



**Testimony of President Guy Capoeman - Quinault Indian Nation  
to the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related  
Agencies of the United States House of Representatives American Indian and Alaska  
Native Public Witness Day  
March 17-18, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today. As you know, my name is Guy Capoeman, and I am honored to serve as the duly elected President of the Quinault Indian Nation's Business Committee. I have held this position for the past five years and am currently serving in my second term. It is a privilege to represent the Quinault people and to advocate for issues that are vital to our community's well-being and future.

The Quinault Indian Nation's Reservation is located in the southwestern corner of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, bordering the Pacific Ocean. Our reservation spans over 200,000 acres of pristine forestlands, rivers, lakes, and mountains, including 25 miles of relatively undisturbed Pacific coastline. With over 4,000 enrolled members, the Quinault Indian Nation is deeply committed to protecting our land, our resources, and our people.

Today, I will focus my testimony on the following critical issues.

**Frozen Tribal Electrification Program Funding**

The Quinault Indian Nation was awarded \$7,598,800 from the Tribal Electrification Program ("TEP") to construct the Taholah Village Energy Park, a critical energy project for our community. On July 15, 2025, the Quinault Indian Nation was notified that Executive Order 14315 had imposed new review requirements, effectively freezing access to already-awarded TEP funds and halting all progress on the project. While all funds have been received and are held in the Quinault Indian Nation's account, we have been unable to expend any of these resources. Despite submitting a formal request for clarification on December 9, 2025, and engaging in multiple follow-up communications, we have received no guidance from the Department of the Interior or Bureau of Indian Affairs on this issue.

As a result of this funding freeze and lack of clear guidance, the Quinault Indian Nation is unable to move forward with a shovel-ready, federally approved electrification project that is vital to our community. The ongoing delays threaten the timely development of the Taholah Village Energy Park, the Quinault Indian Nation's progress toward digital equity and energy independence, and

local economic development opportunities including job creation and community reinvestment. The uncertainty and lack of communication further undermine Tribal self-determination and the original intent of the TEP to benefit Tribal communities.

*We respectfully ask for Congressional assistance in urging the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Indian Affairs to immediately review and release the \$7.6 million in TEP funds so that the Quinault Indian Nation can move forward with our approved energy project without further delay. We also request support in encouraging the Department of the Interior to provide clear, written guidance to all Tribal recipients on the use of post-award TEP funds, to ensure transparency, consistency, and predictability in the administration of these critical resources.*

### **Taholah Village and Queets Village Relocation – Increased Funding for the BIA Office of Tribal Climate Resilience Programs**

As we have testified before this Subcommittee in prior years, the Quinault Indian Nation has two major villages on its reservation: the Village of Taholah and the Village of Queets. Both villages have suffered significant harm from environmental impacts and remain under continued threat. Accordingly, we are actively engaged in relocating these villages to higher ground.

Taholah is situated in the southern portion of the reservation at the mouth of the Quinault River along the Pacific coast. The village consists of two areas known as the “Upper Village” and “Lower Village.” The Lower Village sits below sea level, and severe weather events and ongoing environmental degradation pose the greatest threat to the village, our citizens, Quinault government operations, and critical Tribal infrastructure and services.

High tides, high winds, and storm surge conditions have repeatedly caused waves to break over the seawall that protects the Lower Village from coastal surges. The seawall was breached in 2014, prompting a declaration of a state of emergency. Although the Army Corps of Engineers replaced the seawall, it remains only a temporary solution. Since then, multiple flooding events have impacted the Village. Most recently, in the winter of 2022, the Village experienced significant flooding that caused widespread damage and forced the evacuation of a dozen residential homes and seven government buildings, including our courthouse, community center, post office, and community services offices.

As we have previously testified, our Tribe developed the Taholah Village Relocation Master Plan to guide the Village’s relocation. The Master Plan was adopted by the Quinault Indian Nation Business Committee on June 26, 2017. Since its adoption, we have been steadily implementing the Master Plan's vision, which reflects community member input and addresses long-term stewardship, cultural values, and improved community facilities.

I am pleased to report to the Subcommittee that the relocation efforts continue to advance toward completion, though significant work remains ahead. We have also initiated the relocation process for the Village of Queets. The Quinault Nation has identified and secured land for the Queets relocation, finalized the Queets Relocation Master Plan, and is preparing to begin development in the near future.

***To continue relocating Taholah Village and Queets Village to higher ground, our Tribe requires additional funding. Given the urgent need to expedite the relocation of all coastal Tribal villages, we respectfully ask the Subcommittee to increase funding to the BIA Tribal Climate Resilience Program to \$50 million in fiscal year 2027. This funding will ensure that the Quinault Nation and other coastal Tribes have the resources necessary to relocate their populations to safer areas as expeditiously as possible.***

### **Tribal Healthcare Issues and the Quinault Wellness Center**

The Tribe is concerned that recent policy changes, including reductions to healthcare programs and the imposition of new Medicaid requirements, may harm Tribal citizens and limit access to critical health services. Because Medicaid reimbursements are a major source of funding for Tribal and Indian Health Service facilities, reductions in enrollment or coverage could also significantly strain Tribal health systems, potentially affecting the ability of Tribal clinics and hospitals to maintain staffing, expand services, and meet the health needs of their communities.

For example, the Quinault Indian Nation self-funded a mission critical and wrap-around wellness center to fill the gap of care in rural Grays Harbor County. Our center provides essential health services to individuals experiencing chronic substance-use disorders, mental health, oral care, and other associated medical issues of which the majority of patients served are non-Indian beneficiaries. The need for these services has been so sought after that the nation pursued an expansion within the first two years of opening to double our service capacity from 200 patients to more than 400. Because of the Quinault Indian Nation's ability to access Medicaid reimbursement and establish services as a federally qualified healthcare center we are able fill a critical need in our largely underserved area. Recent policy changes including the new Medicaid requirements will materially impact the operations of our healthcare program and its ability to serve Indian and non-Indian patients alike.

### **Murdered and Missing Indigenous People**

The epidemic of murdered and missing indigenous people continues to represent a profound failure by the federal government to uphold its trust and treaty obligations to Native Nations. This ongoing crisis, rooted in systemic underfunding and neglect, was starkly highlighted in the 2018 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report, "Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans." The report found that the federal government has consistently failed to meet its commitments, leaving Native communities without adequate resources to address critical issues, including public safety, victim advocacy, and justice services. These shortcomings perpetuate cycles of violence and disproportionately impact Indigenous women, children, and families.

***To address this epidemic, we again respectfully urge the Subcommittee to prioritize programs that are essential to combating the murdered and missing indigenous people crisis, including:***

- ***Increased funding for Tribal police departments to strengthen law enforcement capacity and improve response times,***

- *Support for programs dedicated to Native victims of crime, ensuring culturally appropriate services and resources,*
- *Funding for victim advocates who can provide critical assistance to Native victims of all crimes, and*
- *The establishment of a national Indian Country clearinghouse on sexual assault, coupled with funding for housing, counseling, and education programs to support survivors and their families.*

*By addressing these key areas, the federal government can begin to fulfill its trust responsibilities and provide Native communities with the resources they need to combat this devastating epidemic and promote safety, justice, and healing.*

### **Indian Health Service Funding and Advanced Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2028**

In prior years, this Subcommittee made historic strides in safeguarding the health and well-being of Tribal communities by securing advanced appropriations for Indian Health Service funding. We extend our gratitude to the Members of the Subcommittee for their continued commitment to ensuring that healthcare services remain uninterrupted, even during periods of federal funding uncertainty. Advanced appropriations remain particularly critical for the Quinault Indian Nation, as past government shutdowns have caused significant disruptions in Indian Health Service programs and services for our citizens.

*We request that the Subcommittee include advanced appropriations funding for Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2028 at a minimum of \$5.5 billion.*

### **Conclusion**

The Quinault Indian Nation remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting our citizens, lands, and culture from the adverse impacts of systemic underfunding, environmental threats, and violence against Indigenous populations. However, we cannot achieve these goals alone. As our trustee, the federal government has both a legal and moral obligation to fulfill its treaty commitments and provide the resources necessary for our survival and prosperity.

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to support the programs identified above and fully fund the requests outlined in this testimony, which address critical needs for the Quinault people and other Tribal Nations across the country. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.