



2015 Annual Convention Spokane, Washington

RESOLUTION #15 – 44

“SUPPORT THE SWINOMISH TRIBE TO DEVELOP A DENTAL HEALTH AID THERAPIST (DHAT) PROGRAM UNDER TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND SUPPORTING DHAT LEGISLATION IN THE WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE”

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, this prevalence of caries infection exists in spite of the implementation of significant dental decay prevention programs by the Indian Health Service (IHS) and tribes, including fluoridation of water systems suitable for fluoridation, the use of topical fluorides and dental sealants, and education programs on oral health for children and parents; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people have a higher prevalence of dental caries and untreated tooth decay in all age groups compared to the general United States population, with many AI/AN children experiencing dental caries before the age of two, yet there are few dental caries prevention programs that target AI/AN children and, other oral health issues that persist for the AI/AN population such as:

- Seventy-nine percent of AI/AN children aged 2-4 years have dental caries;
- Majority of AI/AN children have a history of tooth decay with 78 percent of the 6-14 year olds and 91 percent of the 15-19 year olds;
- Despite a trend toward a reduction in tooth loss in the U.S. population, older data indicate 25 percent of AI/AN people aged 35 to 44 years have fewer than 20 natural teeth;
- Among all persons aged 55 years and older, nearly 75 percent have fewer than 20 natural teeth;
- Fifty-nine percent of AI/AN adults have periodontal (gum) disease;
- Seventy-eight percent AI/AN adults 35-44 years and 98 percent of elders (55 or older) have at least one tooth removed because of decay, trauma, or gum disease; and

WHEREAS, these disparities are directly attributed to a lack of dental health professionals in the Indian health system in which IHS dental providers have a patient load of 2,800 patients per provider, while general population providers have approximately 1,500 patients per provider and the IHS experiences a very high dental provider vacancy rate, with estimates that 26 percent of the dental positions within the IHS are vacant, which contributes to the lack of access to dental health services; and

WHEREAS, to meet the unmet need for dental care, to address provider shortages, and to address the cost of delivering dental care in a more effective and efficient manner, the Swinomish Tribal health program has developed a DHAT program to provide dental care to their tribal community members under the basis of Tribal sovereignty; and

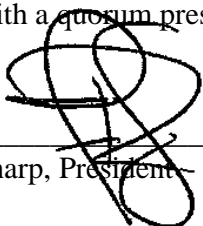
WHEREAS, Senator John McCoy and Representative David Sawyer have introduced Tribal DHAT bills in both the Senate and House of the Washington Legislature, which would authorize Dental Health Aide and Dental Health Aide Therapists working in IHS, Tribal or an Urban Indian health programs to provide mid-level dental health services consistent with the program conducted in the Alaska Native health system; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI and its member tribes support the authority of the Swinomish Tribe to develop a dental therapy program on the basis of Tribal sovereignty in order to meet the dental care needs of their tribal community; and

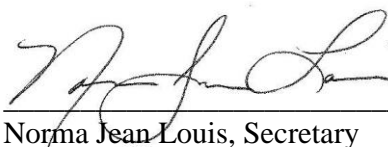
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI and its member tribes continue to support Senator McCoy and Representative Sawyer’s Tribal DHAT bills and urge the Washington State Legislature to pass this important legislation to increase access to dental services in Tribal communities and to address the deplorable oral health disparities that exist for AI/AN people.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2015 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Northern Quest Resort and Casino, Spokane, Washington on September 14-17, 2015, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President



Norma Jean Louis, Secretary