



STAND WITH THE DUWAMISH

#STANDWITHTHEDUWAMISH TRIBE

An Open Letter to Our Sisters and Brothers of All Tribal Nations, Community Members Near and Far, and Elected Federal Politicians and Policymakers

The Duwamish Tribe sends this message of goodwill, promoting peace and strength in a collective voice with our great Pacific Northwest Tribes.

We share a painful history with all First Peoples of this region: The hardship of boarding schools, family separation, deprivations of cultural practice, policing of our ways of living, the devaluing of our identities as Indigenous people, and denial of self-determination. Together, we carry that generational trauma. But we do so today with hope and determination to heal.

The U.S. Department of the Interior seems to think that the Duwamish Tribe that signed the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855 somehow ceased to exist at some point over the past 167 years.

We have not ceased to exist.

This denial of federal recognition is incorrect both as to the facts and the law, and has very real consequences for our members:

- ▶ We are denied federal support for health, education, and anti-poverty programs.
- ▶ We are denied tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and the commitment of the federal government to our continued survival.
- ▶ And when our identity, culture, religious freedoms, and indeed our very existence is denied, so is our individual dignity.

In spite of this injustice, we remain organized, supportive of our members, and active in the community. We are stewards of the local environment and of our traditions. We contribute to the cultural health of our city.

We want our 600-plus members to enjoy the same legal rights as members of federally recognized tribes, and to fully realize the treaty promises made to them by the United States government in 1855.

To the unrecognized tribes that, like the Duwamish Tribe, await justice from the United States government, we must not lose hope and instead organize and commit to supporting each other with courage.

To all of our sisters and brothers of this region's tribes, the Duwamish Tribe remains committed to intertribal cooperation to advance our collective wellbeing as diverse Indigenous people. We honor and respect those who share our Duwamish heritage. We are committed to restoring the relationships between our people and places, promoting the diversity of our tribal cultures, engaging in traditional stewardship of the environment, working with the many tribal governments, and collaborating in community economic opportunities.

To community members near and far, after 17 decades of broken promises, cultural erasure, and outright persecution since settlers landed on our ancestral lands, we are now experiencing a moment of hope like never before.

These days, the name "Duwamish" is spoken hundreds of times each day in land acknowledgments at gatherings around the city. On the banks of the river that also bears our name, the Duwamish River, a beautiful longhouse stands to celebrate our culture and serve our community. More than 20,000 individuals and organizations have volunteered to pay "Real Rent," benefiting Duwamish Tribal Services, the non-profit arm of the Duwamish Tribe, in recognition that they live and work on the land from which the Duwamish people were displaced. **We thank you.**

The acknowledgement of the Duwamish native presence in what is now Seattle is vital to everyone who wants to live in accordance with their values.

To those tribes who have been fortunate enough to receive federal recognition, we honor your capacity to sustain your tribe with the necessary federal resources and community enterprise funds to provide for your tribal members' health and wellbeing. The Duwamish Tribe has stood with so many of you through decades of struggle. Yet, we also understand the pressures you'd endure if you were to stand with us publicly today.

We believe that federal recognition of the Duwamish Tribe will lift all people up. Turning vulnerable people against each other is a tactic the powerful often used to escape accountability. Our fight is with the federal government, not with our brothers and sisters enrolled in other tribes.

Finally, to our elected federal politicians and other policymakers, we ask that you meet this moral moment. Tens of thousands of people in our region today wish to rectify what the the United States government took away from the Duwamish Tribe. Over 100,000 people have signed a petition calling for federal recognition. We have been endorsed by an ever-growing coalition of leaders, representatives, faith groups, labor unions, businesses, artists, and community organizations. Now it's time for the government to act.

We simply seek justice.

We're here. We're ready. It's time.

Rise with us, The Duwamish Tribe

