

Date: November 16, 2023

To: Council President Debora Juarez, Councilmember Lisa Herbold, Councilmember Tammy Morales, Councilmember Kshama Sawant, Councilmember Alex Pedersen, Councilmember Dan Strauss, Councilmember Andrew Lewis, Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, and Councilmember Sara Nelson

CC: Deputy Mayor Greg Wong, Director Nathan Torgelson, Director Rico Quirindongo, and Director Jessyn Farrell

From: Indigenous Advisory Council

RE: Letter of Support for [CB 120670](#)

Summary

On behalf of the [Indigenous Advisory Council](#) (IAC), please accept this letter of support for Council Bill 120670 – *an ordinance relating to tree protections; adding new provisions related to trees that are part of an archaeological site; and amending Sections 25.11.060 and 25.11.130 of the Seattle Municipal Code*. The IAC asks that you support CB 120670 as introduced.

Background

The IAC is a culturally grounded public commission comprised of nine members tasked with advising local government on issues impacting Tribal and urban Native communities. Formed in 2022, we seek to move government and community partners towards transformational relationships rooted in reciprocity, repair, and shared power by acting as a trusted advocate, advisor, and connector among City partners. Our work is separate, and sometimes complementary to, the Tribal Relations work that continues to be led by the Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) through government-to-government engagement with federally recognized Tribes.

Position

The IAC asks that you support CB 120670 as introduced. Council Bill 120670 offers immediate and tangible action from the City of Seattle to better protect culturally modified trees (CMTs) by ensuring the City does not erroneously approve tree removal permits for known and protected archaeological sites. This procedural change to the City of Seattle's tree protection ordinance is responsive to the priorities of several Tribal Nations and improves City compliance with State law. Council Bill 120670 is a first step in improving the City's approach to engaging Tribal Nations in urban forestry management.

Our recommendation comes after the consideration of these issues by our Tribal Caucus, comprised of four elected Tribal leaders with expertise in cultural resource stewardship. Given that CMTs are Tribal cultural resources protected by the federal trust responsibility, the IAC has carefully navigated our role in this policy discussion as public commissioners. We understand the critical importance of upholding Tribal trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations through government-to-government relationships. We thank Seattle

City Councilmembers for engaging in Tribal Consultation and encourage the expanded use of coordinated, timely, and consistent Tribal Consultations with federally recognized Tribes on trust and treaty issues.

In our role advising the City of Seattle's Mayor, Seattle City Council and City departments, we seek to encourage continued policy and program discussions to identify and protect CMTs and support efforts to educate City staff and the general public about the importance of CMTs. These cultural resources are tangible examples of past and present cultural practices, knowledge, and traditions of many Coast Salish Tribal communities that must be protected and respected by all guests on these lands.

We also recognize and understand the critical housing shortage crisis and climate crisis facing the City of Seattle. We look forward to working with you to ensure the City of Seattle addresses housing production and urban forestry canopy in ways that also protect CMTs as finite Tribal cultural resources. We believe the City of Seattle can be a leader in upholding Tribal sovereignty, honoring federal trust obligations, and respecting Tribal cultures and land stewardship, as we lead the region in addressing housing affordability and climate mitigation.

We look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

Vice Chair Donny Stevenson (Muckleshoot), Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

Councilmember Jay Mills (Suquamish), Suquamish Tribe

Councilmember Jeremy Takala (Yakama), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Megan Castillo (Tlingit/Filipina)

Councilmember Suzanne Sailto (Snoqualmie), Snoqualmie Indian Tribe

Esther Lucero (Diné), Seattle Indian Health Board

Derrick Belgarde (Siletz/Chippewa-Cree), Chief Seattle Club

Asia Tail (Cherokee), yəhaw' Indigenous Creatives Collective

Jaci McCormack (Nez Perce), Rise Above