

Letters from here and there

Give us back our rights

Sec. of the Interior
Dept. of the Interior
Washington D.C.

Dear Secretary Lujan:

My name is Maureen Estelle Obert, a full blooded Tlingit from Hoonah, Alaska, a direct decedent from Glacier Bay. My father, Archie Jack Brown, Sr. was born in Glacier Bay Park on Sept. 26, 1927. His parents, Jack and Mabel Brown were living at Pt. Carolus at the time of his birth. My Tlingit name is Sea Clien, I am 41 years old. I have 4 sisters and 8 brothers; 2 brothers are deceased. We all grew up being Tlingits. Our food came from the rich abundant renewable resources of this great land of ours, mainly from Glacier Bay.

My father always stated without the traditional foods from Glacier Bay, myself and my brothers and sisters could have all starved to death. As it is, we are all still here, and between all of us, my mother is the Grandmother of 41 grandchildren; 13 granddaughters, 28 grandsons and one great-granddaughter.

We are a big family. We all still enjoy our traditional foods; smoked fish, smoked deer meat and seal meat. We enjoy the fresh foods also; fish, deer meat, seal meat, clams, seaweed, cockles, gumboots, seagull eggs, herring eggs, crab and berries are a main part of our diet. We have always been able to go out and get our traditional foods with the seasons. Now days we have to have a permit for everything we eat. We are limited to how much we can get the were we can get it. There are restrictions on everything. Things like bag limits are attached to every move we make. You can only get 6 fish per person per year, only 6 deer is allowed. We have to have a permit so we could go get clams, cockles, fish, deer meat, etc, etc. This is very ridiculous management.

The establishment is very economical minded. Since Alaska has been a State we are suddenly ruled and regulated on every move we make. This is very, very unfair. Because Tlingits are free people, we have our own culture, our own rules, our own way of life. Since we became subject to the Whiteman's way of life, we are all drowning in rules and regulations. The establishment

is killing us all off very slowly and torturing us as they move along, treating all Tlingits as guinea pigs. It's lets do this to them, lets take this from them. Let's Feed them our food, take their food away from them. Only laughter comes from your mouth on all this, no understanding. Your heart is black and so is your soul: Your minds are blank to see that matter what you try to do, Tlingits are survivors. We still exist, we are alive, we still go and get our traditional foods, and very few of us still know how to speak the Tlingit language. Tlingits live in a modern day world with houses, oil heat, running water, electric stove, refrigerators, washers and driers; we sleep in beds, use indoor bathrooms, and take hot showers. Our children have color T.V. sets, videos, stereos, tapes, Nintendos and Sega sets. Our children wear 501's, Nikes, leather jackets, etc., etc.

Now how could we have all this and buy food from the stores? Food bought in stores is very expensive. Tlingits provide all of this fringe benefits, but realistically live on the traditional foods that we to out to get to get. Large families cannot survive without the food we go out to get. It's getting harder and harder to just get up and go out fishing, hunting or digging because of rules and regulations. Most of all we need a permit for everything we get to eat.

I say we never needed a permit before, we never needed to check to see if it was all right to go out to Glacier Bay, Excursion Inlet, Basket Bay, Sitka or anywhere else to get traditional foods; we just went. We never had to worry about losing or boats or gear for our way of life. Now the way the rules are, every family needs two or three boats each to get food on our tables.

To jump to the conclusion that ANLCSA and ANILCA took all of our rights away is wrong. These two acts of Congress is just a part of a plan to strip every Tlingit of everything that we live for. We the individual Tlingit have to fight everyone. Every establishment organization just to exist. To name a few, first and foremost is the State of Alaska, Sealaska, Huna Totem Corporation, Forest Service, Park Service, Whitestone Logging, Inc., and of course the City of Hoonah. These people are all instruments of State and Federal regulations to eliminate Tlingit people. All

of these people and organizations should come to Hoonah so that we the Clan's of Huna could show them our recorded history in our regalia, hats, stories, songs, eat our culture foods. This recorded history of Glacier Bay is here to see and to be heard. Our culture is very unique. We could show you our love for our homeland Glacier Bay. It is our sovereign right to harvest and live in our homeland Glacier Bay, the wild renewable abundant resources is ours to harvest. *Ours is the Traditional use pattern recurring with the seasons, our ability to harvest food with the cycles of our recurring wild renewable resources.* These Traditional use patterns and methods of harvesting culture foods so consistently can only prove that we indeed can learn too. The real meaning to Culture Survival. Our survival can only happen with our 'SOVEREIGNTY'. We can harvest Glacier Bay, and Hoonah, Port Frederick, Icy Straits, Excursion Inlet the way that our fathers, Uncles, Grand-fathers, Great Great Grand-fathers did for generations and generations. We the Clan's of Huna still hold the key to Glacier Bay for it was never given up by any Tlingit. We the Clan's of Huna are standing up to show the world that we are indeed the true owners of this Great State of Alaska. *We were here first, and we will still be here for generations to come. We are only asking for our 'SOVEREIGNTY'. "So give us back our rights, our land Glacier Bay, and most of all give us JUSTICE AND LIBERTY from regulations". For we have strength and vitality that will keep our culture alive for many generations to come. And for all the world to see, the great JUSTICE done by the United Stated States of America.*

Gunalcheesh/Thank You,

Maureen E. Obert
Hoonah