



# Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council

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**RESOLUTION # 19-4-2017-2**

**A RESOLUTION ELEVATING THE QUALITY OF ORAL HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKAN NATIVE COMMUNITITES.**

**WHEREAS**, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (TLC) has been created for the express purpose of providing its member Tribes with a unified voice and a collective organization to address issues of concern to the Tribes and Indian people; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Directors of the Tribal Leaders Council consists of duly elected Tribal Chairs, Presidents and Council Members who are fully authorized to represent their respective Tribes; and

**WHEREAS**, as a manifestation of their solemn duty, the Tribal governments actively engage in policy formation on any matters that affect the Tribes and reservations; and

**WHEREAS**, TLC is dedicated to assisting and promoting the health needs and concerns of Indian people; and

**WHEREAS**, the American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) have the highest tooth decay rate of any population in the United States; in which 79% of AI/AN children aged 2-5 years having tooth decay, with 60% of these children having severe early childhood caries (baby bottle tooth decay); 87% of these children, aged 6-14 years, have a history of decay—twice the rate of dental caries experienced by the general population, and 91% of AI/AN young people, aged 15-19 years have caries; and

**WHEREAS**, this prevalence of caries infection exists in spite of the implementation of significant dental decay prevention programs by the Indian Health Service (IHS) and tribes, including fluoridation of water systems suitable for fluoridation, the use of topical fluorides and dental sealants, and education programs on oral health for children and parents; and

**WHEREAS**, the lack of access to professional dental care is a significant contributor to the disparities in oral health that exist in the AI/AN population; and

**WHEREAS**, there is one dentist for every 2,800 individuals in the IHS and tribal health clinics, compared with one dentist for every 1,500 individuals in the general population; and

**WHEREAS**, despite intense recruitment efforts and significant financial incentives, IHS and AI/AN tribes continue to experience great difficulty in attracting dentists with 85 current dental vacancies at IHS facilities in 2016, and a vacancy rate in some IHS Service Areas as high as 54%; and

**WHEREAS**, the dental health disparities for AI/AN children is a national epidemic that is a moral issue and social injustice that can only be addressed with a concentrated recruitment and deployment of dental health professionals to work in AI/AN communities and the development of practitioners

that can effectively extend the ability of dentists to provide for children not receiving care and help to confront the significant oral health disparities existing in AI/AN children.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that TLC urges Congress to elevate the dental health needs of Indian Country and provide the necessary authority to address the dental health disparities in Indian Country.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that TLC supports the efforts of federally recognized Tribes to increase the access to and elevate the quality of dental care in Indian Country by employing Dental Therapists.

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### CERTIFICATION

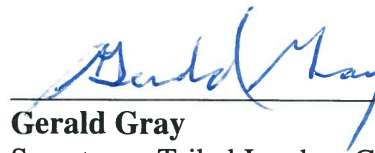
We, the undersigned, as the Chair and the Secretary of the Tribal Leaders Council, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly presented and approved unanimously at an official Board Meeting of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, which was held on the April 19, 2017 in Lander, Wyoming with 10 member Tribes present to constitute a Quorum.



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**Alvin Not Afraid Jr.**

Chairman – Tribal Leaders Council



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**Gerald Gray**

Secretary - Tribal Leaders Council