

Summary: Alleged Misuse of Trust Income by Chippewa Cree Tribe Unfounded

Report Date: April 26, 2017

OIG opened an investigation after we received an allegation that a former official of the Chippewa Cree Tribe used the profits from the Tribe's Dry Forks Farm farming operation as a "political slush fund" and unilaterally handed out those funds to tribal members and organizations. During our investigation, we received an additional allegation that the Chippewa Cree Tribe was not putting Dry Forks Farm's profits into a required "lock box," or trust bank account monitored by the Office of Special Trustee (OST).

Our investigation did not substantiate the allegation that the official unilaterally distributed funds. The funds alleged to have been distributed as a "political slush fund" were actually "community contributions" and disbursed in accordance with tribal policy. Each distribution of funds was voted on and approved by Dry Forks Farm Subcommittee members and each issued check had signatures from at least two Chippewa Cree Tribal Council members as required.

We found that the Chippewa Cree Tribe did not deposit the proceeds from the Dry Forks Farm farming operation into an OST "lock box." Tribal officials told us that Dry Forks Farm did not always make a profit and when it did, having to place it into a "lock box" limited flexibility and access to those funds needed to reinvest in the farming operation each year. We found that OST and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) were aware that the tribe was not depositing the funds as required.

This is a summary of a report that was issued to BIA.

