

# ACTION ITEM MEMO

Port of Tacoma Commission



Item No: 6A  
Meeting Date: October 24, 2023

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**DATE:** October 5, 2023  
**TO:** Port of Tacoma Commission  
**FROM:** Eric Johnson, Executive Director  
Sponsor: Commissioner Kristin Ang  
Project Manager: Commissioner Kristin Ang/Sean Eagan  
**SUBJECT:** Proclamation 2023-06-PT - Native American Heritage Month & Indigenous Peoples' Day

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**A. ACTION REQUESTED**

Request approval of a Proclamation 2023-06-PT recognizing the second Monday in October as "Indigenous Peoples' Day" and the month of November as "Native American Heritage Month."  
**Strategic Plan Initiative:** OS-5 and OS-6

**B. BACKGROUND**

The Port of Tacoma has adopted a Diversity and Inclusion Policy which declares that the Port respects and values the rich diversity of its employees, customers, contractors and stakeholders and that it is committed to a work environment that is inclusive and values diverse thought and expression in pursuit of the organization's mission and is committed to provide a workplace environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

On September 17, 2020, the Port of Tacoma Commission adopted Resolution 2020-06-PT identifying diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values that the Port of Tacoma shall incorporate into its Strategic Plan and into its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives. The resolution adopted the following guiding principles as the basis for the Port of Tacoma's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives: undoing and understanding the history of racism, embracing differences, and developing leadership.

On April 16, 2021, the Port of Tacoma Commission approved a new strategic plan, which contained an organization goal of Organizational Success. Two of the identified strategies contained under this identified goal were:

- Integrating the values of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as health and safety, into the Port's culture and decision-making framework (OS-5); and
- Fostering an organizational culture that attracts, develops and retains a diverse, high-performing, and engaged workforce (OS-6).

Indigenous peoples of the lands that would later become known as the Americas have occupied these lands since time immemorial. Pierce County overlaps the homelands and villages of the indigenous peoples of this region.

“Indigenous Peoples’ Day” was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native Nations to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas. On December 16, 2010, the United States announced support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (“Declaration”), which recognizes that “indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources.” Article 15 of the Declaration recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples “to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information” and obliges Nation states to “take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.”

Many jurisdictions in the United States celebrate “Indigenous Peoples’ Day,” including the cities of Spokane, adopted in 2016; Olympia, adopted in 2015; Seattle, adopted in 2014; and Tacoma, adopted in 2018. President George H.W. Bush declared the first “National Native American Heritage Month” in 1990 at the request of Congress. The Port of Tacoma also recognized Indigenous Peoples’ Day and Native American Heritage Month in 2020.

**C. SCOPE OF WORK**

The proclamation states that the Port strongly supports the proposition that “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” and “Native American Heritage Month” shall be opportunities to celebrate the thriving cultures and values of the Indigenous Peoples of our region. It commits the Port to continuing its efforts to promote the wellbeing and cultural vitality of Pierce County’s Indigenous community-in particular the Puyallup Tribe. Finally, it recognizes the second Monday in October as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” and the month of November as “Native American Heritage Month.”

**D. TIMEFRAME/PROJECT SCHEDULE**

Indigenous Peoples’ Day	October 9, 2023
Native American Heritage Month	November, 2023

**E. ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS**

Alternative 1—Do nothing: Choosing not to recognize Native American Heritage Month could send a signal that the Port does not recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values and could be perceived as inconsistent with Strategic Plan Strategies OS-5 and OS-6.