

CHUIT RIVER LODGE

Beluga, Alaska

www.chuitriverlodge.com

907.242-7613

My name is Dennis Torrey, and I am the owner and operator of the Chuit River Lodge.

There seems to be a great deal of unfortunate misunderstanding between the Tyonek Native Corporation, some of its members and myself. Since several personal comments have been directed toward me in this forum, I wanted to take a moment and set the record straight once and for all.

These documented facts are not disputable, though some may find this information contrary to what they have been told over the years.

1) The Chuit River Lodge is my property.

This five acres and the lodge are my home and livelihood. I have cleared this land, built on it, raised my family here and grown my business here for over 30 years. There is no reasonable dispute of these facts.

TNC, CEO Tom Harris has a copy of my original bill of sale. I received these 5 acres from Pat Chuitt Sr. personally. This agreement was for the exact parcel of land where the Chuit River Lodge sits.

There is considerable legal documentation clearly proving this sale, inclusive of Judge Hollands decree recognizing my ownership of the land and buildings of the Chuit River Lodge.

I have never squatted on a piece of land in my entire life, assertions to the contrary are misguided. Some 17 years ago, Federal Judge Russell Holland provided an order to BIA to deed to me, the five acres where the buildings and fixtures reside. Tom Harris of TNC has a copy of this court order.

I concluded a fair deal with Pat Chuitt Sr, and the deal we struck stands today. At that time, the 5 acres was a remote, wooded lot which would require many years of improvements. Improvements I made with my bare hands and my family over 30 years.

In this deal with Mr. Chuitt, I was to build for him, a 12x12 cabin in exchange for 5 acres of raw land.

In good faith, and because of the size of his family, instead of the small cabin we agreed upon, I went ahead and spent 2 years building for him an even larger, 18x24 cabin. The Chuitt family lived there for approximately seven months. Pat was always satisfied with the deal, and we got along well for several years.

For some comparison, the cabin that I built for the Chuitts was appraised at \$52,000 dollars by BIA. The five acres of land I was to receive was valued at a maximum \$1,500 dollars an acre.

This means I built a cabin worth \$52,000 for \$7,500 worth of raw land. I think anyone can understand why Pat Chuitt was satisfied with this deal.

2) I have done my level best to work with the TNC.

Over the years, and in good faith, I've had several meetings with officials at the TNC office. These meetings have included my daughter, Melissa Clary (who happens to be part of the Tyonek tribe), my attorneys, and trusted friends who can act as witnesses. Despite what you may have heard, we have been trying our best to get along with the TNC. We have made a range of proposals to the TNC on how we could work together. Unfortunately, this effort has been met with disrespect, threats to put us out of business, and an all out refusal to work together toward any reasonable solutions or common goals.

3) TNC Actions

The last meeting I had with CEO Tom Harris was attended by Melissa Clary, my attorney and myself. In this meeting, TNC had expressed a desire to buy us out. TNC representatives came to my lodge property and took pictures and measurements for an appraisal.

In anticipation of making a deal, I hired my own appraiser and found out that the buildings alone at the time were valued at 980,000 dollars.

To end this dispute, my daughter Melissa and I offered to sell the lodge to the TNC for 850,000 dollars. The TNC made us an offer to do a trade on part of the amount, for property located in the valley and cash for the remainder of the amount.

TNC then decided to withdraw their offer completely. When asked about the withdrawal, CEO Tom Harris told my daughter and I that "TNC didn't really need to buy us out, as they were just going to put us out of business because the TNC owned the entire Chuit River".

A continued effort to eliminate our business was conducted thereafter by the TNC. Not the least of which was the employment of armed guards who told my clients they were fishing illegally, and trespassing on TNC land. We have endured a range of illegal activities and our damages continue to mount.

This action of others have been deemed illegal by the State. At this time, the Governor's office in conjunction with the Attorney General has put forth a cease and desist order against the TNC for these illegal actions inclusive of misleading the public into thinking the river has no public access, and putting armed guards on the river to scare off fishermen who are not affiliated with TNC.

In spite of a concerted effort to put us out of business, we have tried, in good faith, to work with the TNC. Further, we have tried to remain good neighbors to those located near us.

In light of new understandings, I am proposing a new era of mutual respect and cooperation. The river has been deemed navigable once and for all, and the Constitution of the State of Alaska assures that the Chuit river is for ALL Alaskans and not just one group.

This is a new day. I believe it is time to put the past behind us. Let us find a way to make this work for all.

Dennis W. Torrey
Owner Operator
Chuit River Lodge
www.chuitriverlodge.com
907.242.7613