

A Resolution Concerning the Return of Old Man House State Park to the Suquamish Tribe

WHEREAS, Old Man House was the "mother village" of the Suquamish Tribe, and home of Chief Seattle and other Suquamish people; and

WHEREAS The Old Man House was an approximately 600-foot long Suquamish Indian longhouse built around 1815 and dismantled and burned in about 1870; and

WHEREAS The 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott promulgated articles of agreement between the United States and the Suquamish Tribe; and

WHEREAS Congress enacted legislation in 1905 authorizing the transfer of the land to the War Department for fortifications to protect the Navy Yard at Bremerton; and

WHEREAS after dispossessing the Suquamish of their ancient village site on the grounds that it was vital for national defense, the War Department never built any fortifications and eventually the land was sold to a private buyer (the General Construction Company) in 1937; and

WHEREAS Washington State Parks recognized the historic significance of this land and purchased a small parcel containing a portion of the former Old Man House building site for a state park in 1950; and

WHEREAS the Suquamish Tribe has requested the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission return Old Man House Park to them as it is a vital cultural and historic resource; and

WHEREAS the Suquamish Tribe has spent months seeking community input and incorporating hundreds of public comments into a management plan for the park. The Tribe has made it clear that the land will continue to function as a park, accessible to all, and that under Tribal administration the park will continue to provide a valuable resource to the larger community; and

WHEREAS the Washington State Park system has had to close some State Parks, restrict the hours of operation for some parks, and charge for parking at almost all others because of the State's fiscal crisis. Return of the Old Man House State Park to the Tribe would ease the fiscal strain on the park system while preserving the Park as a community resource.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

The Kitsap County Democrats find that the return of Old Man House State Park to the Suquamish Tribe is in the public interest. We urge the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to return this important cultural and historic site to its rightful owners.