



Commissioner Nick Fish
City of Portland

February 21, 2018

I'm very proud of today's action and for the leadership it shows.

I want to highlight, briefly, an aspect of this crisis that has been – in my perspective – under-reported.

Portland is home to the ninth largest Native American population in the country.

Our Native community is descended from more than 380 tribes, and adds an incalculable richness to Portland.

This community is also uniquely affected by the opioid crisis.

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians – representing 57 sovereign governments from across the northwestern United States – held its Winter Convention in Portland last month.

During that Convention, the group passed a Resolution declaring “Support for Tribal Nations Taking on Big Pharma to Combat the Opioid Epidemic in Indian Country.”

I want to quote two findings from their Resolution:

“WHEREAS, the opioid epidemic claims lives in such a way that cumulatively threatens to decimate our individual nations as the death rate of American Indians from opioid overdose is the highest of any racial demographic, stealing the lives of 8.4 American Indians per every 100,000 in 2014.”

And:

“WHEREAS, the conduct of pharmaceutical companies has caused a health crisis in Indian Country that threatens the health, welfare, economic security and political integrity of the tribal nations and their citizens.”

The opioid crisis commands our attention and our action.

This lawsuit is about recovering damages for the costs we've incurred managing this issue in our community, but it also makes a statement.

Over the last generation the federal government has abandoned local communities time and again – disinvesting in affordable housing, homelessness services, crumbling roads and bridges, and urgent public health crises ranging from pollution in our rivers to drugs on our streets.

None of us in this room has the power to compel the federal government to do the right thing and appropriately regulate this industry, but we have a voice, and collectively, our voices have power.

Today, we stand with communities across the country calling for accountability and for action in the face of this crisis.