

The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

A Resolution Supporting the Rights of Native Students to Wear Regalia or Objects of Religious and Cultural Significance At Graduation Ceremonies

Resolution No. 21-14



Chuck Hoskin Jr
Principal Chief



Bill Anoatubby
Governor



Gary Batton
Chief



David W. Hill
Principal Chief

WHEREAS, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC) is an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Muscogee (Creek), representing more than 780,000 Indian people throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, each year Native American students, along with their families, face the battle of being permitted or denied the right by certain public schools within the borders of our reservations to express their religious freedom, rich heritage and unique identity as citizens of sovereign nations;

WHEREAS, many Oklahoma public school systems have implemented policies that prohibit Native American students from displaying eagle feathers on their attire during graduation ceremonies, while other schools are considering similar policies; and

WHEREAS, eagle feathers hold a sacred place in the religion, culture, and history of our tribes and our citizens, and possession of this sacred item is protected and promoted by federal, state, and tribal law and policies; and

WHEREAS, under Federal law, 16 U.S.C. Section 668, it is a crime for an individual to possess an eagle feather, except "for the religious purposes of Indian tribes."

WHEREAS, Federal law also permits citizens of federally recognized tribes to receive Eagle feathers from the National repository and they are legally allowed to possess eagle feathers; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter has recognized in a letter dated May 8, 2019, that the Oklahoma Religious Freedom Act protects the right of Native American students to wear religious and culturally significant items at graduation; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, an international instrument supported by the United States, states at Article 2, "indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in their exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity; and

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NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes fully supports the rights of our Native American students to wear regalia or objects of religious and cultural significance, such as eagle feathers on their graduation attire.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes supports and encourages Oklahoma public school systems throughout the Five Tribes' reservations to adopt policies to allow our students to wear traditional tribal regalia or objects of religious and cultural significance at graduation ceremonies.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes meeting virtually on this 9th day of April, 2021, by a vote of 18 for 0 against and 0 abstentions.



Chuck Hoskin Jr., Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation



Bill Anoatubby, Governor
The Chickasaw Nation



Gary Batton, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



David Hill, Principal Chief
Muscogee (Creek) Nation