

Statement of Lindsey White, Student at The Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School

**Field Hearing to Examine Construction and Facility Needs
at the Bureau of Indian Education**

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

September 11, 2010

Hello, everyone. My name is Lindsey White. I'm a member of the wolf clan and I live in Cass Lake. I am currently a senior at the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School. Thank you for the invitation and opportunity today to represent my school.

I've been attending the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School for the past thirteen years. All thirteen years I've been told that education is very important, but it's hard for me to believe this when I see how my school looks compared to the other local schools.

The Bug-o-Nay-Ge-Shig School was formed in 1975. My school was not constructed with the intention of being a long-term structure for a high school. It is a metal clad temporary structure that was built over twenty years ago. Today we have almost three-hundred Native American students from across the many reservations around Minnesota.

Currently, the carpet in our high school is soaked with water because leaks from the ceiling and the windows. Our building fails to meet safety and security standards because this. We have air quality issues that include mold and fungus. This cannot be safe for our students and staff. Also, our heating and cooling system is insufficient. Another safety concern is the lack of security during emergencies. There are no "safe" areas in our building to use during an emergency or disaster; we often have to run to the elementary building during severe weather. Students and staff have also seen evidence of rodents in our building. Our school also lacks up-to-date communication technology and basic integrated alarm systems. Large group school and community meeting areas are insufficient as well; we have to meet in the gym, which is located almost a quarter mile away, or crowd into a small room in our high school building.

All of these problems have effected my education in a negative way. Many of the classrooms I'm in lack windows, which makes the air stuffy. With an insufficient heating and cooling system, I have some classrooms that are very cold and others that are very warm. This is distracting when trying to do my work. The many fluorescent lights give me a headache when I'm trying to concentrate in class. Our hallway has uneven floors. This creates safety issues for students and staff walking through our hallways. Overall, the quality of our high school building is in poor condition. When students are expected to attend and work in a school like ours, it's very difficult to work and take school seriously when our building is in the shape that it is.

For me, as a student going to school in these conditions, it is frustrating because these things are distractions and take away from our academics. It's disappointing that our classrooms are small and inadequate. I am embarrassed that our school is this way, when many other schools look more like a high school should. Despite these serious concerns, our school provides a quality education when we don't have to worry about safety issues. The Bug School focuses on integrating culture into academics. Students have the opportunity to participate in classes such as seasonal activities, Ojibwe Language, drum and dance, cultural arts, and Ojibwe History. We also have a language immersion program.

In closing, I want to say we deserve a building that is secure and safe. Our education is just as important as anyone else's. Because we choose culture as a part of our education, we should not suffer a second or third rate building. If education is a priority, why has nothing improved in our high school building after so many years?

Again, thank you for this opportunity to represent my school and for listening.

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