



Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k

PRESS RELEASE

Media Inquiries:

Joe Delaronde

Political Press Attaché
450- 632-7500 ext 63251

MCKMedia@mck.ca

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

Kahnawà:ke Mohawk
Territory
P.O. Box 720
J0L 1B0

Tel: (450) 632-7500

Fax: (450) 638-5958

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We Remember...

For Immediate Release

(Kahnawake – 14, Seskéha/August 2021) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to acknowledge that August 14th marks one year since the Former Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiro Norton began his journey to the spirit world.

One year ago today, news of the sudden and tragic passing of Tokwiro, at 70 years of age, shocked the entire nation. The family mourned the loss of a father, a brother, uncle, and grandfather. The community lost an elder, a fluent Kanien'ké:ha speaker, a visionary, and a friend. Yet, the true essence of Tokwiro's legacy remains very prominent in our minds and in our hearts.



Tokwiro held a long political career, being first elected to office in 1978. He was elected as Grand Chief in 1982 and served for 13 consecutive terms, initially retiring in 2004 but returning in 2015 for another two consecutive terms. He was known throughout North America and internationally as a defender of Indigenous 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 extends far beyond the events of more than thirty years ago. Under his leadership, Kahnawà:ke saw unprecedented growth in many areas, particularly in economic development and in the restoration and expansion of Kahnawà:ke's jurisdiction across a variety of sectors.

The community's direction did not always mesh with that of the provincial and federal governments – something that Tokwiro took great pride in. He played a major role in transforming how governments work with Onkwehón:we people. He became known across Turtle Island 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.

“Tokwiro was a tremendously fierce leader and a very dear friend. His remarkable acts of defiance and resistance against colonial systems were rooted in a deep, deep love for our people. A love that lead him to devote his entire career to advancing the rights and interests of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke,” stated Ohén:ton Í:iente ne Ratitsénhahienhs Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer. “As Kahnawa'kehró:non, we all have to be thankful for the work he served, and it now rests in all of our hands to carry forward his legacy. To ensure that spirit of rising, of resurgence, and of determination remains intact as we continue on our path as a community”.

As the one-year anniversary of his passing arrives, we say our final ó:nen to Tokwiro. As Kahnawa'kehró:non, we remain defiant, we remain fierce, and we stand determined. We are ever grateful to have received the gifts he offered during his time in this world, and we extend our warmest and deepest gratitude to the family and friends of Tokwiro for supporting his endless devotion, which has led to our self-determination and continued assertion of our rights and jurisdiction.

Niawenkkó:wa, and farewell Tokwiro.