

MWWT



**MNWEINI WILDERNESS WORKING TEAM**



**AMAZIZI WILDERNESS GROUP**

Our name for our mountains, and the culture of our communities who live in the valleys, is Amagug'esizwe (Treasure of the Nation). The mountains of the AmaZizi and the AmaNgwane lie between the two sections of the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site. One day we hope that our mountains can also be a world heritage site – A Living Cultural World Heritage Site. We have done a lot of work to help identify a Community Nature Reserve with a wilderness area. Our name for wilderness is *ihlane*. Now a cableway is being proposed for the AmaZizi Busingatha Valley. This is in the middle of the AmaZizi wilderness. Our traditional AmaZizi leadership and its people are much disturbed.

*My name is Sigungu Miya, brother of the late Nkosi E.M. Miya of the AmaZizi. I speak on behalf of the family of the recently deceased Nkosi Miya, as the traditional leadership of our people. We have not been able to speak until now because we and our community have been in mourning for our Inkosi, his children and his brother.*

*FIRSTLY : The MEC Mabuyakhulu, DEDT has shown a complete lack of respect to the royal family of the AmaZizi, even after the loss of Nkosi Miya. They never formally introduced the proposed Busingatha cableway to the late Nkosi Miya and they have never come to consult at the Amazizi Tribal Office .*

*SECONDLY : Without any consultation with us, the office of Mabayukhlu put up their big tents at Busingatha on 23 November 2013, the day before the burial of the late Inkosi's brother, who died soon after our Inkosi, and who was to be buried on 24 November. On 23 November while we, as the family, were preparing for the funeral of our Nkosi's brother and were bringing his body from the mortuary, there were loud speakers in a mourning tribe .*

*I wish to make it known that, contrary to the claims of some people, Inkosi Miya never agreed to have the cableway in our area. He wanted his communities to benefit from every community project and continue managing their own areas, without being manipulated or disturbed by outsiders who might come to our area to make money for themselves, or take jobs from our people or disturb our culture. He always spoke strongly about the conservation of all living and cultural heritage belonging to the area. That is why he authorised the Amazizi Wilderness Group, to work with other community environmental working teams to promote a community wilderness area and work on wilderness management activities for the existing environment. We also wanted our local wilderness, environmental and cultural groups to make school children aware of the importance of nature and our culture.*

*We, as the traditional leaders and authority of our people, kept in our office all the information and arrangements for the proclamation of a community nature reserve and wilderness area that we support. We do not want this cableway in our area .*

The Constitutions of our community wilderness groups recognise that our mountain *ihlane* is our cultural and natural heritage. *Ihlane* needs to be conserved because it has changed very little from the landscape that our ancestors knew. When we look at our mountains we see what our ancestors saw. *Ihlane* also gives lots of very clean water. This is important for South Africa because our country does not have a lot

of water. In our mountains are rock art sites of the San people and important places of biodiversity. A specialist who did an assessment of ihlane in Busingatha told us that it scored 18 out of 20 for biodiversity. Ihlane also has many things that our culture needs. This is why it is so important to look after it and conserve it.

Our mountains are our heritage and also the heritage of people in South Africa, and, we think, the heritage of all people in the world. Our wilderness is very beautiful and we know that our mountains have a spiritual importance for many visitors from South Africa and overseas. Our prophets have told us that the mountains are places of great power. We know that we have a responsibility to care for our wilderness and that we are accountable for this care.

We need your support because there are politicians and other powerful people who have told us they are going to put a cableway in the Busingatha Valley, but it will only give about 30 to 50 jobs. Over the past 8 years our wilderness groups have employed hundreds of community people to work on jobs like donga rehabilitation in our wilderness buffer and also alien weed eradication. We do environmental monitoring as well and recruit people for fire management in our wilderness. Community guides take people into ihlane and also tell them about the culture of our people. Our wilderness, rock art and cultural groups also work in many local schools and explain to learners why our culture and ihlane is the treasure of our nation.

The AmaZizi and Mnweni Wilderness groups do not support the cableway. We have spent a long time identifying a community wilderness area. We hope your support will be of much help to us. We were expecting that preparation will soon start for a proclamation for a community nature reserve that will include our wilderness area. Now we have been told about the idea of the cableway.

We need help to start our community nature reserve and wilderness area. Our people need more training in environmental and financial management. We have identified two possible sites where it could be possible for big tourism developments like hotels to take place. These sites are outside our wilderness boundary. They will not destroy our wilderness and will not be seen from inside our nature reserve. We hope that one day we can also be a world heritage site - a Natural and Living Cultural World Heritage Site. We need the same sort of subsidies that are given to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife who are managing the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site. But we do not need the cableway. This western business will change our culture and it will change our mountains. We do not want this to happen.

If you love mountains and wilderness and want to honour our culture please help us.