

**Submitted by:  
Mr. Tom Miller, Member, Board of Directors  
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND  
SECONDARY EDUCATION  
APRIL 28, 2007**

**SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS FOR NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

Good morning Chairman Kildee and members of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood and Elementary and Secondary Education. Testimony opportunities such as this today are important in a process that allows for the tribes to submit meaningful comments and suggestions that will affect Indian Education. Mr. Chairman, your support of the tribes and in particular, the education of our native American children, is well known and greatly appreciated. On behalf of the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, I would like to personally thank you for your steadfast support over the years.

My name is Tom Miller, and I am an elected member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians governing Board of Directors. Our Tribe includes over 33,000 members, making it one of the largest Tribal Nations in the United States. Our membership includes a significant number of school-aged children, in the BIE funded system and in public schools, all of whom are impacted by No Child Left Behind. I am also the Superintendent of the Hannahville Indian School which is located on the Hannahville Indian (Potawatomi) reservation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In addition to this, I am the school board chairperson for the Bahweting Anishnabe School, located on the Sault Ste Marie Tribal reservation, also located in the upper Peninsula of Michigan. On behalf of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Native

American students in all schools, I urge your continued commitment to No Child Left Behind and to effective education by providing greater funding and flexibility necessary for improvement of BIA education, facilities and the implementation of Title VII and VIII.

#### NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

The No Child Left Behind Act is a well intended law with an overall goal of increasing the educational levels of our students that is commendable. As it now stands, it is largely an unfunded mandate. This is of an extreme concern to the schools within the BIE funded system which has historically been underfunded and cannot assume any unfunded mandates. We are recommending that the funding be appropriated at adequate levels which will allow the schools to be able to pay for the required activities that will better achieve the goals of NCLB.

#### BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION (BIE) - Title X, Section D

The Bureau of Indian Education will need increased appropriations to allow the schools to successfully compete in this race to raise overall academic achievement and make adequately yearly progress (AYP). Our base funding with the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) had yearly trailed the national average of student revenue by at least \$1500 per student. This coupled with stagnant levels of the Title programs, have limited our ability to keep pace with many of the activities needed to increase overall educational performance (e.g. teacher quality). We also need a period of stability within the BIE system that will allow us to affect the needed changes that must take place with many schools. The recent attempt by the Bureau to reorganize over the objections of the

tribes is classic example of why we must have this stability during this important period. If this proposed reorganization had taken place, the schools would have been in a state of chaos and the education of the students would have affected negatively. A better idea would include working with the tribes that are in that particular agency or region to design an effective model for the BIE to better service the schools and students. Adequate funding and stability within the BIE system are absolutely necessary if we are to meet the raised bar on education as required by NCLB.

At present, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded schools are in a process of attempting to catch up in the construction of new and or renovated educational facilities. Many of the requirements of NCLB assume that the schools have the facilities that will allow them to perform the educational services that are needed to achieve academic success or adequate yearly progress. As of now, our BIE facility process of new and replacement school construction has a serious disconnect with education. There are long periods of delays, mainly related to disagreements between the tribes and the Office of Facilities Management & Construction (OFMC) on the targeted number of students that the school will be sized for. This has ultimately led to reductions in the yearly appropriations for construction because of the delay in the utilization of the appropriated construction dollars. Tribal input is not being given it's proper consideration in this process. School construction needs to be brought under the direction of BIE. This will bring educators on the Bureau side into the building of schools and greatly improve the present process.

## TITLE VII

Experienced educators within Indian Country will report that Indian children learn better

and perform better academically, if they understand the connection between academic curriculum and Tribal culture. Title VII programs are used as a bridge, connecting academic and cultural studies together. Currently, the Title VII formula grants provide approximately \$250 per Indian pupil at public school districts. The programming supplements traditional school curriculum with cultural programming. Tragically, most school systems are unable to implement adequate cultural programs due to inflexible schedules dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act. Often, before the “connection” between the academic subject-matter and the cultural import is made, the rigid schedules force teachers to stop teaching and focus solely upon testing. Native American students lose out. Equally as unfortunate, most school districts receive inadequate funds to implement Title VII Indian Education programs for all students. Most focus on academic tutoring at the elementary school age and provide little or no services to students at the middle and high school ages. Our experience has shown that middle and high school years are critical periods for our Native American students, as this is when we experience our highest dropout levels. It is important for Title VII services include school retention services. Please note also, that Title VII funds may be used for professional development of teachers. There is a need to provide cultural training for teachers, to assist them in working better with our Native American students and families. School districts are hard pressed to divert Title VII funds away from direct academic services and support these training needs. Additional Title VII funds for this purpose would assist school districts in supporting this important need.

I urge you to support greater flexibility in curriculum and testing schedules. Increased

flexibility would encourage the development of programs that would effectively combine academic subject matter with cultural relevance, improving Native American students' chances for success. I also urge you to provide for a 5% increase of \$9.3 million over the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution level of \$195.8 million for No Child Left Behind Title VII funding. Specifically: \$4 million of the increase should go to national research activities (Title VII, Part A, Sub Part 3), focusing on analyzing effective approaches and the current status and needs of Indian children in school. The remainder should go to the Restoration of funding for Education for Native Hawaiians and Alaska Native Education Equity. President Bush's cut eliminated its funding.

#### TITLE VIII

The Title VIII Impact Aid Program is being reduced by \$29 million from the proposed FY 2007 Continuing Resolution level, under the President's FY 2008 Budget proposal. Please note the proposed FY 2007 Continuing Resolution level is already inadequately funded, as the need for new school facilities far exceeds the funding provided to build new facilities. The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians has several school districts within its area. School construction needs have exploded over recent years. Many of the schools are old and in need of repair, or in need of being re-built.

I urge you to provide a total of \$1.342 billion be allocated for Impact Aid. The increase of \$85 million for the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution level would allow for some progress to be made in meeting the public school construction needs on reservations throughout the country. Keep in mind that the funding used for Impact Aid helps meet

the needs of Indians and non-Indians alike.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for listening to me in my capacity as a Native educator and an elected tribal representative. By working together, we can make a positive difference in the world for our children.