

Remembering Chief Qwatsinas (Edward Moody)

Radical is a word of Latin origin that is a scientific reference to ‘the root’. When the root of a plant is sick, the plant cannot heal. When the root of a plant rots, the plant withers and dies. When the root of a plant is healthy and strong, the plant grows and flowers providing beauty and nourishment to other beings as well as the seeds of life to grow a new generation.

We have prepared this statement with the humble understanding that Chief Qwatsinas’ influence was broad, often controversial, and always radical. Qwatsinas always looked to the root of the many ecological and social problems he tackled over numerous difficult years as a high-profile, Indigenous activist.

Many have loved him and many more have gained from their proximity to him and his work.

In his private life, Qwatsinas was a man who cherished most, the simple pleasures that come from love of family and friends. Though the world has lost a great leader and a vigilant hero who fought for those creatures that cannot speak for themselves, much more importantly to us, he was a huge part of our family. We have lost our beloved father, brother, uncle, cousin, lover, and friend. Because his children have lost their father, they feel great sadness for the future they now face without him; without his teachings, his love, his guidance and most of all, his unwavering support. “Dad, we will miss you always; but forever will remember and love you. Yet do not worry, we will be okay... because we are strong just like you. As you always said to us, ‘you got to do what you got to do!’”

Thank you for taking the time to read and share in our profound grief and sorrow. May you find love as radical as that which we shared with Qwatsinas, so that from there you may flourish and flower for generations to come!

Way!

The Moody Family

On August 31, 2010 a shadow fell and the world grew a little darker when our father, Chief, family member, and friend Qwatsinas (Edward Moody) suddenly died of advanced metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Hospitalised for less than two weeks, Qwatsinas received news of his fatal diagnosis only days before he passed on. Demonstrating the extraordinary strength of character that brought him through many trials and hardships in life, he bore the news of his imminent death bravely and with dignity, displaying less than passing concern for his own wellbeing.

Always the strong leader, and never the victim, he actively sought from the limitations of his hospital bed in the palliative care unit, to use his diagnosis to bring attention to the high rate of cancer among our people. He reserved his sorrow for his children and the only personal regret he expressed was his deep concern over the impact his diagnosis would have on his children's lives.

Unwavering in his commitment to Nuxalk sovereignty, even in his last few days, he set in motion yet another stand for reclamation of our Nuxalk rights. He drew on precious, fleeting strength to express his wishes that our family bury him in the Nuxalk ancestral village Nutl'lhiixw (the Friendly Village), a location known to the Province of British Columbia as 'Burnt Bridge' in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.

With the support, assistance, and attendance of: several hereditary chiefs, the Moody family, members of the Nuxalk community, and friends from outside our traditional territories, we fulfilled Chief Qwatsinas' dying request and buried him at a beautiful site in Nutl'lhiixw on Saturday, September 04, 2010.

Chief Qwatsinas (Chief 'Spirit of the Raven') was an extraordinary human, overflowing with deep love for the land, sharp intelligence, quick wit, and constant passion for the sovereignty and wellbeing of his people. For Qwatsinas, the Nuxalkmc included all of our people living today, our ancestors whom he honoured in both thought and action, and our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of tomorrow. The latter were whom he believed would continue to strengthen and rebuild our Nation. Qwatsinas always considered Nuxalkmc needs and ancestral rights, when assessing threats to our traditional lands. He

fought hard and bravely for the bears, the fish, the trees and all other species of life that make their homes in Nuxalk territories. He respected these as deeply as he did our People.

Qwatsinas has been a huge influence in the lives of many members of our family. He always encouraged us to take pride in being Nuxalkmc, challenged us to think in a Nuxalk mind-set and to live in a Nuxalk way in everything we do.

“I went to him when I needed guidance, direction, clarity, a glimpse of his wisdom, or a random chat about this and that. Regardless of what we talked about, there were two things that I was certain would result from our chat. I would have a good laugh, a good healthy experience of pure laughter and that would be combined with a deeper lesson that I sometimes would understand at the time, and others that I would not fully understand for years.” (Family member)

We shall miss his teachings, his profound wisdom, and his unwavering example of resilience. He could not be bought; he proudly lived in humble surroundings with few material comforts and no financial security. Instead he called upon the great wealth of our lands to provide: fish, game and berries for food and trees for fuel for heat and timber, which he gathered and milled with his own hands, for shelter. He has set a high standard of integrity; humble yet powerful, quiet yet profound.

Chief Qwatsinas continuously instructed in both life, and now in death, that our Nuxalk history, heritage, Smayustas (stories), our songs and dances and particularly our language *is* the radical, the root of our sovereignty. In these, we find our deep and lasting connection with our territories and our inherited responsibility to honour and protect all life within our lands. He has continued the legacy of our wise and honourable ancestors by bravely and selflessly resisting genocide and fighting to the death for the integrity of our traditional laws and the security of our Nuxalk territories. He was a true leader and will continue to inspire Nuxalkmc for generations to come.

Chief Qwatsinas is now on a spiritual path making his way through thousands of years of Nuxalk generations who will ultimately return him to the mountain source of his original ancestor descended from Nusmata, where he can find his way back to our great spiritual home.

Thanks to Chief Qwatsinas' aspiration that he should be buried at our ancestral village Nutl'lhixw, aided exclusively by the Nuxalk ancient ceremonies for spiritual passage, this act will further serve as a means to rediscover, reclaim and honour our Nuxalk customs, laws, ancestry and traditions, the source and lifeblood of our sovereignty.

Chief Qwatsinas' vision was broad, and many projects he had recently put in motion remain undone at this tragic turning. In the near future, our family will begin outreaching to Chief Qwatsinas' friends and supporters in the hopes of garnering assistance to realize some of these unfinished projects. Please check back to the website (www.nuxalk.net) for future postings regarding any controversy that may ensue over Chief Qwatsinas' burial. Also check back for information about his upcoming memorial feast, which will be announced by the head of our family and be scheduled for approximately one year's time.

At present, the family welcomes any and all expressions of support for Chief Qwatsinas' burial at Nutl'lhixw and would especially appreciate anyone who has even the most distant memory of Chief Qwatsinas to share that memory with us. Please email: rememberqwatsinas@hotmail.com