

**TESTIMONY OF CECILIA FIRE THUNDER, PRESIDENT OF OGLALA LAKOTA
NATION EDUCATION COALITION, TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

May 17, 2017

Conference Room #2007 Rayburn House Office Building (Formerly B-308)

Chairman Calvert ranking member McCollum and honorable members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Oglala Lakota Nation Education Coalition. My name is Cecilia Fire Thunder, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, I am speaking on behalf of the Oglala Lakota Nation Education Coalition, which represents the Oglala Sioux Tribe's six Tribal Treaty Schools. They are all PL 100-297 Tribal Grant Schools funded through the Bureau of Indian Education under authorization of PL 93-638. We are located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in south-western South Dakota and have 2114 ISEP eligible students in Kindergarten through 12th grades.

Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) formula funds are the primary source for educational and residential programs at BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools for instructional services. The most pressing concern we have at our level right now is the underfunding/constraints in our Facilities Operations and Maintenance. You know what our utility costs are during the frigid winters in our area and because we are receiving 51% of the amount needed to fully fund our Facilities costs, we are increasingly using ISEP funds in order to supplement this area. This unfortunately reduces an already overloaded ISEP budget with our high costs for Health Insurance and other benefits for our staff. When we use our ISEP funds to pay costs for other programs then we reduce available funds for teacher hires and curriculum needs in the classroom which is just unfair to our students who deserve a warm classroom also. The areas of our school that we want to keep you informed about are listed by category below. We speak regularly with Mr. Collins Clifford, Oglala Sioux Tribe Education Committee Chairman and we keep them apprised of these matters.

Teacher Salaries: The base salary at our schools is \$9,000 less than the local South Dakota Public Schools (within 15 miles of one of our schools). As we use more and more of our ISEP funding to supplement the areas which are drastically underfunded, we have less and less money to bring these amounts closer to the schools near us and with whom we compete for teachers. The Public Schools can offer not only a larger salary base, but also a better retirement package and affordable health insurance rates due to a larger pool of employees.

Another area that impacts teacher recruitment and retention and is major use of funds is to provide health insurance for our employees. Programs which are only designated PL 93-638 are eligible for Federal Employee Health Benefits however, since we are not specifically mentioned in the law, our schools PL 100-297 Grant Schools are considered ineligible for the Federal Employee Health Benefits.

Facilities: We continue to suffer from constraintment of our Facilities Operations funding. For the 2016 School Year, the percentage of funds received in comparison to the need at our school

was 51%. As a result we must use ISEP funding to pay for custodians, security officers and supplies since the Operations funding we receive is necessary to meet utilities costs. When we have frigid winters and have to use more heating fuel to heat our schools then this runs us into shortages in basic operations so we do not receive enough funds to pay for basic costs of maintaining our school facilities. We had temperatures that reached forty + below zero on numerous occasions and our facilities costs were huge. Even though it is stated in:

25 CFR, Chapter I, Subpart L, Section 39.1203 Future consideration of contract school operation and maintenance funding.

The Assistant Secretary shall arrange for full funding for operation and maintenance of contract schools by fiscal year 1981.

Since 1981, we have received 100% funding only once and funds to the schools have continued to decrease annually.

None of the schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation have been given any Maintenance Improvement & Repair (MI&R) funding in over a year and a half. Our schools continue to degrade over time, and not having monies or reasonable updates from the Office of Facilities Management only proves that the system is broken and management does not know how to fund Grant schools. Before MAXIMO, when we used a system called FMIS, we at least received some funding. Since the inception of MAXIMO, systems are not tied together and funding has virtually come to a halt. We can continue to enter work orders into MAXIMO to try to increase our schools funding but for our Grant Schools it is a waste of time because the BIE Grant Schools are not tied to the Federal Budget Management System (FBMS), this is how BIE operated schools generate funding for Facilities O & M funds. Deferred Maintenance costs can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars if not into the millions if they are not funded in time. Deficiencies will always exist and become apparent through normal wear and tear of a facility. It is very frustrating when Headquarters expects results from schools, but does not give them access to the tools to accomplish their goals, nor are we getting any funding to take care of our schools. This is unacceptable and we should not be left wondering if we are ever going to receive funding for deferred maintenance items while our facilities continue to degrade.

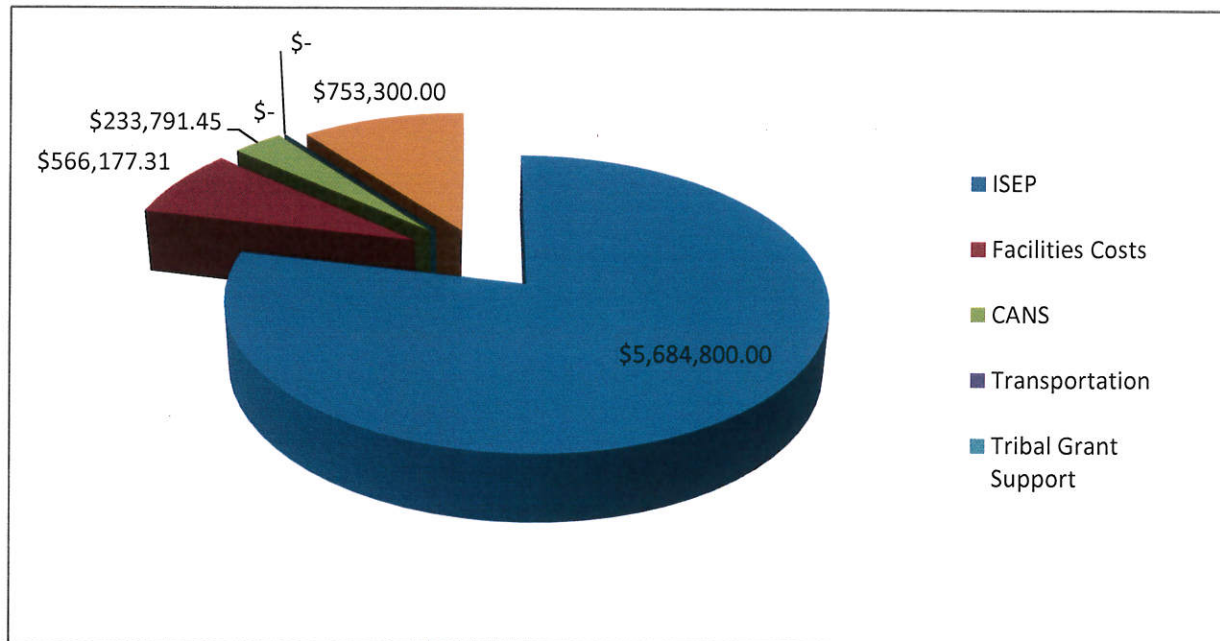
Transportation: All Schools have unmet transportation needs for our students' such as extracurricular activities like after-school academic programs and for sporting activities. One of our schools' busses travel an average of 1684 miles per day to pick up and take students home, with additional after-school routes averaging 1500 miles per day, for which we do not receive funding from the Bureau of Indian Education. Schools are only funded for the AM and PM runs. Any additional bus runs that are needed to take students home for after school activities (Educational or Sporting) are not funded by the BIE, so if transportation programs run out of funds then the schools have to use ISEP funds to cover these expenditures.

Food Service: We receive reimbursements from the National School Lunch Program for meals served to the Students but this is only gives us enough funds to pay for our food costs which includes delivery surcharges for our location. We must pay for food service staff from ISEP funds.

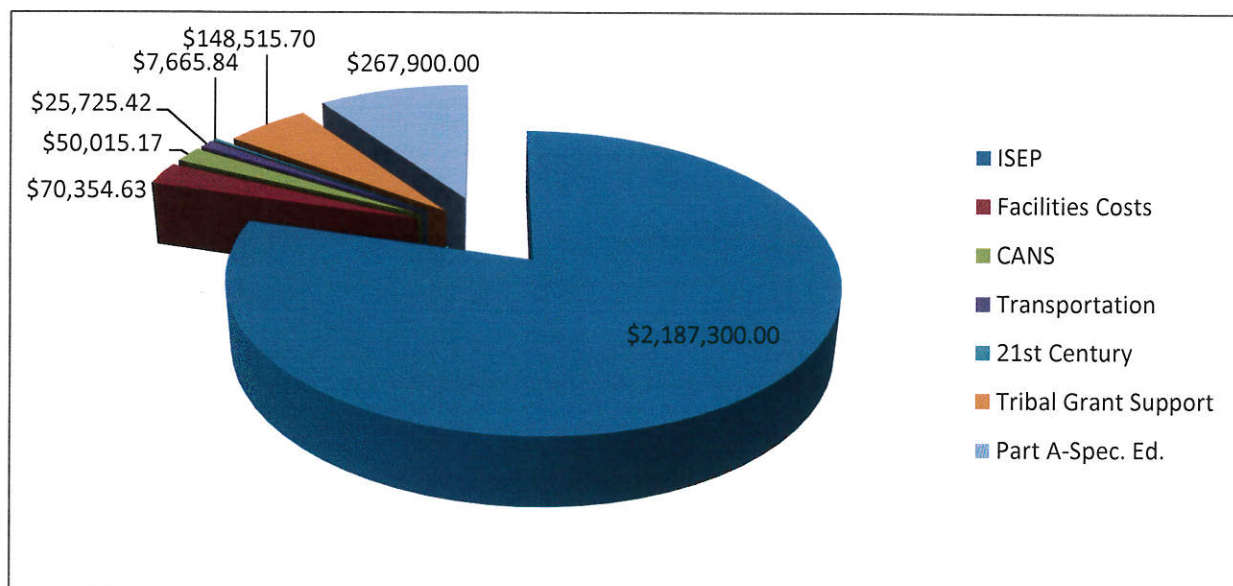
Tribal Grant Support: This program has been under funded for the past 15 years or so. In 2015 it was funded at 64.88% of need and in 2016 we were supposed to receive 100% funding but we

received 83% funding instead. As a result of the underfunding we have had to pay some of our Human Resource costs out of ISEP.

LITTLE WOUND SCHOOL OTHER USES OF ISEP FUNDS FOR 2015-2016



AMERICAN HORSE SCHOOL OTHER USES OF ISEP FUNDS FOR 2015-2016



LITTLE WOUND SCHOOL FACILITIES SHORT FALLS

YEAR	CALC NEED	FUNDED AMT	SHORT FALL	CONSTRAINT
2000-01	\$1,005,509.00	\$792,482.00	\$213,027.00	21.19%
2001-02	\$1,005,508.00	\$875,804.00	\$129,704.00	13.20%
2002-03	\$899,819.00	\$765,354.00	\$134,465.00	14.90%
2003-04	\$906,861.00	\$731,415.00	\$175,446.00	19.30%
2004-05	\$1,000,257.00	\$810,507.00	\$189,750.00	18.97%
2005-06	\$988,056.00	\$732,382.00	\$255,674.00	26.00%
2006-07	\$1,051,707.00	\$708,229.00	\$343,478.00	33.00%
2007-08	\$1,036,109.00	\$705,906.00	\$330,203.00	32.00%
2008-09	\$1,115,895.00	\$742,709.00	\$373,186.00	49.00%
2009-10	\$1,083,684.00	\$709,325.00	\$374,359.00	52.00%
2010-11	\$988,394.00	\$723,296.00	\$265,098.00	43.00%
2011-12	\$1,358,458.00	\$913,303.00	\$445,155.00	45.00%
2012-13	\$1,192,285.00	\$767,303.00	\$424,982.00	49.00%
2013-14	\$1,177,400.00	\$732,000.00	\$445,400.00	51.00%
2014-15	\$1,250,999.00	\$800,270.00	\$450,729.00	49.00%
2015-16	\$1,250,999.00	\$921,895.00	\$329,104.00	???
TOTAL	SHORT FALL		\$4,879,760.00	

The above chart represents the amount of Facilities Operations and Maintenance funds that one of our Grant Schools received over the years, as you can see they have been under funded for a number of years. The constraint is with the operations portion of the Facilities funding. After the system was switched to MAXIMO we are not able to determine the amount of constraint anymore.

Oglala Lakota Nation Education Coalition thanks you for giving us this opportunity to provide the Subcommittee our needs directly from our school administration and school boards. In conclusion we would like to respectfully request an increase of 17.7% to the 2018 budget. We would also like to request 100% funding for Facilities Operations and Maintenance

Thank you for your time and attention to our Tribal Grant Schools concerns.