

NCUIH Honors Chairman Tom Cole and Ranking Member Chellie Pingree with Urban Indian Health Champion Award

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written by Meredith Raimondi | May 6, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 29, 2026) - The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) presented the Urban Indian Health Champion Award to Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04), Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, and Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01), Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, during NCUIH's 2026 Annual Conference.

Chairman Cole and Ranking Member Pingree helped secure the continuation of critical HHS Native health set-asides and grants beyond IHS, including SAMHSA's Native Connections and CDC's Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country. These programs are integral to the holistic health care of Native communities and to fulfilling the federal trust responsibility.

Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04), Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations

An enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation, Chairman Cole has been a steadfast advocate for Indian Country throughout his career, consistently using his position at the top of the House Appropriations Committee to ensure those obligations are met.



“We count on [your] Indian health care centers to discharge the federal trust responsibility in terms of health care, and you do a magnificent job of helping our folks, particularly in challenging moments in time.”

— Rep. Tom Cole, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations



Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01), Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Rep. Pingree has been a consistent and powerful voice for Native health on the subcommittee that directly oversees IHS funding, and a driving force in maintaining bipartisan commitment to upholding treaty and trust obligations — even in difficult budget years.

“It is our deep responsibility to uphold our treaty and trust obligations, and we have to make sure we do that every year.”

— Rep. Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

The award recognizes members of Congress who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and leadership in advocating for issues vital to Native communities. Under their leadership, Congress enacted FY 2026 appropriations including [\\$95.42 million for Urban Indian Health — a \\$5 million increase over FY 2025](#).

About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national representative for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations contracting with the Indian Health Service under the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. NCUIH is devoted to the support and development of high quality and accessible health and public health services for American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban

areas.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.

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