

**TESTIMONY OF CHAIRMAN ROGER TRUDELL  
ON BEHALF OF THE SANTEE SIOUX TRIBE OF NEBRASKA  
BEFORE THE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,  
ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES  
THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2018**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Roger Trudell and I am Chairman of the Santee Sioux Nation. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on behalf of my Nation on the Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations requests of IHS and BIA. The Santee Sioux Indian Reservation is located in a severely economically depressed area of rural northeastern Nebraska. The Reservation covers approximately 184 square miles and is composed of approximately 2,900 enrolled members, around 800 of whom reside on or near the Santee Sioux Indian Reservation. We operate and manage a variety of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Indian Health Service (IHS) programs – all of which are critical to our tribal members. I appreciate the opportunity to present these issues of importance.

Before I go into several specific issues, I want to clarify why we are here as a sovereign nation requesting funds. We are here, along with leaders of the other Native American/Alaskan Native leaders, today because Santee Sioux are at a severe disadvantage. We are not the same as states or even localities. We do not have the same structures nor the same economies. Our Tribe was relocated by force to land that was not ours, in fact we are still barred by an Act of Congress from returning to any of our ancestral land in Minnesota. We were forced into agreements that purposely controlled our economies and ways of life. Those agreements/treaties made the Santee Sioux economy reliant on federal appropriations for the lives of their people. It is because of those agreements/treaties, I am here today.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Our reservation covers 117,000 acres in a rural location. Regarding law enforcement, our situation is critical and the safety of my Nation is already at risk. In particular, our Nation requires a sufficient number of law enforcement officers that includes a criminal investigator and a local detention facility to hold arrested individuals within the Santee Sioux jurisdiction to alleviate long periods of time we are without law enforcement coverage on the reservation. Currently, four law enforcement officers are responsible for serving our entire community. The closest detention facility for arrested individuals is located in another state, in the cities of Yankton and Wagner, South Dakota. Officers must leave the field to transport arrested individuals to these facilities in South Dakota and then drive back to the reservation to continue their shift. This takes law enforcement officers out of the field for significantly long periods of time. With an already reduced police force, this puts the community at a significant safety risk. Additionally, officers must again leave the field to drive to South Dakota to pick-up and transport offenders back to the reservation to appear in court. Furthermore, officers must remain at the court for proceedings with the offender in shackles due to the lack of a holding facility. These proceedings often consume an entire day, further reducing the number of officers in the field and putting our community at even greater risk.

Often, the Police Chief is the only officer on duty to cover the entire reservation. Even further compounding the problem is the lack of funding to hire a criminal investigator to gather evidence, investigate crimes, interview witnesses and apprehend suspects.

To address the need for a local detention facility within the Santee Sioux jurisdiction and alleviate the burdens that take critically needed officers out of the field for transportation of detainees, we request appropriations increases for tribal law enforcement programs for additional officers and investigators while also providing needed monies for reservation based local detention facilities.

## **METHAMPHETAMINE AND OPIOID TREATMENT FACILITIES**

In addition, the Santee Sioux Nation currently faces an immediate and dangerous crisis due to the influx of methamphetamine onto our lands and the increase in opioid abuse. As a result, the Santee Sioux is seeing a significant increase in the cost of treatment of patients due to addiction, disease, overdose, or death. The Nation wants to beat this problem, but funds are desperately needed for counseling, treatment and rehabilitation services, and increased foster care for children of parents suffering from drug addiction, related disability or incapacitation. Again, as with law enforcement, the only treatment facilities available are located in South Dakota and are already overburdened. Without on reservation treatment facilities and additional funding levels to address this horrible issue, our communities will continue to suffer.

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM AND TRIBAL YOUTH SHELTERS**

Ensuring the health and safety of our children is a top priority for our Tribe. With a reduced police force and an increasing onslaught of methamphetamine and opioid abuse, there is a real and immediate need for a safe place for children exposed to drug abuse and violence in the home. More often than not, children exposed to violence or drug abuse in the home have no safe place to go. Our tribe has resorted to members of our Mental Health Committee opening their homes to these children in need of a safe place to stay. Additionally, children suffering emotionally or struggling with mental and emotional issues, do not have a safe place to go. Members of our Mental Health Committee often spend the night just driving around talking with a child in need because there is no other place to go for help. The Santee Sioux are in desperate need of a youth home that provides shelter and safety for infants and children exposed to violence, endangerment, or neglect. A home that serves as a place where our youth can receive culturally appropriate intervention and support services.

To address the impacts of methamphetamine and opioid abuse and the unmet needs facing our youth and families, we urge the Subcommittee to increase funds for IHS Mental Health Services and Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs. Additionally, we request report language requiring behavioral health providers hired under this initiative to provide services at youth homes and shelters and we ask the Subcommittee to appropriate funding for the construction, staffing and operation of emergency youth shelters.

## **ACCESS TO WATER LINES, ELECTRICITY AND SANITATION**

A number of our tribal members reside in extreme rural areas and do not qualify for HUD housing, due to limited inventory (which I know is another Subcommittee's jurisdiction) and other issues. As such, some have taken measures to construct their own housing or to purchase manufactured housing, but these homes do not have access to water/sewage lines and/or electricity due to the location of the reservation and the limited funds for infrastructure expansion. Our population is growing while our ability to house our people is not. We need funds to expand needed water/sewage access and for power hook-ups.

Another issues is the upkeep and maintenance of vehicles used for refuse collection. The Santee Sioux Reservation covers approximately 184 square miles and sanitation vehicles must travel the complete distance covering remote and rural areas on a daily basis, with the nearest refuse center located in the city of Yankton, South Dakota. This puts extreme wear and tear on these vehicles. We need increased funding to provide access to water, electricity, improved sanitation. We ask the Subcommittee to appropriate funding to meet these immediate and basic needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the most immediate needs of the Santee. We believe that our requests further our shared goal of improving the lives of the Santee people and we look forward to working with the subcommittee on our requests.