

# News Release

National American Indian Housing Council  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **NAIHC Testimony: Tribal Development Corporation Study Important for Economic and Housing Development Training, Technical Assistance, Business Education Needed**

**WASHINGTON—March 29, 2006—National American Indian Housing Council Board Member Cheryl Parish** testified before the House Resources Committee today in support of an amendment to create a group to develop a study relative to promoting business development, trade promotion and tourism in Indian Country.

“**NAIHC** wholeheartedly supports the formation of the group and the study leading to establishment of an economic development entity,” **Parish testified.**

The amendment, **H.R. 3350**, would amend the **Native American Business Development, Trade Promotion, and Tourism Act of 2000** to establish the **Tribal Development Corporation Feasibility Study Group**. **NAIHC** believes that this is urgently needed in Indian Country. Native Americans are three times more likely to live in overcrowded housing than other Americans and are more likely to lack basic sewage and water systems, telephone lines and electricity than other Americans.

“I challenge our friends in the press who have an appetite to write about Indian gaming and “rich tribes” to visit the poor, rural tribes of the Great Plains, the vast Navajo Nation, and the remote Native villages in bush Alaska to see that in 2006, poverty still has an Indian face,” said **Parish.**

### **A Business Model for Investment in Tribal Self-Sufficiency**

**NAIHC** is also recommending that a business model for Indian Country be considered as integral to the development of this new entity. **NAIHC** has embarked with other tribal organizations to develop this model, which encompasses housing, infrastructure, health care, education, transportation, with tribal government as the center. The model would infuse tribal economies by correlating the costs of constructing and implementing these systems for today and the next five years.

**NAIHC** seeks a partnership with Congress in drafting this model and believes this legislation is an important component to the successful development of the business model.

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## **Technical Assistance/Training, Business Training, Scholarships, Internships Needed**

**NAIHC** also recommends that the study focus on the continuing need for technical assistance to help tribes in their capacity building. Since Indian Country suffers the poorest rates of high school and college completion of any ethnic group, TA and Training are essential elements of any effort designed for this population. In addition, Business education is also needed.

“If the federal government provided more tools and education, taking the focus off subsidy, I believe you would see more economic growth in tribal communities,” **Parish said**. “In particular, I would like to see such things as an internship program, a mentoring and a business scholarship program with the corporation to teach young Native Americans about business.”

The original **Native American Business Development, Trade Promotion, and Tourism Act of 2000** establishes the Office of Native American Business Development within the Department of Commerce. It provides for financial and technical assistance and administrative services for business development and legal and regulatory compliance to Indian tribes, organizations, and businesses (eligible entities); and provides other assistance to enhance the economies of Indian tribes. It also requires the Commerce department to conduct a Native American tourism program to facilitate tourism demonstration projects by Indian tribes on a tribal, intertribal, or regional basis.

## **Housing Production as Economic Development**

**NAIHC** applauds those tribes who have combined economic development with housing production. Parish’s Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa in Michigan has a plastics company, which employs people from the community to produce innovative building materials that will hold up well against our severe winters. Other tribes, such as the Choctaws in Oklahoma, have a modular housing plant that, again, not only create jobs but also produce badly needed housing at a more affordable price for their members. Navajo Nation has several businesses that contribute to housing while creating jobs. These include a cabinet manufacturing plant that provides kitchen and bathroom cabinets for new and remodeled housing.

“Community development through private investment is key. For certain, a Native-owned corporation would allow tribes to purchase assets or businesses to support housing. Investment in housing is a tremendous stimulus for American communities, but only when the opportunities and legal infrastructure exist,” **Parish said**. “Simple housing alone just provides a roof. However, housing development with a manufactured housing plant, with a roofing business, with a title plant with even businesses like hardware stores or building supply stores stimulate the local economy.”

If Congress does not work to provide opportunities in Indian Country, the drain of resources away from Indian communities will continue, Parish continued.

“I am not referring to an economic drain, but an intellectual one,” **Parish said**. “Young people need opportunity. If they do not have economic opportunity in Indian Country, more of them will continue to leave and seek their careers elsewhere. This is a danger to cultural identity as great as any other. It is, however, one that we in this room and throughout government and the private sector can work to help tribes overcome.”

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*The National American Indian Housing Council) assists tribes and tribal housing entities in reaching their self-determined goals of providing culturally relevant, decent, safe, sanitary, and quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages.*

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