

# The feds pulled \$1.5B from tribal clean energy. Tribes are finding another way.

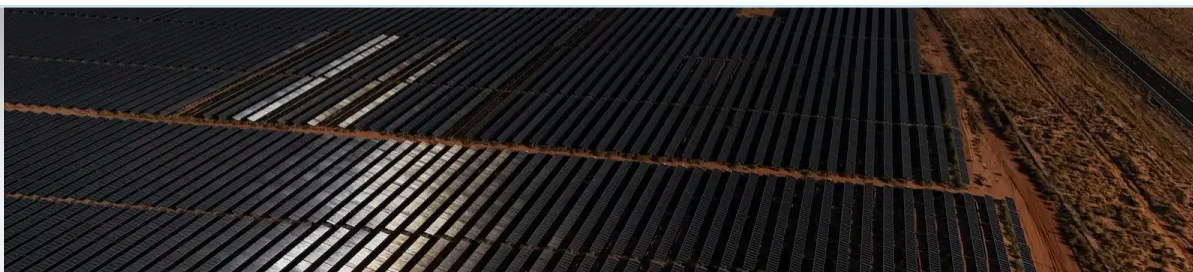
## Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >

Customize >

Allow all



Solar panels operate at the Kayenta Solar Plant in Kayenta, Ariz on the Navajo Nation. **Joshua A. Bickel / AP**

Published

Mar 10, 2026

Topic

Climate + Indigenous Affairs

Share/Republish



Across tribal nations, hosting a convening with dinner and a tour of an ambitious new project is a familiar scene. But for David Harper, a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribes and CEO of the newly created tribal energy financing organization Huurav, a

### Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

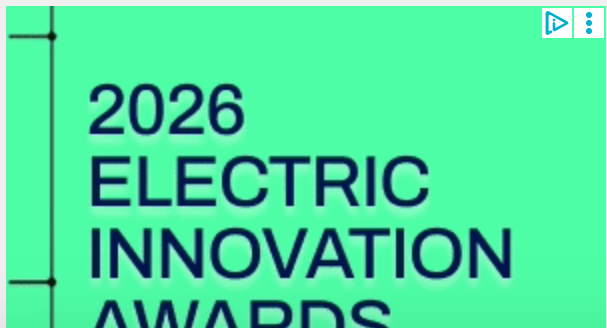
[Show details](#) >

in federal funding earmarked for tribal renewable energy and climate resilience projects.

“Were we surprised by the claw back? No, they’ve done it before,” said Huurav’s Harper. “Have they reneged on their promise of our treaties? Yes, of course. So does that immobilize us and not be able to survive? No, what it does is it helps us, it makes us create a better pathway for ourselves.”

**Grist**[Donate](#)[Sign up for The Weekly](#)

been forced to get creative. To keep clean energy projects alive, tribes are turning to philanthropy, low-interest loans, and nonprofits to bridge the massive financial gap.



**Your privacy at Grist**

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



government itself played in generating these investment needs through things like land theft, disinvestment, [and] cultural destruction in Indian Country, a one-time infusion of cash isn't enough," said Robert Maxim, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and Brookings fellow who recently co-authored a report on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act's impact. Maxim emphasized that federal funding for Indian Country is a

“Things like a clean environment, adequate energy to supply homes, basic investments in electricity, and the ability to do all that without higher levels of pollution and environmental degradation than the U.S population as a whole are all key to that trust and treaty relationship,” said Maxim.

To fill the void, nonprofits like the Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy are stepping in. Through its Indigenous Power and Light Fund, backed by philanthropic partners like the MacArthur Foundation, the Alliance serves as a critical lifeline. Huurav is taking a lead role as well, drawing on its expertise gained through

#### Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >

>

A recent survey found that more than half of Native-operated CDFIs, financial institutions that provide credit to underserved populations, cite lack of funding as one of their biggest challenges, and that financial barrier compounds existing energy inequalities. A 2023 Department of Energy report revealed that tribal households face an energy burden 28 percent higher than the national average. In the Southwest, for example, the Hopi Tribe and Navaio Nation have the highest rates of unelectrified

**Grist**

Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

weather events, like floods and wildfires, fueled by climate change.

Despite these obstacles, Indigenous communities are pushing forward by courting sustainable investors to achieve energy independence and lower utility costs. On the Hawaiian island of Molokai, for instance, Native Hawaiians are leveraging profitable renewable energy projects to reduce exorbitant utility bills while simultaneously advancing their landback initiatives. “They’re making the case that they can get investors to invest in their landback projects,” said Kyla White, Citizen Representative of the

#### Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



transmission upgrades backed by a \$1.5 billion federal loan guarantee.

Ultimately, the push for clean energy is about self-determination and resilience. As David Harper of Huurav puts it: “We don’t trust the federal government, but we have to work with them to understand that we have to continue in our process of survival and self-sustainability.”

**Grist**

Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

A message from **Grist**

## Your support keeps our climate news free.

Grist is the only award-winning newsroom focused on exploring equitable solutions to climate change. It's vital reporting made entirely possible by loyal readers like you.

**At Grist, we don't believe in paywalls. Instead, we rely on our readers to pitch in what they can so that we can continue**

### Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



**Grist**

Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

# Indigenous rights, the environment, and international law: What's at stake at this week's seabed mining talks

Anita Hofschneider · Indigenous Affairs

## Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



**Grist**

Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

**Miacel Spotted Elk**

Modern agriculture is collapsing under climate change. Indigenous farming has answers.

**Miacel Spotted Elk**

The Supreme Court takes up a Guam munitions case with high stakes for Chamoru lands

**Anita Hofschneider**

Enbridge paid police to protect one pipeline. Now it wants to do it again in Wisconsin.

**Alleen Brown**

**Your privacy at Grist**

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



Why this NASA climate scientist wants you to stay angry

**Clayton Aldern**

**Grist**

Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

**Matt Simon**

Data centers are straining the grid. Can they be forced to pay for it?

**Naveena Sadasivam**

The Iran war is changing how millions of people cook — and what they eat

**Ayurella Horn-Muller & Naveena Sadasivam**

**Your privacy at Grist**

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >



Energy

Politics

Solutions

Accountability

Extreme Weather

Food and Agriculture

About

Team

Contact

Careers

Fellowships

Pressroom

More



Donate

Sign up for The Weekly

**Become a Member**

**Advertising**

**Republish**

**Accessibility**



© 1999-2026 Grist Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved.

Grist is powered by [WordPress VIP](#).

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

### Your privacy at Grist

We use cookies for enhanced user experience, and for analyzing the site's performance and traffic. For more information, check out our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Show details](#) >

