

Walter Watso Passes On

Husband of Thérèse Capistran

24 November 2002 at the age of 69 years.

His benevolent smile and his generous heart will always remain among us.



Walter Watso, past Chief of Odanak, passed away on November 24, 2002. Walter became well known for his efforts to recognize all U.S. and Canadian Abenaki People. He carried on his unification efforts up to the time that he passed on. He will be missed by many of us that had close ties to them. Our Band will remember him for the unification pipe ceremonies that he took place in at the Sherbrooke gathering last June.

Walter Watso was the youngest son of Chief Louis Watso from the Adirondack Mountain region and from the Bear Clan. His family was from the few Abenaki families that were living at Akwesasne among the Mohawk. Originally, the Watso family line came from the Mahican-Sokokis from New York and western Vermont. At a time in the past, they lived at Schaghticoke and eventually moved to the South Durham Abenaki Reserve with the Annis, Wawanolett and Annance family clans. Louis Watso moved to O'danak, but always kept the family relationships with those that remained within our Native lands on both sides of the border. The first Watzeau (Watso) families were listed in the 1829 census of Odanak.

Walter was very close of his grandmother who spoke Abenaki in the house and gave young Walter his cultural upbringing. As it was with other First Nation children of his time, his youth was spend in Canadian Catholic Indian schools.

He served in the Canadian Army during the Korean War. In the 1970's he was active in the Odanak Reserve government and served as the Council Chief. He was also at the First Nation Congress for Chiefs for that period. He became very well known for his attempts to have the Odanak Council recognize the Abenaki south of the border. He never stopped his work for a constitution for federal recognition for the Abenaki in and out of Canada.

He spent time working with other Abenakis groups like the Manitoulin Island and Missisquois communities where he gave his help to late Chief Homer St-Francis. In 1995 he worked for unity and had the dream to unify all the Abenaki groups and descendants. He was given the Abenaki bear pipe at that time from a family member from O'danak.

In 2000 he started to work with the Abenaki at Sherbrooke to help the Mena'sen community and Colerain Abenaki descendants join together. In 2001 members of the Shebrooke Elders Circle and Walter choose the Mercier family to lead the Sherbrooke Council with the Wawanolett and Salois family clans. In June 2002 he took an active part in the Sherbrooke bicentennial and historical Wabankiak Pow Wow that was sponsored by our Mena'sen group.

Later on he became sick and spent months in the hospital before he passed on. He gave to our People his last wishes were to continue the work that he started for the unity of the Abenaki People. In October he said his final goodbyes to his friends and began his long trip to the spirit world.

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