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Indians

July 24, 1963

Mr. Levi Stevens, Chairman
Tonkawa Indian Tribe
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Stevens:

This will acknowledge receipt of a copy of your letter of July 15 to Mr. Phileo Nash, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, relative to what you feel are injustices to the Tonkawa 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,

Ponca City, Oklahoma
July 15, 1963

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

Dear Sir:

I am Levi Stevens, Chairman of the Tonkawa Tribe of Indians, located in the north central part of Oklahoma. My letter is in concern, not only of my tribe of Indians, but to all Indians who are in neglect of some problems in this area of Oklahoma.

One tribe in particular in this area, I feel the Tribal Council are not performing their duty to the benefit of the Indian tribe, also the Area Director. I feel the tribal council of the Ponca Indians are not acting in the benefit of their tribe in concern of a farm to market road 6117 located in the northern part of Oklahoma.

I feel it is my duty as a tribal leader to bring this problem to your attention. I want to know why the BIA has not investigated the location of road 6117 further before their approval is put forth.

The Ponca Indians are my neighboring tribe to the east of the Tonkawa tribe of Indians.

Mr. Nash, whenever the tribal council makes a decision, I feel the bureau of Indian Affairs should investigate problems as important as road 6117. I feel that in our mistakes, the Area Director should try to correct these mistakes. I have always been under the impression that the Bureau of Indian Affairs was trained for problems such as this whenever the need was in order. I do know that the Area Director does alter many of our problems supposedly to our benefit.

I feel there is a unjust in this decision on Road 6117 to the Ponca Indians. The interest of this case is of concern of other Indian tribes, who might someday meet the very same problem. I ask a fair investigation be put forth on Road 6117.

The BIA has allotted to the Ponca Indians a sum of money for a farm to market road covering a total of eight miles. The first 4 miles is east of Hwy 77 in Kay County, Oklahoma, White Eagle Station Road 6113. I feel this first 4 miles is a just decision. My reasons of thinking a just decision is; the farm to market road

7/15/63

raises the value of the Indian land and also there are many school children on that road and the Indians land does have Indian homes located on the property.

The next four miles goes across Hwy 77. This is where I feel a injust is located. The road 6117 is located one mile north of road 6113. From my understanding, the purpose of the money from BIA is for the benefit of the non-taxable Indians.

The year 1953 a resolution was drawn up for the purpose of improving White Eagle Station road 6113 adjoining Hwy. 77. Also improving road 6117 west of the highway four miles. In 1953 there may have been Indians living on 6117, today there is only one Indian allotment on 6117 and the Indian owners live on a north and south all weather road adjoining 6117. There are 6 white families only on 6117. There are no Indian children who catch a bus to go to school on 6117. The school bus was not using road 6117 until the project of farm to market road was mentioned a few weeks ago.

Road 6117 is located one mile north of Road 6113. Road 6117 is an improved sand road and is very passable. Road 6117 goes four miles west and comes to a dead end road. Road 6117 comes to a dead-end road one mile east of the Chickaskia river One mile west of the banks of the chickaskia river there is a road coming to a dead-end going south one mile adjoining road 6113. Road 6117 east of the highway 77, there is one half a mile. Road 6117 east of highway 77 will not be improved in this project, but there are two families of Indians and one of those families do have school children. That half mile would benefit more Indians than the 4 miles west of highway 77. Road 6117 east of the highway comes to a dead-end and there is a creek and from this creek banks east it is a mile from another road.

Road 6117, I feel does not have the outlets on either end I feel roads should have. White Eagle Station road 6113 continues west past the highway 77, passes 6 Indian homes and is almost impossible to use when it rains. Road 6113 is or was unimproved until just a few weeks ago. After the road commissioner of Kay County found about the farm to market road project, he did make some promises and put some sand on half a mile of road for the convenience of three Indian families.

Road 6113 is not only a benefit of Indians, but to the benefit of may white farmers and also oil Companies. Road 6113 is a progress to the County of Kay of Oklahoma. Also 6113 leads to the city of Tonkawa, Oklahoma, a small town west of Ponca City a short cut road to Tonkawa from the south of Ponca City.

So keeping in mind the most logical place to put a farm to market road at this time for the benefit of both whites and Indians I feel would be road 6113. I am almost positive that if the County Commissioner of Kay County would choose one of the two roads using tax payers money, 6113 would be the road they would choose I am sure.

Mr. Nash, there are 12 Indian children living on road 6113 who go to school and use the bus route to travel to Ponca City about 8 miles away. In the Conference we had with you in Ponca City, Oklahoma, we spoke strongly of education.

7/15/63

When the snow melts or rains come, these children have to walk two miles to catch the bus at a bus route to school. With this farm to market road these same children would catch the bus at their gates.

Mr. Commissioner, it isn't often that an opportunity comes along such as this, that a road such as this to help our people, the Indian people.

My people have given to the whites since time began, it has hurt my Indian people many times, but now I feel that the Bureau of Indian Affairs should investigate this road problem.

The Ponca Council and Area Director have approved of road 6117, the Ponca Indians did not approve of road 6117, only the council, now the Ponca Indians want to know why such a project can be approved by the BIA.

June 12th, 1963, a meeting was called to draw a resolution to vote on road 6113, but the council called a meeting June 11th with out the knowledge of the people and made the decision such as it is now.

I as a leader think this is a violation that should be not be excepted.

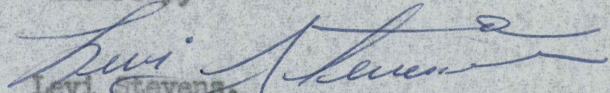
Mr. Commissioner, enclosed with this letter is an address for Release March 4, 1963; Address by Phileo Nash, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Sunday Evening forum, Tuscon, Arizona, March 3, 1963.

Mr. Commissioner, the Engineer said to me at Anadarko, Oklahoma, June 15, 1963, it matter none to him, which road was constructed - 6117 or 6113 - the cost was almost the same.

There is seven hundred acres of Indian land on road 6113 and 12 Indian school children and seven Indian homes. One hundred and twenty acres of Indian land on Road 6117 and no Indian school children and one Indian home - four white families on 6117 - eight white families on 6113 that would benefit by the road.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Levi Stevens,
Chairman of Tonkawa Tribe of Indians

cc: Senator Mike Monroney

Enclosure: