

DA  
Indian

July 16, 1963

Mr. Thurman Rhodd  
Post Office Box 172  
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Rhodd:

This will acknowledge receipt of a copy of your letter of June 10 to Mr. Phileo Nash, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, relative to what you feel are injustices to the Ponca Indians. I appreciate very much your sending me a copy of this letter, and I will be interested in knowing what reply you receive from Mr. Nash on this matter.

Sincerely,



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P. O. Box 172  
Ponca City, Oklahoma  
July 10, 1963

Mr. Phileo Nash, Commissioner  
of Indian Affairs  
BIA  
Washington 25, D. C.

Subj: Proposed Road  
Improvements and  
Unfair Tactics of  
Tribal Council

Dear Sir:

We, the undersigned, wish to call your attention to what we feel was a gross injustice to our tribe of Ponca Indians. We are referring to the recent problem concerning a proposed road program in our community. The program as we understood it was; to improve farm to market roads bordering tax-free land, that the funds appropriated for the BIA was to be used for the benefit of Indian people.

One of the roads to be improved is County Road 6117 and we fail to see how the program applies to this road as it does not fall in this category. It is not bordered by Indian land (with the exception of 120 acres that has a north and south exit to needed facilities.) The population on this road consists of 4 non-Indian families. Also, it is an improved all weather road and is kept in that condition by the County Road Department.

We protested this proposal and asked that plans be changed to a road (6113) one mile south of 6117. We appealed to our Ponca Tribal Council, Area Road Engineers, Area Director and other Officials to no avail. We were notified only recently that if we protested once more, we would lose the entire road program. We hope this is not true as the first 4 miles which is east of Hwy 77 will benefit the Indian people. The portion west of Hwy 77 was the one we objected to for the following reasons:

1. The Indian home and land owners on 6113 maintain their land and have permanent homes and will retain their land.
2. If the road was improved and properly done so, it would promote soil conservation by providing proper drainage and be an inducement for the people of this community to develop their homes and land.
3. It would raise the value of Indian land in this area. Present proposed road would raise the value of non-Indian land, while our Indian land here will be the forgotten area due to lack of suitable roads.



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4. Road 6113 has approximately 700 acres of Indian land in comparison to 120 acres on 6117. The 120 acres on proposed road has a north and south exit to needed facilities.
5. Due to road conditions some of our students are forced to miss school, therefore, dropouts are prevalent among our highschool students. This road is not used as a school bus route because of impassable road conditions in winter and rainy seasons.
6. Throughout the county there are good roads except this one location, which is adjacent to our Indian land and homes. More of our Indian land owners would live in this community if we had a better road.
7. We have 12 Indian school children on 6113 while there are none on 6117.
8. Some of us have tried to build on our allotments, but are unable to live here on account of road conditions in inclement weather.
9. We have been told that it was not feasible to repair this road because of drainage problems, but we who live here know that road 6117 has the same problems. They will have to build two bridges and build the road about 8 feet high. We have only one bridge on 6113 and the build up would only be about 3 feet.

We hope this will give some idea of how we feel and why we were so opposed to the plans.

We are also calling your attention to the unfair tactics used by our Tribal Council in approving the location of this road and all other tribal business. We charge them with gross neglect of duty in their capacity as representatives of our tribe for the following reasons:

1. They take the attitude that their decisions represent the opinions of the tribe without informing them.
2. They refuse to meet with the people whom they are supposedly serving.
3. They meet in private homes of council members rather in a public facility where members of the tribe may attend.
4. They let non-Indian large<sup>land</sup>/owners influence them in their decisions without a thought for the people they serve.



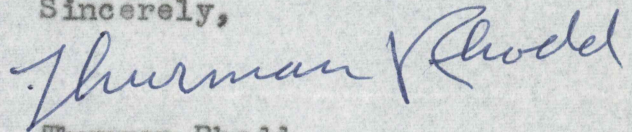
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Also two of the men are employees of the Federal government and we are wondering how they are able to maintain their positions in the Tribal Council.

We hope that you will give this letter your personal attention and can advise us on how to correct some of the mistakes made by our Council. We cannot seek legal advice elsewhere due to financial circumstances.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thurman Rhodd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thurman Rhodd

CC to:  
Senator Mike Monroney  
The New Senate Building  
Washington 25, D. C.