

## Nuxalk House of Smayusta



## Nationhood & the Nuxalk Nation

The following information explains what makes a nation, how a nation is Sovereign, and how our Ancestors and Elders have always protected our land and our resources for the future of our children.

### NATIONHOOD

What makes a Nation? A nation of people have their own: Religion, Language, Land Base and Laws. The Nuxalk People have been given all these gifts from our Creator. The Creator provided to our people everything that we have today, and it is our responsibility to take care of the land and the resources our land provides for us for the future of our children and those children yet unborn.

### RELIGION

Our songs and dances are a gift from Manakays. He gave all the people in the world these gifts, the Mexican, the Spanish, the Norwegian, to name others. How we look after them is important. Other people have lost their dances and songs. Our songs and dances come from the land, they tell who we are. When we dance, we dance for Him. Feasting and potlatching are part of our ways, they are still practised today. Even when the government tried to make us stop practising these ways our people continued to feast and potlatch. Family names are passed down at these occasions.

"Tu tus Kwanataw," the Cry Song Ceremony, is performed when a loved one moves on to the spirit world. The "Cry Song of the Raven" has a very important significance to all of us that

believe in God's gifts. In this Smayusta are numerous teachings. The strength of the medicine in the spruce bough comes from this story. We use the spruce bough to "smoke people out" during this Qunqwtstsut, the Cleansing/Washing Ceremony. In the December Solstice, Manakays and the Angels have a meeting in Heaven, they decide who will die, they decide how many children will be born, they decide how many fish will go up the river basically they decide how we will prosper.

Each of us is born with a Cmnwas (Guardian Spirit). Sometimes when we are in a serious life threatening accident the only reason we survive is because of the strong Cmnwas. It prevents us from dying but it can also leave us. There are ways we can take care of this Cmnwas, smoking out, then holding a feast to acknowledge to God that we remember our ways. At this feast we acknowledge the people who assisted us in whatever way they may have helped by distributing gifts (redistribution of wealth). When we hold this feast what we are doing is making the Creator smile therefore the decision made by God and the Angels can be reversed.

## LANGUAGE

The Nuxalk Language is part of the Coast Salish dialect. We all know the history of how we almost lost our Language through the Residential School system. Today our Language is being taught at Acwsalcta School and in the public school. All three major universities recognize the Nuxalk Language as a requirement for second language entry.

## LAND

According to Elders who are no longer here our people used to number over ten thousand - therefore we must have had a land base equal to the number of people. The Territory of the Nuxalk is vast. Our Smayustas are far reaching. Through the Clellamin family our Smayustas go as far as Alexis Creek (Alexii was one of the first brothers to descend to Earth). King Island is known as Nuxalknalus the centre of the Nuxalk Territory. Each tribe of the Nuxalk are recognized distinctly - Kwalhnmc (people from the Kwatna territory) Taliyumc - South Bentick Sutslmc - Kimsquit, etc.

## LAW

Each Chief had a right hand man who helped keep the law. The right hand man would do the undesirable work of the Chief. The laws were very strict. There were laws to protect the river. River guardians were put in place to protect the river. There are many laws that we as Nuxalkmc had, and we must go to our Elders to learn what our traditional laws are.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN

It means . . . . Nuxalk Nation is a nation. It means that we are a nation of people just like Africa is a nation. Japan is a nation. All these countries have their own land base, their own religion, their own language, and their own laws. It also means that we have our own Sovereignty. What is Sovereignty?

## SOVEREIGNTY

Our Sovereignty is our traditional ways. It is our fishing, hunting, ceremonies, laws, stories, songs, potlatches, and dances. Our Sovereignty is a sacred gift handed down to us by Tatau, our Creator. It is something that was never given to us by any government or business. Our Sovereignty is when we hunt, where we hunt, when we fish and where we fish. Our Sovereignty is our plant foods and medicines. Our Sovereignty is our traditional way of life.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO OUR PEOPLE TODAY

This means that we are the Nuxalkmc, and we will always be the people of this land, the Nuxalk Territory. We were born with our language, our culture, our traditions, our stories, our songs, and our dances. These are gifts that have been provided to the Nuxalkmc, by Tatau (God), our Creator through Manakays (Lord), the Great Spirit. We are a Sovereign Nation. No person or no government has the right to take away what our Creator provided for us.

In 1913 Chief Jim Pollard stated to Royal Commission on Indian Affairs: "When I was a boy my father and the old men of the tribe told us to be careful with our land and property here, not to give it away, or sell it. We want to let you know that the fish is the same as a bank, this is where we derive our income."

Our Elders and our Chiefs continue to protect our land and our resources today. The Nuxalk Nation has never signed any agreements or treaties with the Government of Canada or the Government of BC. This is what our Elders mean when they tell us to be careful because the government is working hard to take away all our rights, and they want us to sign agreements with them. Why? We are still protected by international law, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Indian Act and the Constitution of 1982.

**Way!**

**House of Smayusta**

**Nuxalk Nation Government**

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