



**Statement of Chairman Randy King  
Shinnecock Indian Nation**

**Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related  
Agencies  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives**

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**American Indian/Native Alaskan Witness Hearings, Tuesday March 27, 2012**

Good afternoon Chairman. My name is Randy King. I am the Chairman of the Shinnecock Indian Nation Board of Trustees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today concerning our need for new tribes funding.

The Shinnecock Indian Nation's Reservation is located in Suffolk County, New York—on Long Island. We have lived on Long Island as a self-governing nation exercising jurisdiction over our lands since time immemorial. Despite this long history, we only recently were acknowledged as a federally recognized tribe since October 1, 2010, even though we entered the federal acknowledgement process in 1978, when we applied for litigation assistance with our land claim.

Before federal recognition, Shinnecock was a state recognized tribe which managed to maintain jurisdiction over its reservation community despite its only source of income being limited revenue from its annual powwow and a few small grants, such as the Community Services Block Grant. Although these funds provided some resources to the Nation, they fell far short of the monies needed to maintain a proper government and meet the most basic needs of the our tribal members.

Today, the Nation numbers over 1,300 with approximately 662 tribal members residing on the reservation. Our tribal government currently provides its members with a community

center, a cemetery, an underfunded health and dental center, a family preservation and Indian education center, a museum, and a playground—all of which are funded through limited grants and all of which are located on the reservation.

Despite the fact that the BIA has concluded that we were a tribe since well before the arrival of non-Indians on our shores, the Nation and its members have been denied much needed Federal services and benefits for decades. Now with Federal acknowledgement, the Nation should have the opportunity to receive its fair share of the funding that this Subcommittee provides to other federally recognized tribes. We should not be penalized for the Federal government adding us to the list of federally recognized tribes after 1997. “New Tribes” listed after 1997 face more stringent standards for access to federal funds, despite the fact that we have continuously governed our lands long before the United States existed. That is all that we are asking- our fair share of federal allocations for tribal governments.

This includes equal access to funding for such basic needs as housing, education, healthcare, and public safety. Our reservation lands have suffered from ground water contamination, brown tides, and illegal dumping, and we need the funding necessary to address these problems as well.

Mr. Chairman, I want you to know that we are fully prepared to do our part. We are already looking at a variety of economic development initiatives which will increase our self-sufficiency and decrease our dependence on the federal government, but none of these economic initiatives are going to be successful unless and until we have a strong tribal government and the strong tribal law enforcement and judicial services required to support that government. So, in short, in order to effectively govern and provide services to our membership, we need to have sufficient federal resources to provide infrastructure, employment opportunities (jobs and training), public safety, education, health care, and housing, as well as a strong and capable governmental system.

Since the Shinnecock Indian Nation gained federal recognition, it has worked to build its sovereign capacity and self-governing infrastructure, but we can only go so far without federal assistance for internal capacity building. That is why I am here today.

The Nation was pleased to learn that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has included new tribes dollars for Shinnecock in its FY 2013 request. Now we need to have those dollars appropriated.

We are also going to require your assistance in insuring that our Nation is brought into the full complement of federally funded programs and services available to federally recognized tribes. Our people are in desperate need of federal help. According to the economic characteristics data set from 2005-2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that a majority of our tribal members are either unemployed, underemployed, or not considered part of the work force. We understand the budget constraints that you are facing, but we would ask you to remember that we have been forced to live with virtually no federal assistance for well over two hundred and thirty six years. Mr. Chairman, we are not asking for a hand out, but for a hand up in ensuring that our children have opportunities and options that most Americans take for granted.

I would like to thank the Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the Nation. I am available to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.