



2015 Annual Convention Spokane, Washington

RESOLUTION #15 - 50

“OUR PLEDGE TO DEFEND INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT”

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, Congress, working with tribal nations, tribal leadership, and advocates for American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) children, passed the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978 to stop the wholesale removal of Indian children by public and private agencies, taking 25–35% of all Indian children from their homes, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of leading national child welfare organizations have declared ICWA to be a “gold standard” for child welfare because as ICWA mandates, it is in every child’s best interest to be protected from harm and to prevent the unnecessary trauma that occurs when children are removed from their family, culture, and community; and

WHEREAS, national Indian and non-Indian organizations, state governments, members of Congress, tribes and tribal communities, and thousands of AI/AN individuals have supported ICWA as an essential and effective policy that protects the best interest of AI/AN children; and

WHEREAS, early application and consistent compliance with ICWA prevents unlawful removals of AI/AN children from family and promotes stable placements for AI/AN children in loving, permanent homes, connected to family and culture; and

WHEREAS, current research shows that family, culture, and community promote resiliency and healthy development in AI/AN youth; and

WHEREAS, AI/AN children continue to be taken from their homes at alarming rates (rates three times higher than other children) due largely to misapplication, ignorance, or willful non-compliance with the mandates of ICWA and often without notice to or engagement with the child’s tribe; and

WHEREAS, in response to these troubling numbers, calls for action from Indian Country and allies, and consistent and shocking reports of widespread ICWA non-compliance, federal agencies have recently acted to improve ICWA implementation and protect Indian children and families; and

WHEREAS, recent opposition to ICWA has risen in the form of frivolous litigation, misinformation campaigns with Congress, and attempts to garner media attention by exploiting tragic events and promoting racist, inaccurate stereotypes of AI/AN tribes; and

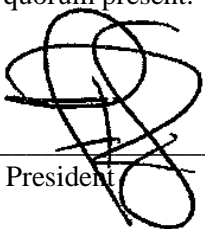
WHEREAS, those in opposition to ICWA claim to advocate on behalf of Indian children and for the best interest of Indian children, but have not consulted in any meaningful way with, or worked with, Indian Country experts, national Native organizations, or any individual tribe; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI does hereby recognize and firmly support the continued need for ICWA and federal efforts to improve ICWA compliance and implementation; and

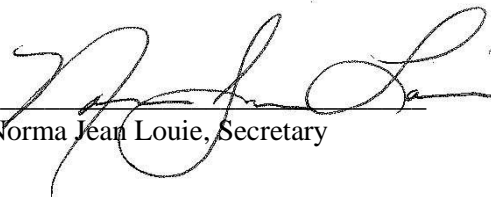
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI pledges to work hand-in-hand with tribal nations, Indian Country allies, AI/AN families, and supporters, to vigorously promote ICWA in the courtroom, state house, and Congress to protect AI/AN children and their families from the harmful effects of being denied the federal protections provided under ICWA; and

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 Louie, Secretary