



## **2016 Annual Convention Tulalip, Washington**

### **RESOLUTION #16 - 54**

#### **“SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO RETURN THE LAND AND RESOURCES OF THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE TO FEDERAL TRUST FOR THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES”**

#### **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**, in the 1870's, members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) were key players in saving the North American plains bison from extinction by some of

the last wild bison on the continent from east of the Continental Divide to the Flathead Indian Reservation for the purposes of maintaining what was essentially a conservation herd; and

**WHEREAS**, through subsequent stewardship, CSKT tribal members grew those few bison into a herd of hundreds of animals that free-ranged on the Flathead Indian Reservation up until the early 1900's, when the Reservation was allotted and opened for non-Indian settlement; and

**WHEREAS**, upon allotment and non-Indian settlement, land began to be fenced, the bison herd could no longer range freely, and the bison herd had to be sold by CSKT tribal members to private parties and the Canadian government instead of the United States, due to lack of appropriated funds; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Bison Range was established by the federal government in 1908 (35 Stat. 267; 16 U.S.C. § 671) on lands that are near the center and fully within the exterior boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation, which were unconstitutionally taken from the Tribes (*Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Montana v. United States*, 437 F.2d 458, 465 (Ct.Cl. 1971)); and

**WHEREAS**, CSKT had not consented to the federal government taking the land to establish the National Bison Range and the bison originating from the initial tribal conservation herd used to form the herd on the National Bison Range; and

**WHEREAS**, over the past century, the CSKT has maintained connections to the bison, land, and other natural resources at the National Bison Range; and

**WHEREAS**, CSKT has entered into two Self-Governance agreements with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for activities at the National Bison Range Complex during the periods of fiscal years 2005-2007 and 2008-2010; and

**WHEREAS**, CSKT is seeking legislation to restore the National Bison Range lands to the Tribes, by putting land in trust, including, the requirements that it would be required that the land continues to be: (1) used for conservation of bison, wildlife, and other natural resources and (2) open to public access and educational opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, CSKT have a historic opportunity before this federal administration leaves to accomplish return of the range; and

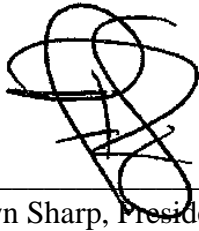
**WHEREAS**, CSKT have support of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leader Council and the National Congress of American Indians to pursue legislation to restore the National Bison Range lands to the Tribes; and

**WHEREAS**, ATNI believes that such legislation is an appropriate solution to the unique situation and history of the National Bison Range and the Tribes' relationship with the bison, wildlife, natural resources and land; now

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATNI supports the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' efforts to enact congressional legislation that would restore the National Bison Range lands to the Tribes, with the lands being held by the federal government in trust for the benefit of the Tribes.

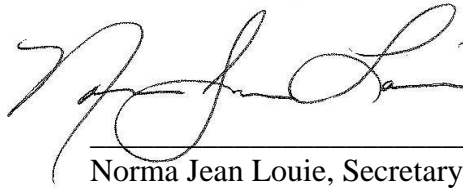
**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2016 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Tulalip Resort Casino, Tulalip, Washington on September 26-29, with a quorum present.



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Fawn Sharp, President



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Norma Jean Louie, Secretary