

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY  
THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS & FORESTRY,  
RONNIE KASRILS,  
AT A TREE PLANTING IN HONOUR OF THE XHOSA LEADERS WHO  
FOUGHT NINE WARS OF RESISTANCE  
Arbor Week, Isidengo Mountain, Stutterheim, September 1999**

We stand here today, in memory of the Xhosa people who fought nine wars of resistance against the colonisers. After 100 years of warfare, they were finally defeated in 1878. Without cattle, their grain stores destroyed by the British, the people were starving. Where gunpowder and cannons had been unable to quench their spirit, starvation ended the resistance.

Yet the courage and pride of King Sandile and Maqoma, two great Xhosa resistance fighters, was never vanquished.

Sandile, as we know, was the son of the famous Paramount Chief Ngqika Gaika, founder of the Ngqika or Gaika Tribe. Ngqika died in 1829 when Sandile was still a minor and in 1840 Sandile became Chief of the Ngqika tribe. He was captured during the War of the Axe in 1847 and on his release he was granted land in "British Kaffraria" for his tribe. He later supported Kreli in a war with the Cape Colony.

King Sandile would not submit to British rule, refusing to admit that his people had ever been defeated. When the governor called him for discussions, Sandile said that he had made peace and that there was nothing more to discuss. Infuriated, the colonial troops struck again, moving in to destroy Xhosa houses, cattle and grain pits.

On 29 May 1878, Sandile was mortally wounded in a skirmish with a detachment of Fingo troops under the command of Captain Massey-Hicks. He died a few days later and his body was brought to a nearby military camp. He was given a military funeral at which his body was carried on eight rifles by Fingo pall-bearers. It is said that he was buried with a British soldier on either side to convince his followers that his spirit would not roam.

During the resistance, Maqoma, Sandile's brother, was sentenced to twenty years on Robben Island. His wife Katyi was allowed to accompany him. Two years after his release, he tried to reclaim his land. Once again, he was sent to Robben Island where, in 1873, he died.

It was the practice of Sir Harry Smith to try to humiliate the Xhosa chiefs by ordering them to kiss his feet under the guard of bayonets. Even after being forced to the floor, Maqoma continued to show his contempt. With Smith's boot against his neck, he said: "You are a dog, so you act like a dog".

It is to commemorate this spirit of resistance and fearlessness that we are here today.