

Ted Moses

Person: Ted Moses

Author: Victoria Loy , McMaster University

Date Entered: 2005-05-04

Description Ted Moses is the current Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec. Elected for a second time in 1999 (previously Grand Chief from 1984 to 1987), he is also the Council's ambassador to the United Nations. Moses was the Grand Council signatory of the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship between the Government of Quebec and the Cree of Quebec, a landmark treaty that aims to foster active cooperation between the governments, sustainable growth, and mutually rewarding economic development. The 2002 pact seeks to honour provisions made to the Cree people in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975, of which Moses was a chief negotiator.

Born in the James Bay region of Northwestern Quebec in 1951, Ted Moses attended residential schools followed by university in Toronto and Montreal. He has held various positions in the governing bodies of his home community, including election as Chief and mayor of Eastmain, James Bay, in 1987. Prior to his first appointment as Grand Chief in 1984, Moses negotiated the establishment of various organizational infrastructures, such as the Cree Hunters and Trappers Income Security Board. He was one of the founding members of the Indigenous Initiative for Peace, an international organization of aboriginal leaders. In 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights, he represented the indigenous population of North America. In 1996, in recognition of his long record of work for human rights and autonomy, he received an honorary law degree from the University of Saskatchewan.

While Moses is seen by many in the First Nations as a progressive figure, his detractors have perceived the 2002 Agreement's concessions to the Quebec Government — such as the relinquishment of native land titles for development — as both illogical and a betrayal. For Moses, however, an autonomous future must involve cooperation rather than segregation: "The land is there, but not everyone can become a trapper...[d]evelopment is the guarantee of good relations and positive spin-offs for everyone. We have to create opportunities. For the sake of our children, we cannot accept a life of poverty."

During Moses' time as Grand Chief, the Grand Council has come to be regarded by many people involved in Indigenous politics in Canada, at the UN, and elsewhere, as setting a standard for statesmanship.