

Nuxalk Nation Government



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Press Release

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"First of all; we acknowledge and recognize Tatau, the Creator through Manakays, the Great Spirit for all that is provided for us since the beginning of time and still is today."

First, I must acknowledge our Heavenly Father for all that he has given us, the land, the rivers, the inlets, the ocean. Let me explain our origin story. In the beginning of time along the walls of Nusmata (heaven) hung the coats of the Grizzly Bear, the Raven, the Eagle and the Killer Whale. Our first ancestors had a choice as to what they wanted to descend to Earth with. When they descended to Earth, the coats of the animals went back to Heaven. This is our direct tie to Manakays (God).

Now the land we call Ista, I want to say we have a lot of Nuxalk People who understand and believe this land is Nuxalk Territory. We have never signed any papers or documents that say otherwise. We treasure this land, this is the place where one of the first Nuxalk Woman descended. The land we call Ista - that was her name, Ista. Today we have a dance and a song we call "Ista". This is why we are standing up for the land. It is the animals, the birds, the fish, for all those that are disappearing that we speak. Where will they go when the land they live on is taken from them. In this stand we as Nuxalk are not alone. Our friends here, Forest Action Network (FAN), Greenpeace, Bearwatch and P.A.T.H., stand with us, we are grateful that they hear and support what it is that we are saying.

During our last stand (September 1995) for Ista, I spent over a month in jail, during that time my wife moved on to the spirit world. This not only affected me and my family, but all of us. I also know that

F.A.N. understands the pain that I am speaking of as they also mourn the passing of a very dedicated young man, Nutsxmalsta, Corey Duncan.

Our Elders tell us that we must love one another. We do not hold anyone in contempt. We are always sharing our land and will not kick anyone off our land. When the first white people came, we helped them in every way we could. I can't understand why all that is on the land that is a part of us/ is being destroyed, we are being robbed of so much. The burial grounds of our grandfathers and grandmothers are being washed away as a result of poor logging practices.

They want to take everything away from us, our weddings, our food, so very much. So many ways that we are being affected. Like in the past we dealt with epidemics like smallpox, tuberculosis, etc. Today we are still being infected. I need to strongly emphasize ours is a peaceful movement. There are no weapons. There is no way we could ever hurt anyone: our Elders have always instilled this in us.

The Canadian Government continues to use their "divide and rule" tactics on our people. They want to control our lives through the elected band council system through the Indian Act. Some of these people have forgotten their Smayustas (our origin story) and that the responsibility we have to MAnakays, not the Canadian government.

I would like to thank the people from other countries who are sending support. "Thank you for your words of encouragement and prayers which lighten our spirits and the load we are carrying". I also wish to acknowledge the local support from people, "Thank you for your help". We are unable to pay for lawyers, unlike the Interfor corporation which has three lawyers engaged against us. It is ironic that they are paying great amounts of the money they derived as profit from cutting down the trees in our forests.

It hurts that we should be jailed because we stand up for the land. We are portrayed as radicals. I would like to acknowledge the Hereditary Chiefs, the Elders, the women, the children, all the people who have not forgotten their Smayustas. They have strong spirits - that is why they are out there today.

For the future of our children, grandchildren and those yet to be born . . .

Way!

**Head Hereditary Chief Nuximlayc (Lawrence Pootlass)
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