

Cobell Settlement Land Buy-Back Program Speaker Bio

Cris Stainbrook, Oglala Lakota, President, Indian Land Tenure Foundation



Cris Stainbrook's presentation sets the stage for the land buy-back program by outlining historical tribal/federal government land policies, particularly allotment. Allotment transferred small parcels of land to individual Indians, with the federal government retaining control over the commercial use of those lands as trustee. Among the many negative effects of the allotment policy was the ultimate fractionation of the lands into smaller and smaller undivided co-ownership interests, which the federal government is required to track and for which it maintains an Individual Indian Money (IIM) account for each co-owner. The Cobell litigation attempted to have the government recreate its' accounting of the IIM funds since the beginning of allotment, which it could not do. The Cobell settlement included funds to buy back – and place into tribal ownership – allotted lands. Learn how these things came about in the context of land allotments and fractionation.

Cris Stainbrook has been working in philanthropy for 25 years and has been president of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) since its inception in 2002. As the Foundation's president, Stainbrook provides leadership, strategic direction, management, fundraising, and policy oversight to the organization with an emphasis on the successful implementation of the Foundation's mission.

Before joining ILTF, Stainbrook spent 13 years at the Northwest Area Foundation, where he held several positions. As program officer, he managed grant-making programs in sustainable development, natural resource management, economic development and basic human needs. During his final four years with the Northwest Area Foundation, he served as the community activities lead, overseeing a rapidly growing staff and implementing new programs aimed at developing community-directed plans.

Stainbrook was a founding member of Native Americans in Philanthropy and served on the board of directors for 11 years. He was also a founder and longtime advisory committee-member of the Two Feathers Endowment of the Saint Paul Foundation. He currently serves on the board of the Minnesota Community Foundation and the Saint Paul Foundation. In addition, he has served on a number of committees within the Council of Foundations and the Minnesota Council on Foundations. Stainbrook holds a bachelor of science degree from the University of Iowa and a master's degree in fisheries science from Oregon State University.