

**Testimony of  
Rosa Honani  
Yuwehloo Pahki Community of the Hopi Tribe  
Before the  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
March 25, 2015**

Nukwungtalongva, Good morning, Chairman Calvert and members of the Interior Subcommittee, Committee of House Appropriations, My name is Rosa Ellen Honani, I am Water/Cloud Clan from Yuwehloo Pahki, (Spider Mound Community). I am an Elected Hopi Tribal Representative from the Hopi Nation. I will not read from my prepared statement I will only speak from it. The focus of my statement is to call your attention to our plight at Yuwehloo Pahki, and the failure of the Office of Navajo Hopi Relocation to follow through with its promises to provide decent, safe and sanitary homes to the Hopi relocates who gave up their homes and accepted relocation pursuant to the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act.

I have met many of you during your visit to Hopi and our Community this past January. It is good to see you again.

As stated above, I am here today representing the 22 federally relocated families from the Hopi Tribe.

The relocation of the Hopi families occurred pursuant to the Navajo - Hopi Settlement Act, Public Law 93-531. The relocation for our people occurred during the 1970's to 1990's. When the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act was finalized, our original home sites were located in an area called the Joint Use Area. According to the terms of the settlement the Joint Use Area was transferred to the Navajo Tribe and our original homes were "partitioned" – given - to the Navajo.

According to the terms of the settlement, we left our original homes, and the memories of where our grandparents, our ancestors and our parents raised their families and farmed. We were relocated to lands on the far east side of the Hopi Reservation. We call the Hopi relocation community Yuwehloo Pahki (Spider Mound).

### **Background**

When the Navajo – Hopi Settlement was enacted and relocation program created the Hopi were quick to accept their responsibility under the terms of the law and began to relocate. We were the very first families to relocate.

The Navajo Hopi Settlement Act required that the replacement homes for relocates be decent, safe and sanitary. The Office of Navajo Hopi Relocation has defined that to mean homes that

have “water, sewer and electricity in good working order”. See Office of Navajo and Hopi Relocation, Policy Memorandum #6, August 3, 1992.

When we accepted relocation we were promised homes possessing these basic necessities, and in fact, we were promised that our homes would have running water, electricity and accessible roads. We received letters from the ONHIR promising these things, but they have never materialized.

In several cases, we moved into our homes before the electrical lines and roads were constructed on the promise that these were in the works and would be provided, accepting temporary solutions such as portable solar units or gas fueled generators to provide electricity, in the interim. I first moved to Yuwehloo Pahki in 1992, into a home where the electricity had not yet been hooked up and was told that it would happen soon. It is 23 years later, and I still do not have connected electricity. 25% of the Hopi Relocateses are still without electricity.

We were also promised safe, accessible roads that would be built so that we could travel to and from our homes. Yet many of our homes are located on dirt roads which are inaccessible except to heavy-duty four wheel drive vehicles for large portions of the year. During the winter, residents routinely leave their homes while the roads are frozen in the morning and have to wait until they are frozen again at night to return home. When you visited Yuwehloo Pahki, you traveled over some of these roads.

Additionally, many of the homes were poorly constructed and designed. Several of our homes were built with a faulty design plan, and the plumbing for those homes is encased in concrete. The plumbing in those homes have failed, and the plumbing is inaccessible unless the floor of homes is removed to provide access to the pipes. Our residents do not have the means to pay for such massive repairs. One home in particular that the Committee visited this past January utilizes a catch bucket for sink water drainage.

Over thirty-five years ago, then Hopi Chairman Abbott Sekaquatewa and Hopi Relocatee Melvina Navasie testified in front of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs concerning the Navajo Hopi Land Settlement Act and the federal relocation process. They spoke of the dire living conditions of the new home sites even then, no water, no utilities and no paved roads. At that time, the Hopi knew the Relocation Commission moved on from the Hopi relocation efforts to focus on the Navajo families. Many of our people gave up hope that help to have water, adequate plumbing, and public access to utilities was simply a luxury, out of reach for them even though it was promised as a term of their removal to the area.

As I stated earlier, many of you remember the living dire conditions of the Hopi Relocateses during your fact-finding tour to Hopi. You heard the Relocateses’ testimonies including the children who walk daily on treacherous roads to the highway to meet the school bus, elders who have to employ coal-burning stoves to cook and heat their residence.

You also toured some of the Navajo communities built by the ONHIR for Navajo relocateses. You saw, as we see everyday, neat homes with concrete driveways built in planned subdivisions with paved roads.

It is clear to us from seeing these projects that the Office of the Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation has the delegated federal authority pursuant to the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act (Pub. L. No. 93-531) and Public Law 96-305 (discretionary funds) to remedy the infrastructure issues. I would like to point that in their fiscal yearly budgets, ONHIR has consistently requested and received monies for infrastructure of relocated housing. We, Yuwehloo Pahki, are literally in the dark as to why ONHIR has failed to address the dire housing conditions for the Hopi Relocates. We live there.

In 1992, ONHIR issued a policy memorandum acknowledging that the relocatees were being placed into houses without running water or a utility infrastructure in the immediate area. This policy memorandum explicitly stated that residents would no longer be allowed to establish occupancy of their replacement home until these services were provided to the site. It also established the ONHIR policy to work with the respective tribes in obtaining projects and with other federal agencies such as the Indian Health Services and the local tribal utility authority.

The ONHIR policy directive also stated if relocatees were to move away from their homesite, the relocatees would be monetarily penalized and possibly never have the opportunity to receive a replacement home that provides the basic necessities.

This puts the residents of Yuwehloo Pahki in a very difficult position. We cannot leave our homes without losing the only thing of value we received in exchange for our removal, but we live in homes that do not have the basic necessities that everyone else takes for granted.

We believe the ONHIR has the authority and ability to fix this, but most of all, we believe that the ONHIR has moral and legal obligation to provide the Hopi relocatees with the basic necessities that were promised to them when they accepted relocation.

The ONHIR's proposed fiscal year 2015 budget, the Agency projected their 2015 costs for infrastructure for their Relocates stating "The primary mission of this unit is to insure that relocatee dwellings meet all applicable decent, safe, and sanitary standards, and that building sites offer families the best possible structural alternatives" at \$635,000.00 for the discretionary fund line item. In the same Fiscal Year 2015 budget, ONHIR cites their responsibility to fund utility line connections to their clients.

When my family moved to the area, the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation would send out their field monitors. It was the only time, we would see ONHIR. Their workers would ask us to fill out surveys asking us what we needed for our houses. After the fifth year and no home improvements, we told ONHIR we would no longer complete their forms. We need action, not a federal agency paper trail to substantiate their administrative expenditures.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, our people know the history of the Relocation. We are familiar with amendments to the original PL 93-531. We know there has been other congressional committee hearings that were held to address the problems including the socio-economic effect of relocating people, both Hopi and Navajo. We look at the "promises" made by the federal government when our land

was taken, they promised to provide the Hopi Relocateses with the opportunity to protect and keep our families together and protect our way of life and based upon those promises of an equal life in another area, we are still waiting.

The residents of Yuwehloo Pahki understand that this Committee is considering several options for dealing with the ONHIR, which include sunseting the relocation program altogether and eliminating or reducing funding.

Although we have no position on whether you end this program or close the ONHIR, we do request one thing.

It is our strong request that this Committee provide funding and a directive to the ONHIR to provide what was promised **to the residents of Yuwehloo Pahki** when they accepted relocation – electricity, water and decent roads.

Askwali (Thank you) for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.