

Narrator - In August 2001, a world known celebrity was invited by the chiefs of Unaman-shipu, Pakut-shipi, and Ekuanitshit to come and visit Nitassinan's forest and rivers. It was Raoni, Chief of the 8,000 Kayapos Indians, who made international headlines fighting for environment issues in the rain forest, while struggling for aboriginal rights, as well.

Jean-Charles Pietacho - What we've got here, is a legend, Raoni is a legend for the fight he held against Brazil government and for the fact he was successful in many ways. Make sure you'll always remember the day with Chief Raoni!

Narrator - Raoni's greatest victory was having Brazil concede the Kayapo Nation ownership of over 180,000 square kilometers of rain forest land, which was more he could expect, since then the Kayapos have ruled out dams, mines, timber activities, and no trespassers are allowed on this territory, about as large as the Innus traditional land claim. Raoni, whose face can be seen on books, websites, T-shirts, and posters, met with statesmen like President Jacques Chirac of France, campaigned around the world with rock star Sting, and inspired a movie whose narrator was Marlon Brando.

In one word, Raoni is a living hero, recognized on all five continents, not so bad for someone who, as the story goes, only met the world outside the rain forest in the '60's.

The idea is to have Raoni know the state of the territory, and give some advice to the Innu chiefs, which, of course, could be helpful in the ongoing negotiation with the governments of Canada and Quebec.

Raoni's visit would also help everyone, white people included, to review the absolute necessity of hydroelectric, forest, mining and other huge natural resource projects.

Narrator - Raoni, Patni, Takrakudja, and Tedje believe in traditional dancing and singing, and they're more than happy to participate in Innu Nikamu. Why not take advantage of this popular musical festival to show the Innus how the Kayapos would paint their bodies as a sign of joy upon meeting other Indians.

There's an aspect of Raoni which amazes everyone, an aspect which helped forging his international celebrity, it's of course his botoque, a balsamic-like platter that the Kayapo leader wears inside his lower lip. In the Amazon a botoque is a proof of courage, targeted to scare off the enemies.

Narrator - Kayapos visitors are impressed indeed by the quantity of lakes and rivers in Nitassinan, just like the Innus, they use bush airplanes to roam around their territory, but it hasn't always been so. For more than 10,000 years the Innus have walked this land which is now being challenged by the governments. They left traces all over, and they used it as a burial ground, as a result, each little part of Nitassinan has been granted an Innu name. But to gaze at it from so high, as if they'd be eagles, the Kayapo visitors come to believe these lakes, swamps, forest, and rivers are somehow similar to their own hunting grounds, except for a few details, instead of caribous, bears, beavers, and trouts, they have jaguars, tapers, turtles, and piranhas.

Unaman-shipu, known also as La Romaine, this community, which in the '50's lived outdoor in tents, think quite much of the Kayapos. In those years both Nations had no school, no priest, no doctor, they relied basically on their knowledge of the land, the animals, the vegetation, and the spirits.

Looking at those gone, witnesses of yesteryears, silent seniors whose images hang on the walls of Uanamen Shipu's Tribal Council, the Kayapos are convinced their meeting with the Innus will benefit from helpful inspiration.

Raoni's presented with Nitassinan, the land where all the Innus are born, where they fish, where they hunt, where they're buried, but the governments are convinced Nitassinan belongs to the total population of Canada, which includes the Innus. Such an assertion rings a bell to the Kayapo Chief, who dealt with it in the old days.

Chief Guy Bellefleur - In each big river in this area, there's a hydroelectric dam project. And this energy will be sell to United States. We are looking for equity and respect for everybody. Our challenge is to live in harmony with both ways of life. It's how we can guarantee a future to our kids. Remember, these kids will always be Innus and they'll need the land to live.

Narrator - "I'm worried," says Raoni, "in Brazil, that's what they tried to do, giving the Indians small chunks of land, and dividing their hunting territories. I didn't share this point of view, we kept telling the politics, our land enabled us to reach far out to hunt our animals, a right which was fundamental in the pursuit of our way of life. They finally understood. White people do not see things as we do, it's our job to make sure they understand our land is essential to us for survival with our children."

Raoni seems to be thinking that such a tool could have been useful during his negotiations with the Brazilian bureaucrats.

When perpetrators enter the Kayapo territory to get some timber, to fish, or to dig for gold, Raoni sends a squad of warriors after them. They are arrested, their equipment is seized, and they are expelled. The Kayapo legally run their land the way they want, and there's nothing the Brazilian government can do about it.

Pakua-shipu.

Narrator - In 1977, the bureaucrats decided to relocate Pakua-shipu Innus on the other side of St. Augustine River, they built houses but failed to build a school, instead they renovated the old one on the other bank, as a result school children had to cross in a motorized sleigh during winter or in a canoe during summer, which was somehow dangerous. After a long string of claims, a new school was finally built on the right bank of the river. But as we know, the school location was only one of the problems, the worst being Lake Robinson's hydroelectric dam.

Chief Guy Bellefleur - The Innus have fought: they have blasted the issue in the medias. Personally, I went to Court trying to stop this project. Calling upon official by-laws the Government wouldn't even respect. Since the Innus were demonstrating, Hydro-Québec called for an injunction to muzzle them and it worked. The Innus remained quiet and refrained from any "physical affirmation". As a result, the project left them totally empty-handed.

Narrator - Traveling so far north, the Kayapos would be ill-advised not to stop and really enjoy Lac Brulet's hunting and fishing facilities, where they can meet with former chief of Ekuanitshit Pinip Pietacho.

A respected shamanistic healer, Raoni shows lots of interest for the Innus traditional medicine, and Pinip Pietacho shows him how to heal a sore throat.

The Kayapos are concerned with what they've learned, this unique territory could soon be drawn by some huge hydroelectric project, they immediately offer their help and support to the Innus, or we'll have to fight until everything is stopped. And then they board for their last stage in Nitassinan: Ekuanitshit. It's not the last stage of their overall saga, though, they have yet to see many friends before getting back to their rain forest. One of the reasons for such a long trip, a voyage across many continents, and over a few months is to gather funds for the Raoni Institute, a huge multi-function complex, including traditional medicine facilities, scheduled to start its operation in 2005.

Here, in Ekuanitshit ancestral rights are challenged, for instance, white people are accusing the local Innus to waste La Romaine's River resources, of course the government refuses to get involved.

"Reaffirm your rights," answer the Amazonian visitors. "Look at the Raoni Institute. For the past eight years the Kayapos have done their best fighting for it. Today, the Brazilian government is a partner, in spite of many Kayapos issues with the local industrial sector, and with many lumberjack threats."

Raoni is quite impressed with Ekuanitshit's pharmacy. The use of medicinal plants, in conjunction with occidental medicine is part of his institute project.

"In order to control health, education, and natural resources, we need to understand how the white people do their things, we need to prepare documents and publicize them. Let me meet with the white chief, the Prime Minister," says Raoni, "I'll demand that the Innus be respected, and I'll discuss the low altitude flying issue."

Félix Atencio Gonzales - In Brazil, I know the White people. They'll want to mislead you. They're liars! I've been fighting quite awhile. If the White people resent it, they particularly dislike the fact I want to live as an Indian. So they try to show some temper. But it start yelling a them. It's how they get scared away.

I'm very excited to be here to get acquainted to you to visit your people.

Narrator - And, as written in the Antique Book of Innu traditions, gifts straight from the heart are given to Raoni and the Kayapo visitors.

Before adjourning, the chiefs agreed on the following statement: "The Kayapo chiefs have given the Innu Nation full support in their preservation efforts of Nitassinan and its resources. They have expressed their concern with hydroelectric dams, mining operations, low altitude NATO flying, traditional territory slashing by the constructions of roads, ongoing deforestation projects and known governmental agendas on similar projects, including commercialization of water. There projects have influence on the ecosystem, the animals and the traditional activities."