governor to forgo and the Washington State Legislature to reject any state legislation that would limit or prevent Washington citizens from fully pursuing state tort claims against Washington state or its local governments and subdivisions before federal and state courts and juries, or obtaining legal counsel to pursue such claims; and

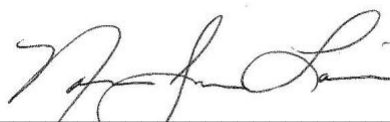
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this will be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution(s).

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2026 Winter Convention held at the Hilton Portland Downtown in Portland, Oregon, on February 1-5, 2026, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary