



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 05 2021

The Honorable Ross Cline, Sr.
Chairman, Nooksack Indian Tribe
P.O. Box 157
Deming, Washington 98244

Dear Chairman Cline:

On September 15, 2021, the Department of the Interior (Department) received a letter from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requesting that it examine certain actions that the Nooksack Indian Tribe (Tribe) is taking with regard to evicting purportedly disenrolled Tribal members from their homes and determine whether these actions violate the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA).

Based on the information the Department has received from HUD's legal counsel to the disenrolled individuals, the Department understands that the Tribe is attempting to evict these individuals from HUD-assisted housing in which some of the individuals entered into lease-purchase contracts with the Tribe. As the Department understands it, these contracts generally provide that the house will be conveyed to the tenant once all required rental payments are made. The individuals also claim that, despite their requests, the Tribe refuses to provide documentation of an accounting of all rent payments made to the Tribe. Moreover, the individuals also are being denied legal representation of their choosing in Tribal court in order to adjudicate these issues.

The HUD has expressed concern as to whether the outlined actions taken by the Tribe are resulting in the individuals being denied due process or their property being illegally taken. As such, HUD has requested that the Department review the situation to determine whether there is a violation of the ICRA or other applicable Federal law. The Department takes HUD's concern seriously and will review the situation to ensure that the Tribe is in compliance with the ICRA and Federal law. Further communication with the Tribe from the Bureau of Indian Affairs will follow this letter.

Should you have any questions, you may contact Ms. Ann Marie Bledsoe Downes, Principal Deputy Solicitor – Indian Affairs, by email at ann.bledsoedownes@sol.doi.gov or by phone at (202) 208-4423.

Sincerely,

Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs