

Eulogy for Chief Qwatsinas who died on August 31st, 2010

"Qwatsinas - You have changed the world"

Chief Qwatsinas, Chief of the Nuxalk, was a great visionary who strove tirelessly for justice and the protection of nature. He fought with great commitment for the preservation of the forests and the rights of his people.

"When the duty calls, I will surely be fighting in the front lines for it all."

Quote Qwatsinas

Qwatsinas was a driving force behind the international campaign for the protection of the Great Bear Rainforest. His courage and his deep love for his people as well as the beings who can't speak for themselves have changed the world.



Qwatsinas (2. from the left) in the row of the 7 Chiefs who placed themselves in front of the trees in protection

Lydia Kroll: "I got to know Chief Qwatsinas in 1996 in Bella Coola at the start of the campaign to save the Great Bear Rainforest. I have met him many times since and have accompanied him on his campaign tours through Germany. I remember him as a shrewdly smirking, intelligent,

yes, wise man who radiated dignity. His strong personality, his unbreakable will and his loving humor have left their mark on me.

Qwatsinas always believed in the great that can come from the smallest of things. No interview, no letter, no idea and no project seemed too unimportant and small to him. On the contrary, he saw the great in the small. Many times he encouraged me, I can still hear his "I know you can do it, Lydia" so clearly in my ear. I always admired him for his tireless and radical dedication to that which he loved. My heart is sad to know I will never hear him laugh again, never read again: "Yaw, Lydia. It is good to hear from you."

Agnes Dieckmann: "I got to know Qwatsinas in person during his visit in 2002. But even long before that the Nuxalk had shaped my involvement with urgewald and thus my work for INITIATIVE 2000plus. People who knew Qwatsinas and who fought alongside him for the protection of his home had told me so much of him that I had the feeling that I had known him for a long time even before I finally met him.

The story of the exercise book which I wrote for presentations in primary schools tells a tale of the uniqueness of the Canadian rainforest. But it also tells a tale of the love that the Nuxalk have for their land and their home and of how important it is to fight for what is close to our heart. The logging in the Great Bear Rainforest was the centre of our work for a long time. The situation of the Nuxalk is known to many people through the work of INITIATIVE 2000plus. The initiative has many times over the years drawn attention to the exploitation and destruction of the Canadian rainforest. In hundreds of presentations students have marveled at the trees and the animals of the Great Bear Rainforest and become concerned about the destruction. They have learned that the devastation of the forest amounts to the devastation of the home and the culture of the Nuxalk. INITIATIVE 2000plus has many times presented the connection between our excessive consumption of paper and the destruction of rainforests in Canada. Still today it demands a sustainable paper consumption. Tens of thousands of children protested with their signature against the logging in Canada that takes place to satisfy our demand for paper. One of the inspirations was the fight of the Nuxalk for the Great Bear Rainforest.

In 2002, Qwatsinas travelled to Germany for the conference "Treffpunkt Recyclingpapier" by the INITIATIVE 2000plus. Because the wood taken from the land of the Nuxalk is also made into German paper, Chief Qwatsinas addressed consumers as well as political and economic decisions makers in order to report on the progression of logging in the old growth forest despite protection agreements: "The consumption of old growth paper by consumers is a problem that they must know because it comes from the Great Bear Rainforest and Nuxalk homelands."



Chief Qwatsinas tells Bärbel Höhn, former minister of the environment in Northrhine Westfalia, about the logging in the Great Bear Rainforest. (Congress "Treffpunkt Recyclingpapier" organised by INITIATIVE 2000plus, July 4th, 2002)

Qwatsinas also visited schools in Northrhine-Westfalia. In two schools he blessed a tree they had been awarded with for their extraordinary commitment to sustainable consumption of paper. These were moving situations: teachers and students as well as contributors to the INITIATIVE 2000plus and Qwatsinas were touched.



Qwatsinas with students of the grammar school in Löhne



Qwatsinas with students of the primary school in Dehme

Qwatsinas' belief in the great which can grow in the smallest things was also reflected in his parting words when we accompanied him to the airport: "The visit to the schools was something very special for me. It is good to see that children in German schools are campaigning for our home. The fight for my homeland is trying and takes a lot of strength. My visits to the schools gave me new energy."

Even if Qwatsinas is not among us anymore, his ideas and visions live on. In his memory we would like to collect donations once more for a project that was especially close to his heart. He always wanted to keep the roots and the identity of the Nuxalk alive. In the Scw7cwlk valley in the Nuxalk territory a place is supposed to be created in the traditional way in which the Nuxalk can keep their culture and tradition alive and pass it on to the next generation. At the same time they want to protect the valley and the animals (e.g. from hunting) through their presence. With the help of donations that were given to the Nuxalk in 2007 by the INITIATIVE 2000plus they were able to build a log cabin. We would be very glad if we could once more hand over donations to the Nuxalk in order to honour the memory of Chief Qwatsinas.

Agnes Dieckmann and Lydia Kroll, urgewald e.V.

Please direct your donations for the Scw7cwlk project to urgewald using the reference "Nuxalk".

Thank you.

For further information please visit www.nuxalk.net

(For donations from Germany)

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(Inofficial translation by Larissa Hanko)

