



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MSP-15-009

TITLE: In Support of Full and Consistent Federal Funding for American Indian Higher Education Programs and Strengthened Federal Policies to Improve American Indian Higher Education Success

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American 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 the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has a moral and legal responsibility – as yet unfulfilled – to the federally recognized tribes with which it signed treaties in exchange for more than one billion acres of land and the resources contained therein; and

WHEREAS, separate NCAI Resolutions, RAP-10-041 and REN-13-054, were previously adopted and provided conflicting policy guidance on the issues addressed by resolution MSP-15-009; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments and the United States Government have chartered 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) to ensure that high quality, culturally based Tribal higher education is accessible to American Indian people who were largely excluded from state supported higher education programs; and

WHEREAS, TCUs fulfill a fundamental role in maintaining, preserving and revitalizing irreplaceable American Indian and Alaska Native languages and cultural traditions and strengthens indigenous peoples worldwide;

WHEREAS, TCUs serve more than 100,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives (representing more than 250 Indian tribes), and other rural community members in academic and community-based programs each year;

WHEREAS, federal funding for American Indian higher education – including TCU operating funding, which is the responsibility of the U.S. Department

of the Interior; TCU land-grant funding, which is the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; as well as funding for American Indian scholarships, tuition payments, Native language research, and student success, Adult Basic Education, and career readiness initiatives, is woefully and chronically inadequate;

WHEREAS, in addition to signing binding treaties with Indian tribes, the federal government in the early 1900s signed contractual agreements with certain states, including the States of Colorado and Minnesota, calling on these states to provide tuition-free higher education for American Indians in exchange for the state's agreement to assume building and land that previously housed federal Indian board schools;

WHEREAS, over the past several decades, thousands of American Indians and Alaska Natives have accessed tuition waiver programs at Fort Lewis College and the University of Minnesota-Morris, successfully completed courses of study, and used their education for the betterment of their tribes and Indian Country;

WHEREAS, among the most successful students and most likely to complete courses of study at Fort Lewis College and University of Minnesota-Morris are students who first completed one or more courses of study at TCU;

WHEREAS, as more American Indians and Alaska Natives enroll or transfer into both TCUs and state-chartered institutions of higher education such as Fort Lewis College and University of Minnesota-Morris -- particularly non-resident students -- the rate of growth will become unsustainable if federal funding for American Indian higher education is not significantly increased;

WHEREAS, longstanding and growing inequities in federal and state policies, laws, and funding levels for American Indian and Alaska Native higher education are national concerns that require a collaborative national commitment to more and creative funding strategies and partnerships.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that NCAI does hereby assert that the President and Congress should fully and consistently fund all American Indian/Alaska Native higher education programs, including as priorities Tribal College and University programs and other programs aimed at ensuring the American Indians/Alaska Natives have access to and succeed in higher education with the goal of empowering all Native peoples with the education, skills, and tools needed to protect and strengthen Tribal Sovereignty and American Indian self-determination; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI urges the federal government to work with tribes, states, and American Indian/Alaska Native peoples on a coordinated nationwide effort to fully, consistently, and equitably support American Indian/Alaska Native higher education access and completion through strengthened support for

Tribal higher education, expanded access to scholarship and tuition funding, parity in federal funding and program participation, and other strategies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Resolution MSP-15-009 is substituted for Resolutions RAP-10-041 and REN-13-054, which are repealed by adoption of this resolution; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2015 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the St. Paul River Centre, St. Paul, MN, June 28 to July 1, 2015, with a quorum present.

Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:

Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary