

Bigstone Environmental Assessment

The Red Lake Environmental Response Program (RL ERP) is housed in the Red Lake Department of Natural Resources building. One of the top priorities of the RL ERP is to protect groundwater resources. In the Band's effort to protect this valuable resource, the Brownfields Section 128a Tribal Response Program was developed. Additionally, the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program is in place to help ensure all regulated USTs are in compliance with federal regulations and to protect human health and the environment.

Recently, the RL ERP coordinated with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to do an Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) at the former Bigstone Convenience Store. This assessment was necessary due to a high concern for potential contamination from the abandoned underground storage tank system. Less than one gallon of gasoline could contaminate millions of gallons of water. The system has not been maintained for several years and this non-compliance created the potential for a petroleum release into the soil and groundwater. The US EPA funded the project and no cost was incurred by the Tribe.

In order to do a proper ESA, the tank, piping and dispenser had to be removed in order to access underneath for samples. We are still awaiting lab test results but there was some obvious contamination in the soil. The extent of the contamination is currently being evaluated. The affected soil will be removed once the results are received and a determination as to how far the plume extends is made. We remain hopeful that we were able to intercept the contamination before it migrated down to the water table.

Your Environmental Programs are in place to protect the people and environment of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians. We are available to provide guidance to the communities and anyone concerned about the environment in which we live and work. Community participation and feedback are always welcome. Together we can protect our treasured resources for ourselves, our children, and all generations to come.

