

Letter-Writing Action: Protest the Denial of Tribal Recognition for the Duwamish

Overview:

On July 2nd, 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ruled to deny federal recognition to the Duwamish Tribe after a decades-long legal battle. The Duwamish are the First People of the city of Seattle, which took its name from the Duwamish leader Chief Si'ahl. In the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty, the Duwamish ceded territory—but not sovereignty—to settlers, in exchange for reservation land and other rights. More than 150 years later, the U.S. government has not honored this agreement.

Today, as residents of Seattle, we must continue to support the Duwamish in their struggle for justice. Duwamish Tribal Chairperson Cecile Hansen has called for “an uprising from the citizens of this city.” In particular, she has asked us to write letters protesting the BIA’s decision.

Please join us in writing letters expressing solidarity with the Duwamish. Below, you will find contact information and sample letters for multiple decisionmakers.

The contents of this packet were authored by members of the Duwamish Solidarity Group (DSG), originally a subgroup of the Coalition of Anti-Racist Whites (CARW).

More information:

Duwamish Tribe’s website: <http://www.duwamishtribe.org/>

Brief historical context of the Tribe’s fight for federal recognition:

<https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-duwamish-tribe-4pCfBkJ7hUKWE2kMvsPQIQ>

Reactions to the BIA’s July 2nd 2015 decision:

- <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/puget-sound/duwamish-tribe-denied-federal-recognition>
- <http://www.thestranger.com/blogs/slog/2015/07/07/22506907/duwamish-tribe-vows-to-keep-fighting-for-recognition-despite-last-weeks-decision>
- <http://www.thestranger.com/blogs/slog/2015/07/09/22517493/duwamish-leader-i-think-there-should-be-an-uprising-from-the-citizens-of-this-city>

Text of Bill HR 2176 (Duwamish Tribal Recognition Act): <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2176/text>

Reformed federal recognition process implemented days before July 2nd decision:

<http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/departments-of-the-interior-announces-final-federal-recognition-process-to-acknowledge-indian-tribes.cfm>

2021 Support the Duwamish: Contact National Decisionmakers

<i>Name/Title</i>	<i>Contact Info</i>	<i>Talking Points</i>
President Joe Biden	The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 Phone: 202-456-1111	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland	Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington DC 20240 Phone: 202-208-3100 E-mail: feedback@ios.doi.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest BIA's decision
Asst. Secretary Indian Affairs	Bureau of Indian Affairs MS-3642-MIB 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20240 Phone: 202-208-7163	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest BIA's decision
Raúl M. Grijalva, Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources	1324 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-6065	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Senator Patty Murray	Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2621 Twitter: @PattyMurray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Senator Maria Cantwell (member of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs)	511 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-3441 Staff contact person: Eric Fitc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal	1510 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: 202-225-3106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congressman Adam Smith	2264 Rayburn Office Building Washington, DC 20515	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal

	Phone: 202-225-8901	Recognition
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Congresswoman Kim Schrier	1123 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-7761	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congresswoman Suzan Delbene	2330 Rayburn Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-6631	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congressman Rick Larsen	2163 Rayburn Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-2605	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congressman Derek Kilmer	2059 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-5916	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland	1004 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-9740	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler	2352 Raymond House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3536	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers	1035 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition
Congressman Dan Newhouse	504 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-5816	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge support for Duwamish Tribal Recognition

Letter-writing tips:

- Personalize your letters!
 - You don't have to give a full history or legal analysis of the decision; feel free to express your personal feelings and experience.
- Be firm but polite.
 - Please don't write anything that could be detrimental to the Tribe's struggle.
- Keep writing letters!
 - Please also reach out City of Seattle and King County officials to ask them what they are doing to support the Duwamish.

Sample letter of support

[Address of Recipient]

Dear [Name/Title of Recipient],

We stand with the Duwamish – the First People of Seattle – and support their right to self-determination, self-governance, and the other essential responsibilities and powers entitled to federally recognized tribes. We urge you to support the Tribe's efforts to obtain federal recognition for a government-to-government relationship with the United States and to provide long overdue closure on a process initiated generations ago.

Chief Si'ahl (Seattle) of the Duwamish and Suquamish Tribes was the lead signatory of the Treaty of Point Elliott of 1855. Located in the largest city in Washington State, which bears the Chief's name, the Duwamish Tribe maintains its separate and distinct cultural identity, exercises authority, and engages in policy advocacy on behalf of its membership. We ask you to support and represent the Duwamish Tribe in its efforts to hold the United States Government accountable for the promises it made in that Treaty to this day.

The Duwamish Tribe's leadership has confronted, contested, and challenged injustices in multiple legal and bureaucratic forums. They work to hold the government to account for its failure to deliver on its promises under the Point Elliott Treaty and assert the rights of the Duwamish as a Treaty Tribe. Due to the tribal leadership's relentless push for justice, in 2001, the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the Clinton Administration found sufficient evidence to re-recognize the Duwamish Tribe, only to have it reversed by the Interior Department under the Bush Administration.

While working to clarify its federal status with the government, based upon the fact that the Duwamish Tribe of Indians is a Treaty Tribe and that has never been invalidated, the Duwamish became landowners. In 2009, the Duwamish built a traditional Longhouse and Cultural Center, the first longhouse to be built in 150 years in Seattle. The Tribe created a public regional

educational resource to promote the history and education about the Duwamish while also contributing to the environmental health and regulatory oversight of the Duwamish River as an EPA Superfund site. The Duwamish have continued to contribute to the welfare of the citizens of Seattle and Puget Sound emphasizing marginalized populations.

We urge you to champion the Tribe's efforts. Federal re-recognition of the Duwamish Tribe can be reinstated legislatively, administratively, or judicially this year with your support. We must reinstate the recognition of the Duwamish Tribe so that the healing process can begin. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Full name, title and address of representative of the organization]