

July 18, 2024

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, Member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee  
Hart Senate Office Building 511  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Maria Cantwell,

We are writing today as seven of the twenty one Nooksack Tribe households threatened with losing our homes without any due process or civil rights protections. As a senior member and former chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and champion of the federal Low Income Tax Credit Program (LIHTC), we are desperately requesting your help in stopping these evictions from taking place in your home state.

We appreciate your commitment to supporting affordable housing for Tribal communities. You have championed the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), as well as federal LIHTC laws that created rent-to-own programs in Indian country and in our state through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

As part of the federally-funded and state approved rent-to-own programs, an out-of-state investment bank received millions of dollars of tax credits to build affordable homes in our tribal community starting in 2005. We have raised our families in these homes, with the promise of eventual homeownership if we remained tenant-homebuyers in good standing for 15 years. We did everything that was asked of us and through the LIHTC program, we were legally entitled to deeds for our homes by no later than 2020—but that never happened.

Instead, we are facing imminent eviction by the Nooksack tribe, which says we can no longer live in these homes because they revoked our Nooksack membership in a purge of 300-plus people in 2016. Up to twenty one households, which includes sixty-three people, have been threatened with eviction. Elderly people, severely disabled individuals, and children will be left homeless if the U.S. Interior Department doesn't act to stop these evictions from homes we are legally entitled to own.

The United Nations has now twice issued unprecedented statements calling on the federal government to intervene. The UN [stated](#): *"States and indigenous authorities share the responsibility for ensuring that processes and decisions by indigenous authorities accord with international human rights."*

This Congress, you [introduced](#) the bipartisan Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act; an attempt to improve "the housing credit program to better serve at-risk and underserved communities," including Native American communities. Under NAHASDA, Tribal governments are required to abide by the federal Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA) as a condition of receiving

congressionally approved housing program funding. But the Interior Department, which is the lead agency regarding ICRA enforcement in the federal Indian housing context, is not doing so.

We are those at-risk communities, and you can help. We are entitled to civil rights protection, and we are begging you to urge Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to intervene and halt these evictions. Your public silence is threatening not only our livelihoods but the legitimacy of these two federal programs, which are administered across the country and in Indian country.

We also invite you to meet with our family in Deming when you are back in Washington during the August recess so that you can see first-hand the harm that these evictions will cause.

We understand and appreciate your commitment to Tribal sovereignty, but as the United Nations recognized, this is predominately an issue of human rights abuse—internationally recognized human abuse taking place in your home state. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that federally-funded programs are not being used to commit human rights abuse.

Very truly yours,



Michelle Roberts, Family Spokeswoman

Michael Rabang

Francisco Rabang

Satumino Javier

Norma Aldredge

Liz Oshiro

Alexander Nicol-Mills

Cc: U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, Chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee  
U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee