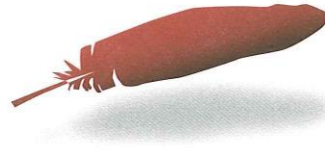


# National Indian Health Board



## National Indian Health Board Resolution 23– 01

### **SUPPORT FOR A COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL PROGRAM TO COORDINATE TRIBAL CLIMATE MITIGATION AND RELOCATION EFFORTS**

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serves all Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments by advocating for the improvement of health care delivery to American Indians and Alaska Natives, as well as upholding the federal government’s trust responsibility to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the health and welfare of Tribal Nations is intrinsically tied to the health and welfare of our environment; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal Nations throughout the United States are experiencing climate threats such as flooding, erosion, ocean acidification, increased wildfires, extended drought, and changes in seasons that have put our homelands and our ways of life in jeopardy; and

**WHEREAS**, a growing number of Tribal Nations urgently need to relocate their reservations, villages, and communities due to threats from erosion, flooding, permafrost degradation and other threats; and

**WHEREAS**, moving a Tribal community is complex, multi-layered, and resource intensive, and many Tribal Nations do not have the necessary staff time and expertise required to coordinate such an effort; and

**WHEREAS**, federal relocation programs that do exist are drastically underfunded, would only cover the cost of relocating one small Tribal community, and often contain matching requirements which are not possible for many Tribal Nations; and

**WHEREAS**, other federal resources are not usually designed for the purpose of relocating communities, are focused on other narrower funding objectives, and are not aligned with the unique needs of village relocation; and

**WHEREAS**, waiting years and years to secure enough federal funding and then coordinate these resources will be too late for many Tribal Nations who are facing immediate threats from the impacts of the climate crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has found unmet relocation infrastructure needs of about \$3.5 billion over the next 50 years for Alaska alone, and for the Lower 48, BIA found unmet relocation infrastructure needs of about \$1.4 billion; and

**WHEREAS**, the BIA Tribal Climate Resilience Program awarded only about \$60 million in climate resilience funds over the course of nine years (2011–2020), and the Infrastructure and Jobs Act allocated only just \$130 million, which would just cover a single relocation project; and

**WHEREAS**, a 2020 BIA report found that “This patchwork approach leaves gaps in actions due to the criteria of each program and requirements of each (i.e. cost share, technical aptitude needed). Providing the direction for a coordinated, multi-organizational framework would help to address gaps among agency programs;” and

**WHEREAS**, the Government Accountability Office has said: “Unclear federal leadership is the key challenge to climate migration as a resilience strategy. Because no federal agency has the authority to lead federal assistance for climate migration, support for climate migration efforts has been provided on an ad hoc basis;” and

**WHEREAS**, failing to provide adequate technical assistance and financial resources is tantamount to being complicit in the disappearance of our lands, our people, and way of life.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Indian Health Board does hereby urge Congress to create a federal program located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior that would assist Tribal Nations in community-driven relocation and other environmental mitigation efforts, in coordination with the necessary federal partners; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the federal program should help provide planning and funding coordination as well as expedite land-into-trust applications for Tribal communities who are forced to consider relocation due to climate change; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Congress should provide sufficient funding so this program may adequately meet the needs of all Tribal Nations who are forced to consider relocation due to climate change; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of the National Indian Health Board until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

### **CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023.



**Chairperson, William Smith**

**ATTEST:**



**Vice Chairperson, Nickolaus Lewis**