

Testimony of Mike Williams
before the Committee on Indian Affairs

*Impact of High Energy Costs in Rural Alaska Native Communities and
Opportunities for Alternative and Conventional Energy Development*

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Bethel, Alaska

Greetings! My name is Mike Williams, currently Chairman of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, Area Vice President for the National Congress of American Indians, President of Yupiit School District Board of Education, Vice President of Rural Community Action Program, Akiak Native Community Tribal Council.

We have sustained ourselves here in Rural Alaska for thousands of years. I remember as a child growing up in a small village that we had only 2-4 hours a day of electricity, with no other appliances that we have today. We did not have electricity in the summer months. We utilized our ways of preserving our fish, game and what we gathered throughout the summer. I remember we had a small wind mill in Akiak to provide electricity to our hospital. Times have changed very quickly when we have all the appliances that we have in our communities and our villages are providing electricity and oil and gas for our motors and snowmachines to engage in subsistence activities. We have over two hundred Tribal Communities throughout Alaska that are experiencing problems of providing sustainable power, fuel to our members.

I want to make a few recommendations.

1. We need immediate relief for our fuel which the cost have skyrocketed in the last year. We need to do assessments on each of our communities needs and you need to consult with each Tribal Government.
2. The Federal and State Governments need to take immediate action to subsidize transportation of all fuel to rural Alaska.
3. We need immediate capital to harness the wind, solar, biomass, hydro, and have each Tribal Government develop their alternative energy. This can be done right now.
4. We need immediate relief for operations of our schools, community buildings, clinics, and other public facilities to include them in Power Cost Equalizations

model that we currently receive.

5. We need immediate capital to consolidate power generation with several villages to connect them to cut costs and to make them sustainable into the future.

I recommend that we have ongoing consultation with each of Alaska's Federally Recognized tribes every year to review our status.

I really appreciate and thank you for listening to our Tribal concerns about the energy issues that have profound affect on our daily lives in Rural Alaska. Thank you.