

**Written Testimony of David Martinez, Jr., President
Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc.
Submitted to the US Congress:
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND RELATED AGENCIES
FY 2016 FEDERAL BUDGET REQUEST, SUPPORT AND CONCERNS FOR:
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR (DOI)--BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (BIA)**

March 14, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Request Summary: My name is David Martinez, Jr., President of the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., (RNSB). I am here today to request funding to address the education and health needs of the residents of the Ramah Navajo Reservation in Cibola County, at Pine Hill, New Mexico. Specifically, Ramah request the following:

- (1) For \$13 million to Connect RNSB to the Gallup Junction Lateral Waterline Project.
- (2) For Funding from IHS in the amount of \$4.6 million to Redesign the RNSB's Water & Sewer System.
- (3) A Directive to the BIE to include RNSB on the Selected Replacement School Construction List or \$10 million for Replacement of Ramah Navajo's Library and Kindergarten buildings.

Background: The Ramah Band of Navajos is a small rural community of 3,500 people located in the Northwest region of New Mexico spread across 250 sq miles. It is geographically separated from the main Navajo Nation Reservation. Our community is located on a dry plateau area over 7,300 feet high.

It was only in the late 1960s when the Gallup McKinley County Public School in New Mexico refused to rebuild a local public school that was condemned and closed, resulting in having the Ramah Navajo people send their children away from their community to other public schools and to boarding schools, some of which were located out-of-State and their children were only able to come home once or twice a year. It was then that the Ramah Navajo community through their local government established the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., as a nonprofit organization under New Mexico State law and obtained its 501(c) 3 IRS status. The founding School Board members then traveled to Washington, DC and New York City to lobby Congress and Foundations to raise money for their own community controlled school. When they were successful, it was this effort and others that eventually led Congress to pass the now historic Public Law 93-638 "Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act" of 1975 (ISDEA). RNSB has since become the first Indian community to also operate its own Indian Health Service health center, and the first Indian community to have its own radio station, sorely needed in our early days when paved roads were non-existent and few people had phones in their remote homes. RNSB is now known throughout Indian Country as a leader in Indian self-determination.

It is important to note that RNSB not only governs its K-12 School, but has many other programs that provide vital public services for the Ramah Navajo Community. In this dual capacity, the

Board shares responsibilities with the Ramah Navajo Chapter (a political sub-unit of the Navajo Nation) in providing most major services to the Community by contracting federal and state programs. During its 45-years of operation, the School Board has established four divisions within RNSB consisting of over 215 employees in our Education, Health, Community Services and Administrative Services Divisions.

Request No. 1.: For \$13 million to Connect the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. to the Gallup Junction Lateral Waterline Project.

The RNSB does not have access to lakes, rivers, streams, nor dams to supply water to its school, health clinic, fire station, and 300 community and staff housing units. It is dependent on a single 3,000 foot deep aquifer that has dropped over time. However, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Interior among others are funding the Gallup Rural Navajo Water Supply Project which will supply water from the Eastern Cutter Dam through the city of Gallup down to Bread Springs, New Mexico. This Gallup Junction Lateral Waterline will supply Bread Springs which is located within 49 miles of RNSB. We are seeking funding to connect to this southern leg of the Gallup Junction Lateral to ensure a long-term supply, treatment and transmission of water to our tribal school.

The Bread Springs phase of the Gallup Junction Lateral Waterline Project is scheduled to begin in May 2017. We are seeking funding for needed design in connecting to this water line as well as construction and engineering cost estimated at \$13 million.

Request No. 2.: For IHS to fund \$4.6 million for Redesign, Renovation and Upgrade of the Pine Hill School Campus Failing Public Water System

Most of our water facilities were constructed when the school was built in the early 1970's. Today our community struggles with as many as 10 waterline breaks and outages per year caused by corrosion, rust, joint failure, poor design and pump failure. The system contains 18 miles of waterlines made up of approximately 4 miles of cast iron pipes, 2 miles of asbestos and 12 miles of PVC. The 4 miles of cast iron pipes are now 44 years old into their 50 to 60 year life expectancy but began failing as much as 4 times per year 6 years ago. The pipe is observed to have considerable amounts of rust and corrosion caused by hard waters and heavy metals found in our water supply. The asbestos line has broken 3 times in the past 2 years caused by poor design where the piping is not properly bedded. However, the 12 miles of PVC fails the most often at 3 to 4 times per year due to joint failure and improper bedding.

To worsen matters, this waterline system runs most frequently beneath the few paved roads located in our community. In 90% of repairs, paved roads must be destroyed to access the break points at considerable expense to the RNSB. Necessarily, these once paved roads are now sites of pot holes the size of large trucks. The cost of line repairs along with repaving road cost is insurmountable for our community school without a tax base.

Moreover the RNSB's water line system operates under a single water shut-off valve. Therefore, when repairs are made on the line the entire water line system must be shut off. This leaves critical services such as the school, EMS, volunteer fire station and the health clinic (which is the only healthcare provider within 40 miles) without water, forcing their closing until repairs are

completed. In 2013 water was shut off for 15 consecutive days requiring water tankers to haul water to the community and portable toilets to be placed on street corners. In 2014 three separate occasions of water line breaks caused the water to be shut off for a total of 9 days. Already in 2016 we have experienced another water line break which again required portable toilets to be placed on street corners to service over 1,000 residents. A much needed system redesign would eliminate these required system wide shut downs.

Additionally, the Pine Hill School Campus Public Water System has two wells with one off-line due to unsafe levels of arsenic, iron, lead, uranium and other heavy metals. A near-by off campus well is the only other water source for this area. The pumps for both operational wells are overworked to keep up with the demand. To safeguard against long-term water outages, our operating (as well as off-line) wells require an upgraded water treatment facility to reduce amounts of heavy metals to stay within U.S. EPA acceptable levels. Finally, to develop a well rounded public water system, we require a monitoring system to check the piping, wells, valves, and water treatment levels as well as an additional 250,000 gallon water holding tank to store treated water.

To begin planning the water system redesign, renovation and upgrade we would develop a Preliminary Engineering Report that would describe our existing facilities along with a description of the issues being addressed by the proposed project. It will also identify alternatives, present a life cycle cost analysis of technically feasible alternatives and propose a specific course of action. The Preliminary Engineering Report will also include a detailed current cost estimate of recommended alternatives.

We calculate the following project costs:

1. Preliminary Engineering Report	\$ 318,140
2. Final Preliminary Engineering Report	\$ 165,000
3. Upgraded Water Treatment Facility	\$ 447,000
4. 250,000 Gallon Welded Tank	\$ 400,000
5. Est. New Water Lines (18 mi./95,040ft x\$30)	\$ 2,851,200
6. Street Repairs (1.5 mi./7,920 x \$50)	<u>\$ 396,000</u>
Total:	\$4,577,340

We are requesting that Congress approve funding in the amount of \$4,577,340 under the 2017 federal budget to perform a *Preliminary Engineering Report* leading to the ***Redesign, Renovation and Upgrade of the Pine Hill School Campus Failing Public Water System*** that provides water to 2,000 community members as well as the K-12 school, medical clinic, EMS and volunteer fire station.

Request No. 3: A Directive to the BIE to include RNSB on the Selected Replacement School Construction List or \$10 million for Replacement of Ramah Navajo’s Library and Kindergarten buildings.

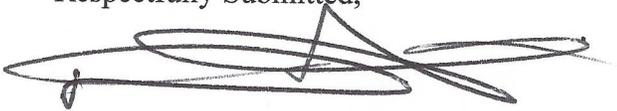
Both Pine Hill School’s library and kindergarten buildings totaling 32,000 square feet are closed due to *stachybotrys chartarum*. This particularly dangerous form of black mold required a

significant gutting and rebuilding of our elementary school in 2011. The elementary required replacement of interior walls, the roof and interior finishes. We have good reason to believe that similar corrective action would be required. Given the extent of the major renovation needed to bring the building to safe and usable condition, it has been recommend that the building be demolished and a new library and kindergarten building be constructed. In the mean time both buildings have been sealed due to high concentrations of mold in the building. As a result, all of our kindergarten students are housed in other locations. Our library has been divided between classrooms in our elementary and middle school. There is no space for a high school library. However, using this classroom space for library has created overcrowding in the classrooms. We have an emergency need for a new kindergarten and library.

We therefore urge congress to direct the BIE to include RNSB on the Selected Replacement School Construction List or \$10 million for Replacement of Ramah Navajo's Library and Kindergarten buildings, or alternatively, to BIE to identify funding from the Facilities Improvement and Repair account to immediately redress our critical building deficiencies so that our full school campus can again be utilized.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees for the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., I would like to express our appreciation for your support for our community endeavors that will help us become more self-sufficient. I hope that our testimony will help you better understand the situation of our community as with many other American Indian tribal communities. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully Submitted,



David Martinez Jr., President
Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc.
P.O. Box 10
Ramah Navajo Reservation
Pine Hill, New Mexico 87357
(505) 775-3257/3258