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21 May 2015

Ms Jenna Lewinsky

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Dear Jenna

I was pleased to hear what both of you are doing concerning conservation of Jacob sheep.

I was fascinated by what you are doing to prevent the complete extinction of these sheep.

Last week on Museum Day I was the Guest Speaker at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg. I will attach a copy of the speech I made on that day.

I appreciated that you keep in touch with us.

My warm regards to both of you.

Yours sincerely

PRINCE MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI

ENCL.

OPENING OF THE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM EXHIBITION OF THE KWAZULU NATAL MUSEUM IN CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL MUSEUMS DAY

"INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CONSERVATION"

ADDRESS BY
PRINCE MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI MP
PRESIDENT OF THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY
INKOSI OF THE BUTHELEZI CLAN AND
TRADITIONAL PRIME MINISTER TO THE ZULU MONARCH AND NATION

Pietermaritzburg: 15 May 2015

Thank you to the Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum for that kind introduction. I think it is clear to us all that my life has been busy and filled with missions and causes. Some were specific to the time, such as the struggle for political liberation. But others have run like a thread through many decades, consistently demanding my attention. That is the case with conservation.

As a young child at my mother's knee, I heard the history of my people. My mother, Princess Magago ka Dinuzulu, was a treasury of indigenous knowledge. She was also an accomplished singer, musician and composer, who played the piano, the auto-harp, the *ugubhu* and *isiqomuqomana*. Through her music and her stories, I learnt about the courage of my ancestors and the struggle of my nation.

It was my mother who told me that King Shaka ka Senzangakhona used to set aside land for animals and prescribed specific times for hunting. He did this to ensure that no one hunted while animals were suckling their young. In this way, he preserved the animal populations that fed our people. Kings from that time onwards paid attention to the balance between the environment and the needs of those who lived off the land.

Thus conservation is not a western idea, or a popular cause that arose when we realized the polar ice caps were melting and the ozone layer had holes. Conservation is part of the indigenous knowledge system of African people, and certainly of my own people, the Zulu nation.

An indigenous knowledge system can be described as the full body of wisdom, information, experience and belief of a specific people that is passed down from generation to generation, often through spoken word and observed actions. It is a system through which people make sense of, attach meaning to, interact with and organize the world in which they live. It is through our oral tradition.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are most evident perhaps in medicine and agriculture, but they include a people's entire store of knowledge, belief, customs, laws, morals and culture. In short, everything that humans acquire by virtue of being members of a specific society. Thus indigenous knowledge systems influence a

people's approach to issues as diverse as justice, aesthetic value, food security and conservation.

Many westerners have been surprised by the vast knowledge that exists within rural African communities, despite an apparent deprivation of formal education. Indigenous knowledge on farming, for instance, is often more valuable than academic learning once you are in the field. I recall how His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, speaking at the University of Cape Town in 2011, praised our rural farmers for emphasising the traditional methods of farming, particularly in light of global conservation efforts.

My own interest in conservation was born out of our indigenous knowledge system that placed value on protecting animals and understanding plants, albeit always in relation to the needs of man. But as my interest in conservation grew, long before it became fashionable, I realised that we could not put mans' needs and interests first forever. Our natural environment had value in and of itself and demanded our protection.

It was difficult conveying this notion in those early days. I recall how, shortly after my installation as Inkosi of the Buthelezi Clan, Dr Ian Player and Mr Nick Steele called upon me to speak to Amakhosi and traditional communities in Hlabisa and Mtubatuba, to appeal to them to accept the establishment of "the Corridor" between Umfolozi Game Reserve and the Hluhluwe Game Reserve. It was a hard sell, getting people to prioritise land for animals, when land for people was scarce.

At that time, in the 1950s, Dr Player, Mr Steele and Mr Hugh Dent were young game rangers at the Natal Parks Board. Later, when Dr Player became Senior Conservator, he arranged for my family and I to spend long weekends at Mtwazi Lodge in Hluhluwe and at Umfolozi. It was an unprecedented act, for at that time the Apartheid Government maintained game reserves as the exclusive playground of whites.

When I became Chief Minister of the erstwhile KwaZulu Government, I established the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources. This later became the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Services; a first in South Africa. One of my biggest concerns was our country's diminishing rhino population. By the seventies, fewer than 500 White Rhino remained. Through a concerted effort, however, we were growing their number in Mfolozi Game Reserve.

It was Dr Player who initiated Operation White Rhino, whereby surplus rhino were captured at Mfolozi Game Reserve and sent to the Kruger National Park and the great zoological gardens throughout the world. It was a tough assignment, not least because the darts that were used to sedate the rhino occasionally backfired. Much later in life, Dr Player wrote me that he had lost vision in one eye due to this dart malfunction. Yet he had no regrets.

Over the course of my life, I have been honoured to serve as the Patron of the Magqubu Ntombela Foundation, and to support several conservation foundations and initiatives, not least the Rhino and Elephant Foundation and the Wildlands Conservation Trust. I founded the Tembe Elephant Park on the border of KwaZulu

Natal and Moçambique. I was also honoured to receive the Bruno-H-Schubert Stiftung Environmental Award in Frankfurt for my life's work as a conservationist.

But I am always brought back to remembering the real icons of our struggle for conservation; people like Dr Ian Player, Mr Magqubu Ntombela, Mr Lawrence Anthony, Mr John Aspinall – and many more whose names are not yet as widely known. People, for instance, like Mr Tristan Dickerson.

I am pleased that today's programme to mark International Museums Day included a talk by Mr Dickerson on his work with Panthera. I support his efforts to protect our leopard population and lent my name to this cause in March 2013, when his team interviewed me towards the documentary, "To Skin a Cat". As the traditional Prime Minister to the Zulu Monarch and Nation, I feel a compelling responsibility to promote knowledge that protects, preserves and promotes our natural heritage.

Leopard skins have been used for generations as a cultural accoutrement, but we cannot drive this majestic animal to extinction for the sake of a symbolic cultural practice that could equally be expressed with manufactured leopard skins.

The connection between animals and symbolism runs deep in African culture. There is, for instance, a line in one of my praise songs that calls me "the rhino". Zulu people have a habit of giving praises based on events, especially to leaders. When I was a young man, of just 27, King Cyprian ka Bhekuzulu, the father of our present King, held a council meeting at Mona Bridge, which was addressed by Dr Hendrik French Verwoerd, the then Minister of Native Affairs. I was one of those who were elected to speak. Because of what I said in my address to Dr Verwoerd, some of my uncles added "Ubhejane", the Rhino, as an extra line in my praises. They said I was "the rhino who blocked the Boers at Mona Bridge".

My party, the IFP, has for years been symbolised by a family of three elephants. The elephant, of course, speaks of strength, family ties and endurance. The elephant also has a long memory, which the IFP certainly has too. We are not a flash-in-the-pan political party intent on short term gains. We have served the long-term interests of South Africa for four decades. We remember the pain of the past and we understand that healing, social cohesion and a shared vision are necessary for a stable and prosperous future.

The IFP has played a significant role in ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems are protected and receive recognition in a democratic South Africa. During constitutional debates at the negotiating table, I was the first to introduce a proposal and documentation for the recognition of indigenous and customary law.

Indeed, many of the first concrete proposals on what our democratic constitution should entail came from the IFP, including proposals for a full bill of rights, social and economic rights, a constitutional court, independent organs of state controlling the executive, a federal state with provinces, autonomy of local government, and many other aspects of a modern constitution.

I had already fought for many years for the recognition of the Zulu Monarch and Kingdom, and for the preservation of the institution of traditional leadership as an

established social system that ensures justice, cohesion and security. Traditional leaders operate in terms of indigenous and customary law, so it was essential to enshrine this law in our constitution.

Today, South Africa's Constitution recognises and protects indigenous and customary law, as well as the right of communities to maintain their customs and traditions. Constitutionally, traditional authorities are placed under provincial legislation which may not obliterate them or modify them out of existence. Thus traditional leaders are enabled to remain the repository of the customs, traditions and identity of communities.

This is a tremendous asset in our fight for conservation, for traditional leaders play a central role in ensuring sustainable development, and through their leadership the value of conservation remains part of our indigenous knowledge system.

Through our kings and A*makhosi*, we have acquired a deeply held belief that community is primary, rather than the individual. The notion of *Ubuntu-Botho*, where I am only because you are, speaks of our understanding that none of us live in isolation, independent of those around us. We all affect one another, just as we affect our environment. Thus we must respect one another, and respect our environment, not only to the extent that we are dependent on it, but because it has value in and of itself.

This is part of our indigenous knowledge system. It is worth thinking about and certainly worth celebrating. I therefore want to thank the KwaZulu-Natal Museum for creating this exhibition, so that all who see it will be prompted to consider the value of community, conservation and what we can do with the knowledge we have.

It is now my pleasure to officially open the Indigenous Knowledge System Exhibition.

I thank you.

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