



Pride of the Ojibwe

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March 21, 2025

Bureau of Indian Education
Ms. Juanita Mendoza
1849 C Street, NW, MS 3609
Washington, DC 20240
Email: consultationcomments@bie.edu

Subject: Response to Tribal Consultation Request Dated February 28, 2025

Dear Ms Mendoza,

The Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Governing Board respectfully submits our comments in response to the Tribal Consultation Request received on February 28, 2025. We have addressed each of the three questions as follows:

- 1) **Mechanisms for Families' Use of Federal Funding for Educational Options**
Our area does not offer any available mechanisms that would allow families to utilize Federal Funding for alternate educational options. Our BIE School is unable to levy property taxes, secure state funding, or use state referendums to generate local support. Consequently, our school remains at a significant funding disadvantage compared to state public schools, receiving only about half the funding that those schools obtain.
- 2) **Eligibility Criteria for Students in the Plan for the 2025–26 School Year**
The eligibility criteria is effectively already met under current circumstances. Our state provides an open enrollment program that permits students to apply to any school of their choice. A majority of our community's children opt to attend our BIE School. This preference is largely due to the comprehensive range of support programs we offer—including FACE, 21st Century initiatives, McKinney-Vento grants, as well as an integrated curriculum that embeds language and cultural teachings. These programs have fostered outstanding outcomes, resulting in the highest graduation rates in the nation and a strong track record of preparing students for further education and professional endeavors vital to our communities.
- 3) **Availability and Feasibility of Additional Educational Options (Private, Faith-Based, or Charter Schools)**
Our rural location offers limited alternative educational choices. The nearest available options include:

- One small Catholic school serving only grades K–8
- A very small Mennonite Elementary School
- A very small Christian Academy

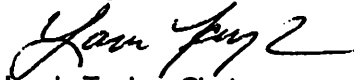
In addition, local public schools do not have the capacity to accommodate the number of children served by our tribally run BIE school. Moreover, if our students were required to attend these external schools, many would face daily commutes of up to 60 miles from their villages—an issue that would considerably disrupt their learning.

It is also important to note that prior to the establishment of our BIE school, our children who attended these other institutions were subject to racial biases, derogatory comments, bullying, and even physical confrontations—perpetrated not only by students but also by staff and parents. The cumulative impact of these negative experiences, which led to a historic “Walk Out,” was a central factor in our decision to build our own school, where our children can learn in a safe and supportive environment free from prejudice.

We trust that this response provides a clear understanding of our position and the challenges we face regarding available educational funding mechanisms and options.

Should you require any further documentation or clarification, please feel free to contact our office. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Louis Taylor, Chairman
Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Governing Board