

Nuxalk Nation Government

Last Updated Sunday, 01 March 2009

The Nuxalk Nation is a sovereign Nation that has never ceded, sold, surrendered or lost our traditional lands through act of war or treaty. The Nuxalk have two governing bodies, the traditional government, through the Hereditary Chiefs and the colonial-rooted Indian Act elected Chief and Council, imposed by the government of Canada.

Hereditary Chieftainships

have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years. A chief, or Staltmc, is a family's representative speaker for their Ancestral Village and associated responsibilities of upholding their family's place and voice within the Nuxalk Nation. The Hereditary Chieftain system ensures a close tie to the land, with names, songs, stories and dances that are tied to exact locations throughout the territory. Each Staltmc is responsible to his or her family (as a Staltmc may be a man or woman) first, as well as to the Nation as a whole.

The elected Chief and Council

are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Indian Band, as funded through the federal government's Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The band council is responsible for administering INAC regulations and funding.

In the eyes of the Canadian government and public, the elected band council is often considered as the legitimate governing body. Many people do not realize that the Canadian government imposes this foreign system, effectively employing Nuxalk people to administer colonial laws at the expense of Nuxalk traditional law and sovereignty via the Nuxalk Nation Administration Office .

However, for many Nuxalk people, working for the Canadian government is one of the only sources of employment available to them in the Bella Coola Valley. The government programs that are run through the band office are often under-funded and very restrictive in their delivery and eligibility, thereby severely limiting access to Nuxalk people who are in need of them.

Many Nuxalkmc have chosen to relocate to other areas for school and work, and are now beginning to question the effectiveness and legitimacy of the elected band council system and are looking to restoring traditional systems of government, culture and language.