

Assistant Secretary Bureau of Indian Affairs Deb Haaland,  
1849 C Street, N.W., Washington DC 20240

Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge  
451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410

Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Robert Califf  
10903 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Commissioner of Internal Revenue Danny Werfel  
1111 Constitution Ave, NW, Room 6329, Washington, DC, 20224

Director of the Indian Health Service Roselyn Tso  
5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857

Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Liaisons GG Giacardo and Tyler Fish  
1849 C Street, N.W., Washington DC 20240

BIA Law Enforcement Charles Turner  
700 East 5th Street, Building 728, Suite B, Vancouver, WA 98661

Portland Area Indian Health Service Capt. Marcus Martinez  
1414 NW Northrup St, Portland, OR 97209

Washington State Health Authority Director Sue Birch  
PO Box 45561. Olympia, WA 98504-5561

Director of the Department of Social and Health Services Jilma Meneses  
1115 Washington St SE, Olympia, WA 98504

DSHS Office of Indian Policy Tim Collins  
1115 Washington St SE, Olympia, WA 98504

Office of the Attorney General Tribal Liaison Asa Washines  
1125 Washington Street SE PO Box 40100, Olympia, WA 98504-0100

April 24, 2023

Dear Assistant Secretary Haaland et al:

We, the former chairs, former council members, and concerned citizens of the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe (SSIT), are writing to appeal for immediate assistance in addressing the current crisis facing our Tribe. Our Tribal Council has blatantly disregarded the laws and policies of our Tribe, and we are now left in a state of turmoil. We urge you to take swift action to help us resolve these pressing issues.

The Tribal Council has engaged in a range of unethical and illegal activities that have caused great harm to our community. They have used tribal police to intimidate tribal citizens and suppressed the investigation of the rape of a child victim. They have also misappropriated federal grants for personal gain, including opening a marijuana store and planning to open a bar with slot machines next door to the health clinic and daycare. Furthermore, they have exerted undue influence over the tribal judiciary and halted the testing and treatment of our water supply. They have closed the enrollment office and disenrolled political opponents and their families in violation of tribal policy. They have also removed a former chair from the Tribal Council, and a tribal elder who is a disabled veteran from tribal housing in an act of political retaliation.

As former chairs, former council members, and tribal citizens, who are also U.S. citizens, we demand immediate action to address these issues. We call for the reinstatement of the Bill family in accordance with the SSIT Appellate Court decision, and we demand that the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services investigate the SSIT police department's mismanagement and politically motivated actions in the investigation of the rape of a child. We also implore State and Federal granting agencies to investigate the gross misappropriation of grant dollars and annual funding agreements, and we demand fair and equitable distribution of programs, services, and funding to all tribal citizens within the service area.

We understand that the BIA has a policy of non-interference, but the situation has reached a critical level where the lives of our tribal citizens are at risk. As U.S. citizens and some of us who are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, we appeal to the United States' treaty responsibility to intervene with law enforcement and launch investigations of all federal grants to the Tribe. We also request alternative services to help elders and children get to medical appointments more than one hour's drive from our reservation.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, we would like to bring to your attention the fact that our Tribal Council has also made legal threats to prevent news agencies from reporting on the disenrollment of political opponents and their families. This is a clear violation of our First Amendment rights as U.S. citizens, and we believe it is yet another example of the council's abuse of power.

We firmly believe that the disenrollment of tribal citizens, especially those who are political opponents, is not only unjust but also unconstitutional. The Tribal Council's attempts to silence the press and prevent the dissemination of information about these disenrollments are a clear violation of our rights and an attempt to cover up their actions.

We stand ready to act, but we recognize the urgent need, by which we mean time-sensitive need for federal assistance in protecting our tribal citizens from a Tribal Council who are grossly abusing the power of their office.

Respectfully,

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Norma Joseph

Former Chair  
Director Cultural Resources

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Janice Mabee

Former Chair

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Cynthia Harris

Former Chair

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Ronda Metcalf

Former Councilwoman

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Jason Joseph

Former Chair  
Manager Cultural Resources

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Benjamin Joseph

Former Chair

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John Pugh

Former Councilman

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Sonja Metcalf

Former Councilwoman

## **Crisis Overview**

### **Threats to Human Life**

- The coverup of a rape of tribal child
- Denied federally funded housing and medical care to eligible elders, children, and the chronically ill
- Halted the testing and treatment of the Tribe's water supply
- Opened a marijuana store, planned a bar with slot machines in immediate proximity to the Tribe's daycare and health clinic

### **Political threats to the Rule of Law**

- Exerted political control and influence over the police department, using it to suppress political opponents and elections
- Disenrolled a family, threatened the disenrollment of other families
- Attempted to censure council members opposed disenrollments
- Discredited, eliminated the Tribe's Appellate for overturning disenrollments
- Charged a former chair with malfeasance and removed her from the Tribal Council for court-ordered testimony in the disenrollment case

### **Misappropriation of Funds, Mismanagement of Businesses**

- Mismanaging multiple federal grants, possibly all of them
- Bribed and sexually harassed employees in the tribal offices
- Purchased property without due diligence
- Falsely reported income tax of employees
- BIA funded scholarships were not awarded or awarded without a fair process

### **Denying the tribal citizens access to their tribal government**

- Tribal Council meets without giving notice to the tribal citizens
- Tribal Council has ceased to meet at the regular time and day of the month
- Tribal Council closes their meeting when perceived political opponents are in the room
- Tribal Council refuses to give a current accounting of funds
- Tribal Council refuses to take questions from its citizens