

NATIVE DIRECTIONS INC. HEADQUARTERS:
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Native Directions Inc.

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September 6, 2024

Joe Patterson
Assemblymember, Fifth District
California Legislature
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 94249-0005

Marie Alvarado-Gil
Senator, Fourth District
California State Senate
State Capitol, 1021 O Street, Room 7240 Sacramento, CA 95814

via email

Dear Assemblymember Patterson and Senator Alvarado-Gil,

Although the letter was not sent to us directly, we believe it is important to respond, as the matter involves Native Directions Inc. I appreciate the concerns raised by your constituents and welcome the opportunity to address them. We are confident that through open and respectful dialogue, we can clarify the nature of these projects, dispel any misconceptions, and collaborate for the benefit of both the local community and the Native American populations we serve.

Native Directions is a Tribal Entity

First and foremost, I would like to clarify that Native Directions, Inc. (NDI) is a tribal entity, and specifically an urban Indian organization, recognized under Section 5960.35(b)(2) of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC). This section defines a “tribal entity” as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, tribal organization, or urban Indian organization, as outlined in Section 1603(29) of Title 25 of the United States Code. NDI is an urban Indian organization, specifically classified under this definition, and not merely a nonprofit entity within the State of California.

While NDI is not a federally recognized Indian tribe, we have served as a legitimate urban Indian organization for over 50 years, providing vital health, housing, and wellness services to Native American communities throughout California. Our services extend across multiple tribes, supporting Native Americans from diverse tribal affiliations. The recognition by Indian Health Services (IHS) as an Urban Indian Organization underscores our critical role in delivering essential services, particularly within urban areas.

Tribal Entity’s Letter of Support Comes from Tribal Board

As a tribal entity, the grant applications required us to provide a letter of support from the NDI tribal board, rather than the County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors, which we included as part of our

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submission. We also had to collaborate with El Dorado County, including Fire Department, Building and Planning, to secure the CEQA Statutory Exemption and obtain the necessary permits for construction. *We had no intention of bypassing or disrespecting EDC; in fact, after securing the Program Funding Agreement, we planned to initiate contact with the EDC Board of Supervisors.* However, once the pushback from Rescue neighbors began, coupled with the spread of NIMBY-driven false information that alarmed the community, the situation became more challenging. Despite our efforts to release fact sheets clarifying our projects and the media's verification of the facts, some Rescue neighbors continued to disseminate misinformation and work to rally legislators, and the Board of Supervisors, in an *attempt to push us off our land.*

Collaboration with Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians

If it is accurate that the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians in El Dorado County have changed their position, despite our meeting at their corporate headquarters in June 2023 where we reached a mutual understanding—particularly as they, like the Rescue neighbors, initially believed we were building medical hospitals—we respect their decision. However, the lack of a formal partnership with the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians does not diminish our legitimacy, as we serve a broad spectrum of Native American populations throughout California.

Two Tribal Projects in Rescue

The “treatment center” referenced in your letter may pertain to our Youth Perinatal Residential Facility, a 16-bed facility in Rescue that supports young Native mothers and their children under the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) administered by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This is not a traditional substance abuse treatment facility but a center focused on providing housing and support for vulnerable Native mothers. Additionally, nearby, we are developing an Adult Residential Facility (ARF) to serve 30 Native women with disabilities under the Community Care Expansion (CCE) Program through the Department of Social Services (DSS). Both facilities aim to address the health, wellness, and housing needs of underserved Native populations with disabilities.

We Cannot Relocate: Grants Tied to the Land

While we've been advised by a Supervisor and some Rescue neighbors to consider alternative sites, the land for these projects was part of our required 5% match for the grant and is directly tied to the funding. The grant did not cover the cost of the land, and neither the county nor the state contributed to its purchase, making relocation infeasible. Additionally, with our limited resources, as some Rescue neighbors have suggested, finding a suitable commercial property is not a simple or affordable option for us.

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Ongoing Engagement with Board of Supervisors and Willingness to Mitigate

NDI, HomeCA, and our design team have engaged in regular communication with local officials, including Supervisors Laine, Hidahl, and Parlin, with whom we met in July 2024. We are committed to addressing community concerns, as demonstrated in our correspondence with Supervisor Hidahl, which outlines our willingness to mitigate environmental impacts. Please find attached our letter to Supervisor Hidahl.

Grateful for DHCS and DSS Support

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity provided by DHCS and DSS to offer these critical services through programs like BHCIP and CCE.

Letters of Support for Tribal Projects Includes CCUIH and 6Beds

While your letter highlights concerns about the lack of support from local elected officials, we are actively working on this through ongoing engagement. In the meantime, we are fortunate to have strong backing from key tribal organizations, nonprofits, and businesses throughout El Dorado County. One of our key supporters is the California Consortium for Urban Indian Health (CCUIH) (CCUIH.org), which represents 10 Urban Indian Health Programs (UIHPs) statewide, including NDI's Three Rivers Lodge in Manteca, as well as programs in Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Fresno, Oakland, and more. These organizations provide essential healthcare and support to Native Americans in urban areas. Please see the attached CCUIH Fact Sheet for more information.

Additionally, 6Beds Inc., (6Beds.org) a state-recognized advocate for residential care facilities, headquartered in El Dorado for over 10 years, also supports our efforts. The breadth of this support highlights the widespread recognition of the importance of our projects.

Projects Exempt from Zoning and Application of CEQA Statutory Exemption

It is important to note that our projects are exempt from zoning under State legislation passed in 2021 (AB 133 and AB 172). Regarding the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), we are pursuing a statutory exemption under Section 5960.3(1-9) of the WIC for BHCIP projects. As the land is undeveloped with no existing structures, this further strengthens our case for a CEQA statutory exemption. We are also exploring a categorical exemption for these projects including the ARF.

Rescue Neighbors Pushing for EIR Violates CEQA Process

At the CEQA workshop held by the El Dorado County Planning Commission on July 27, 2024, it was clarified that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is only required if an initial study identifies significant environmental impacts that the applicant chooses not to mitigate. Opponents of the Rescue project are pushing for an EIR prematurely, likely as a tactic to delay the project indefinitely. This approach not only violates the CEQA process but is also unfair and discriminatory.

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Working with Fire Department and Building

We are working closely with the local Fire Department and Building and Planning Departments to ensure compliance with all safety and environmental regulations. We remain committed to mitigating any environmental impacts and have requested a meeting with the Planning Department for further guidance and to address any concerns. We are awaiting a response from the Director of Planning.

Serious Concerns About Unequal Treatment

Finally, 6Beds Inc. has noted that similar licensed residential facilities already exist in El Dorado County without the level of scrutiny our tribal projects are facing. This disproportionate scrutiny raises serious concerns about *unequal treatment*, particularly given that our projects serve vulnerable Native populations, including women with disabilities and young mothers. Any additional requirements imposed must be justified to avoid the appearance of discrimination against an already underserved group.

Committed to Address Concerns

In conclusion, I appreciate your attention to this matter and your willingness to engage with us on these important issues. Native Directions, Inc. has served vulnerable Native American populations for over 50 years, and our proposed projects in Rescue continue that mission. We are committed to addressing all concerns in a transparent and collaborative manner and look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure these vital services are delivered to those who need them most.

Thank you again for your time. We are available for further discussion and clarification as needed.

Sincerely,

Ramona Valadez

Ramona Valadez, Comanche
Executive Director
Native Directions, Inc.

Cc: Michelle Baass, Director, California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
Kim Johnson, Director, California Department of Social Services (DSS)



07/25/24

Dear Supervisor Hidahl,

I hope this email finds you well. Thank you for meeting with us on Monday, July 22, 2024, and sharing your expertise, especially on fire mitigation. Your insights were invaluable in highlighting important areas, many of which we had already considered and incorporated into our building design and fire-safe landscaping plans. We appreciate your guidance and are grateful for your assistance. Below is a recap of the items we discussed, which will help guide our future actions.

One outstanding item was contacting the Rescue Fire Council and we sent an email to them already and awaiting response.

Fire Department Coordination

Anthony Lee Mull, the architect of HomeCA's Design Team, summarized their coordination with Fire Captain Joel Warman from Rescue Fire. They have been in discussions with Captain Warman since March 6, 2024, initially consulting him about the appropriate fire sprinkler system for their project. Captain Warman confirmed they could use an NFPA 13R fire sprinkler system, and they followed his recommendations. Additionally, they received guidance from him on driveway widths and onsite water storage, all of which were incorporated into the project design. Throughout March, Mull and the fire sprinkler design team, Elite Automatic, maintained ongoing communication with Captain Warman via email, discussing the pump system, water storage, and other design-related queries. All recommendations were included in the design. In May, they submitted a complete set of plans and permit numbers to the Fire Department for review. Following further communication in July, Captain Warman confirmed the building permit approval on July 8. By July 16, they received minor comments from the Fire Department's review agency, which Elite Automatic is addressing. Overall, Captain Warman has been consistently helpful, responsive, and supportive, providing technical assistance and ensuring all fire department requirements were met.



Fire Safety and Mitigation

Regarding fire safety and mitigating fire risk, our Fire Safety and Mitigation Plan includes establishing a 200-foot defensible space around the property, using fire-resistant construction materials such as a metal roof and other fire retardant materials, installing a fire sprinkler system with large water containers that release water to eliminate fire when triggered, and installing a fire alarm. We also have a Fire Mitigation Volunteer Consultant, a retired Fire Captain, included in our team to provide expert guidance.

Evacuation Procedures

For evacuation procedures, we conduct monthly fire drills at various times to ensure residents are prepared. Residents must have a backpack ready for quick evacuation containing important documents, medication lists, and other essentials. We maintain an accessible road with four-way access for efficient evacuation for the Youth Perinatal and Adult Residential Facilities in Rescue. Facilities in Shingle Springs are located next to Highway 50, providing efficient evacuation routes.

Water Supply

To ensure an adequate water supply, our wells provide 80 gallons per minute for the Youth Perinatal Facility and 45 gallons per minute for the Adult Residential Facility. Facilities near Highway 50 will be connected to the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) for water supply.

Traffic Mitigation Plan

Our Traffic Mitigation Plan aims to minimize traffic by consolidating grocery shopping trips to Costco every two weeks. Amazon and other delivery services will have minimal impact, as residents do not have the financial means to place orders frequently. Additionally, residents usually do not own cars, reducing overall vehicle traffic. Staff members who live on-site may own cars, but their presence will have a limited impact on traffic flow.



911 System Utilization

Regarding 911 system utilization, our facilities are non-medical, and 911 is called only in life-threatening situations. For non-emergency situations, staff will transport residents to their doctor's appointments.

Thank you once again for your time and valuable input. We look forward to continuing our engagement and addressing any further concerns as we proceed with these important projects.

Warm regards,

Patrick Prado

Patrick Prado, COO
HomeCA Inc.

Ramona Valadez

Ramona Valadez, Executive Director
Native Directions Inc.



Health Care for American Indians Living in Urban Communities in California

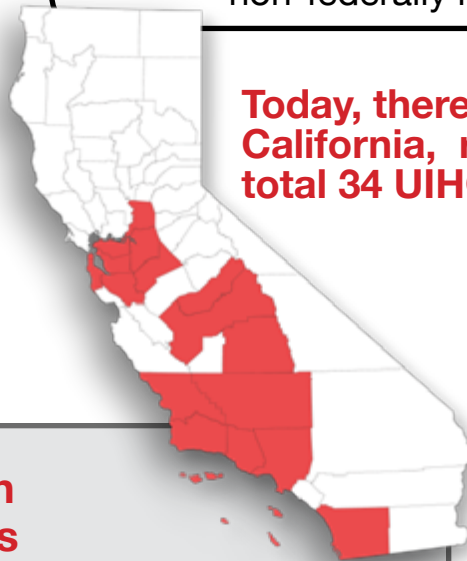
What We Do:

- Policy Monitoring and Advocacy
- Research and Evaluation
- Community Initiatives
- Training and Technical Assistance

Urban Indian Health Organizations

(UIHOs) are independent, nonprofit, Indian-controlled organizations that contract with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to provide direct health care, referral/access services, inpatient and outpatient substance abuse treatment, and social service programs.

California is home to more American Indians than any other state in the country, including Urban Indian communities, and terminated, or non-federally recognized Tribes.



Today, there are 10 UIHOs in California, representing 1/3 of the total 34 UIHOs in the U.S.



1 in 9 American Indians in the U.S. lives in a California city.

California State Health Care System for AIANs

The state administers Medicaid programs, funded by the federal government, to ensure access to health-care services for AIAN individuals.



- Health services for American Indians are based on a special historical legal responsibility identified in treaties with the U.S. government.
- California voluntarily accepted this responsibility by adopting Public Law (P.L.) 83-280 in 1954, which allowed for State jurisdiction of Indian affairs.
- [DHCS: Indian Health Program \(IHP\)](#) mission is to improve the health status of American Indians living in urban, rural, and reservation or rancheria communities throughout California.

Table 1: American Indians in California

American Indians in CA that live in Urban Areas:	88%
American Indians in CA that live on Reservations:	3%
Federally Recognized Tribes in CA:	110
Non-Federally Recognized Tribes in CA:	50
CA State Tribes Petitioning for Federal Recognition:	75

The Right to Health Care

American Indians have a special Trust relationship with the U.S. government, receiving essential resources such as healthcare. Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (1976) explicitly authorizes health services for Urban Indians.

Urban Indians are individuals of American Indian ancestry who have moved to cities either by choice seeking employment, education, and housing, or by force through the federal government's relocation policies starting in the 1940's. This has resulted in the vast majority of Urban Indians being unable to access their tribes for health services. Urban Indian Health Organizations are a key lifeline for the population.



Studies show that many American Indians fail to seek treatment at non-Indian facilities due to historical trauma, experienced prejudice, and misconceptions about American Indian health problems.

Urban Indian Health Status

Factors including economic, systemic, historical, and access to health care have all led to severe health disparities among the Urban Indian population. American Indians in urban areas suffer from chronic health conditions and health disparities that are vastly disproportionate to the health status of the general population.

Racial misclassification is a common occurrence on vital health statistics and census reports for American Indians in urban settings. These discrepancies lead to the ongoing underestimation of the population size and health status of Urban Indians in California.

Urban Indian Health Organizations (UIHOs)...

- Are uniquely positioned to identify health issues and diseases prevalent in the Urban Indian community.
- Offer culturally competent health, wellness, and prevention services.
- Are one-stop health centers that combine medical, dental, behavioral health and prevention with traditional healing practices. These factors result in American Indian patients seeking treatment earlier and more often than in non-Indian health facilities.





Native Directions Inc.: An Urban Indian Organization Fact Sheet

Understanding the Role of an Urban Indian Organization

Tribal Entity Status

Under Section 5960.35 (b)(2) of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC), Native Directions Inc. is a tribal entity, and specifically an Urban Indian Organization as defined in section 1603 of Title 25 of the United States Code.



1. Location

Native Directions Inc. primarily operates in urban areas, particularly in Manteca and Stockton, California. Recently, NDI has extended its services to El Dorado County and Amador County. Unlike organizations that focus on serving Native Americans on reservations, Native Directions Inc. is dedicated to supporting Native American populations living in urban environments or outside reservation boundaries.



2. Serving the Native Population

For over 52 years, Native Directions Inc. has been dedicated to providing essential services to Native Americans living in both urban and rural areas, including those outside reservation boundaries. These individuals may belong to federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes, or have Native American ancestry, even if they are not affiliated with a specific tribe.



3. Health and Social Services

The organization's primary mission is to deliver health care services. In addition, it provides a broad range of social, educational, and cultural support tailored to the unique needs of Native Americans in urban environments, ensuring culturally appropriate care and assistance.



4. Recognition and Funding

Native Directions Inc. is recognized and funded by Indian Health Services (IHS), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This recognition allows the organization to participate in programs designed for tribal entities, helping to address health disparities and other challenges faced by urban Native Americans.

NDI addresses the unique challenges faced by Native Americans who reside in urban areas. Historically, NDI has served Native Americans in need across California and has extended its services to individuals from other states, including Florida, New York, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and beyond.

The Role of Native Directions Inc.

As an Urban Indian Organization, Native Directions Inc. has played a crucial role for over five decades in ensuring that Native Americans living away from their traditional homelands have access to the services and support they need. The organization is a vital part of the broader effort to improve the well-being of Native populations in urban settings.

Tribal Affiliations

Members of Native Directions Inc. are of Native American descent and are affiliated with a diverse range of tribes, reflecting the extensive heritage within the organization. These tribes include:

- Fort Sill Chiricahua Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Comanche
- Chiricahua Apache (CA)
- Iroquois
- Pee-Posh from Gila River, Phoenix, Arizona (CA)
- The Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians (CA)
- Hopi
- Pascua Yaqui
- Acoma Pueblo
- Maya
- Omaha
- Ponca
- Cherokee
- Ho-Chunk
- Paiute (CA)
- Potawatomi
- Miwok (CA)

This diversity underscores the significant role Native Directions Inc. plays in serving the urban Indian community, a responsibility it has fulfilled with dedication for over 52 years.



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BUDGET
HEALTH
INSURANCE
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UTILITIES AND ENERGY
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 5 ON
STATE ADMINISTRATION

SELECT COMMITTEES
DOWNTOWN RECOVERY
FENTANYL, OPIOID ADDICTION, AND
OVERDOSE PREVENTION
WILDFIRE PREVENTION
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

August 22, 2024

Ms. Michelle Baass
Director
California Department of Health Care Services
Mail Stop 4100
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Ms. Kim Johnson
Director
California Department of Social Services
774 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

via email

Dear Director Baass and Director Johnson:

I am writing to express concerns regarding a proposed treatment center in rural El Dorado County by Native Directions, Inc. This issue has been brought to my attention by a significant number of my constituents who are concerned about this proposal. As you know, the County of El Dorado has also expressed concerns and has sought clarification regarding administrative review of project entitlements. I have serious questions about whether the proposed project meets the requirements outlined in the law to qualify for waivers of the standard project entitlement process.

The proposed treatment center raises several significant concerns within the local community. First, the project lacks the intended collaborative approach with the community, as mandated by law. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) requires a letter of support from the local lead agency, the Board of Supervisors, which Native Directions has not obtained.

Another critical concern is the lack of clarity on the environmental impact of this treatment center. There are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed through a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis. Specific issues include the facility's location in an area with very high fire risk, inadequate roads that could

exacerbate traffic hazards, and limited infrastructure, such as insufficient water availability.

While the law allows *tribal* governments and organizations formed by *tribal governments*, Native Directions, Inc is neither of those. Their attorney claims that its recognition by Indian Health Services meets the statutory requirement; however, Native Directions, Inc is a non-profit entity that is not formed by a federally recognized tribe.

The only federally recognized tribe in El Dorado County, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, has stated in writing that it is not working with Native Directions, Inc. It is my firm belief that Native Directions, Inc. does not meet the spirit or plain language of the law that is intended for expedited review *only* when working in partnership with a local government or a project of a tribal government.

While there have been letters of support submitted, it appears none of those letters are from community leaders or elected officials. The law requires a collaborative approach by mandating community support and the application fails to establish any at all from local electeds, local governments, local federally recognized tribe, or any other community leader.

Thank you for addressing these critical concerns. I look forward to your prompt response and any measures you can take to resolve these issues. Should you need any further information or wish to discuss this matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (916) 435-0501.

Sincerely,



Joe Patterson
State Assemblyman, District 5



Marie Alvarado-Gil
State Senator, District 4