

**TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE DARRELL G. SEKI, SR.
CHAIRMAN, RED LAKE BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS**

**Before the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee for
Indigenous Peoples of the United States, July 11, 2019**

Good Afternoon Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Cook, and all our friends here.

My name is Darrell Seki, Sr., Chairman of the Red Lake Nation. Chi Miigwetch for this opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Red lake Band of Chippewa Indians.

Red Lake's 840,000 acre Reservation is held in trust by the United States and is home to over 12,000 tribal members. The remoteness of our relatively large Reservation, and our lack of good roads, reliable communications systems, and other necessary infrastructure makes it difficult to provide public safety services, promote economic development, and create employment opportunities at Red Lake.

I am here today to talk about the BIA's failure to assist Red Lake in repairing our inadequate public safety buildings and our crumbling tribal roads system.

Red Lake has been tirelessly trying to fix the dilapidated public safety infrastructure on our Reservation. Years ago, the BIA condemned its own law enforcement center at Red Lake but did not replace it because of a lack of funds. As a result, my Tribe was forced to borrow five million dollars in 2011 to rebuild it. This year, my Tribe was compelled again to take out a USDA loan to replace two dilapidated BIA fire halls.

Replacement of these three federal buildings is the responsibility of the BIA, but because BIA would not fulfill its trust responsibility, we had to. If the BIA will not provide funding to repair and replace its own facilities, it should at least pay a fair and equitable lease cost to the Tribe. We ask for your assistance and support to obtain these lease agreements from the BIA.

Road construction and maintenance funding is another critical need at Red Lake. While our need for improving our tribal road system increases, the funding we receive has decreased.

In 2002, through the negotiated rule-making process, tribes agreed that a needs-based formula should be used to allocate Indian Reservation roads funding to tribes. This funding distribution was in effect from 2004 through 2012.

However, beginning in 2013, with the passage of MAP-21, and later the FAST Act, the distribution of Tribal Road construction funding shifted from a needs-based formula to a population-based formula. This change has permitted funding intended for Indian Reservations to be diverted to county, state, and other non-tribal roads over which the federal government has no trust responsibility, to the detriment of Reservation residents where there is no viable funding alternative.

Because of this shift, **Red Lake has lost \$6 million under the MAP-21 and FAST Act, plus \$4.5 Million under the previous highway bill, for a combined loss of \$10.5 Million since 2004 in road construction funding.** Yet this formula manipulation continues to be used by the BIA, despite repeated demonstrations by Red Lake and other Tribes of the gross inequities it is causing.

Following extensive fieldwork, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently concluded that “Federal programs designed to support the social and economic wellbeing of Native Americans remain chronically underfunded and inefficiently structured.” The Commission specifically identified Reservation roads as one of the highest unmet needs.

It is imperative that the Congress recognize the inequities that persist in the BIA Tribal Transportation Program and take steps to ensure these inequities are corrected.

Chi Miigwetch for your support of our most immediate needs at the Red Lake Nation. These needs directly impact **my constituents**. We need this Subcommittee to help us make the BIA live up to its trust responsibilities.