



**The Navajo Nation** **DR. BUU NYGREN** **PRESIDENT**  
**Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees** **RICHELLE MONTOYA** **VICE PRESIDENT**

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February 19, 2026

Dear Bryan Mercier, Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

On behalf of the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office, I acknowledge your planned visit to the Navajo Nation on February 19, 2026, to conduct a listening session regarding the anticipated transfer of program functions previously administered by the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR) to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

This transition is not discretionary; it implicates binding federal statutory duties and long-standing trust responsibilities arising from the implementation of the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974. The federal government undertook explicit obligations to relocate affected families, provide replacement housing, develop infrastructure, and ensure the protection of beneficiary rights. Those obligations remain active until they are fully satisfied.

The Navajo Nation expects that any assumption of ONHIR functions by the Bureau of Indian Affairs will be executed with full recognition that these are continuing federal responsibilities—not temporary programmatic assignments. The transition must include:

- A clear written delineation of all program functions to be assumed
- Assurance of uninterrupted congressional appropriations and budget authority
- Preservation and lawful transfer of all beneficiary records and case files
- Continuity of pending housing construction, repair, and infrastructure commitments
- Resolution pathways for unresolved applicant claims and litigation matters
- Defined points of accountability within BIA leadership

Relocatee families have already endured decades of disruption, displacement, and uncertainty. Administrative restructuring must not result in further delays, diminished services, or erosion of rights guaranteed under federal law. The trust responsibility requires continuity, competence, and measurable implementation benchmarks.

We entered this discussion prepared to advocate firmly for relocatees and to insist upon structural clarity regarding timelines, staffing, funding, and oversight. The listening session should produce actionable next steps, not merely an informational exchange.

We look forward to engaging directly with you on February 19 and to receiving a formal outline of BIA's transition framework.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Slim".

Sarah Slim, Executive Director  
Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office  
Navajo Nation  
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