



Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k

PRESS RELEASE

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Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiro Norton passes into the Spirit World at age 70

For Immediate Release

(Kahnawake – 14, Seskéha/August) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) regrets to announce the passing of Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiro Norton today at the age of 70.

Mr. Norton was in his second term since returning to the Office of Grand Chief in 2015. He had suffered a fall at his home earlier today and was rushed to hospital in critical condition and passed away with his family at his side at approximately 8:30pm.

His death comes as a shock to his fellow Ratsénhahienhs (Council Chiefs) and the entire community, as he had participated in the weekly Council meeting just five days ago. While he had suffered some recent health issues, he was expecting to fully recover and had continued to participate in the political matters important to Kahnawà:ke.

Mr. Norton was first elected to office in 1978. He was elected as Grand Chief in 1982 and served for 13 consecutive terms, retiring in 2004. He was known throughout Turtle Island and across North America as a fierce defender of our rights. For many, he will be best remembered for his role during the Oka Crisis of 1990. Though many consider this his defining moment, his role in our history goes far beyond the events of thirty years ago. Under his leadership Kahnawà:ke saw unprecedented growth in many areas, particularly in economic development and the battle to restore and expand Kahnawà:ke's jurisdiction. The community's direction did not always mesh with that of the provincial and federal governments – something that Mr. Norton took great pride in. He became known as a strong voice for Indigenous solidarity, defiance and determination. As a statesman, he carried a vision in continually striving for the advancement of Indigenous governance.

In 2002 he was awarded a National Aboriginal Achievement Award (now known as Indspire) for Public Service.

He spent many years as an ironworker before venturing into politics. He was also a past head coach of Kahnawà:ke's senior lacrosse team. He had a great love for his family and his community.

The MCK offers its sincerest condolences to the family, friends, colleagues and all those who crossed the path of this remarkable leader. We share the grief that the community is experiencing at this most challenging time. He will surely be welcomed to the Spirit World by those who walked Turtle Island before him.

More details will be released once funeral arrangements are made.

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