



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Senator Sol Sanderson Honoured by First Nations University of Canada for Historic Contributions to Indigenous Education

(Treaty 4, Regina, SK) The Prince Albert Grand Council is thrilled to announce that Senator Solomon Sanderson, a distinguished member of Chakastaypasin Band of the Cree Nation, was honoured today by the First Nations University of Canada. This recognition highlighted Sanderson's extraordinary contributions to Indigenous education and his lifelong dedication to the advancement of First Nations rights and sovereignty.

Born on Oct. 18, 1941, at James Smith First Nation, Sen. Sanderson's journey in advocacy and leadership has been one of tireless dedication unwavering commitment, and profound love for his people and culture. His efforts have left an indelible mark on First Nations communities across Canada and beyond.

Sen. Sanderson served as chief of his reserve for three terms and as the leader of the Federation of Sovereign Nations from 1979 to 1986, where he currently serves as a member of its senate. Under his leadership, First Nations became much more active in asserting their political rights, culminating in the inclusion of these rights in the Canadian Constitution in 1982. Sen. Sanderson was instrumental in ensuring that treaties were entrenched in the Constitution and recognized at the international level. He led a delegation to London to lobby the British Parliament on behalf of Treaty Indians.

A founding leader of the Assembly of First Nations, Sen. Sanderson was a senior spokesperson at the First Ministers' Conferences on Indigenous issues. He played a crucial role in advancing Indian government, including control over First Nations schools and three post-secondary institutions: the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (now First Nations University of Canada). Sen. Sanderson was also prominent in the Treaty Land Entitlement process in Saskatchewan.

In 1969, Sen. Sanderson played a pivotal role in organizing Indigenous leadership in Saskatchewan to thwart the 1969 White Paper Policy, which aimed to assimilate First Nations in Canada. His commitment to preserving First Nations' cultural identity and rights was further evidenced in 1972 when he assisted in creating the "Indian Control of Indian Education Policy," jointly endorsed by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the President of the National Indian Brotherhood, late Chief Noel Starblanket. The following year, he established the first First Nation-controlled school in Canada at James Smith First Nation, setting a precedent for future educational initiatives.

Sen. Sanderson's leadership has known no bounds. In 1982, he chaired the World Assembly of First Nations, bringing together representatives from 33 countries to discuss self-determination and sovereignty. His international advocacy efforts included representing First Nations issues at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, among other global forums.

One of Sanderson's most significant achievements was his successful lobbying for the recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the Constitution Act of 1982. His relentless pursuit of justice also led to exposing major land frauds, resulting in settlements for several First Nation claims in Saskatchewan.

"As a member of James Smith Cree Nation, Senator Sanderson has always been a source of inspiration and pride for our community. His pioneering initiatives in education and governance have laid a strong foundation for future generations. We are immensely proud of his achievements and the honour bestowed upon him by the First Nations University of Canada," said Chief Calvin Sanderson of Chakastaypasin Band of the Cree Nation.

"Senator Sol Sanderson's contributions to Indigenous education and the advancement of First Nations rights have been monumental. His work has not only empowered our communities but also ensured that our voices are heard and respected at both national and international levels. This honour is a well-deserved recognition of his tireless efforts and unwavering commitment," Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte of the Prince Albert Grand Council.

"Senator Sanderson's legacy is one of empowerment, education, and unwavering dedication to the advancement of First Nations. His life's work has set a powerful example for future generations, inspiring us to continue the fight for justice, equality, and the preservation of our cultural heritage. His contributions have profoundly influenced the landscape of Indigenous education in Canada, and it is our privilege to honour him for his outstanding achievements," said President Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann of the First Nations University of Canada.

The honouring of Sen. Sol Sanderson by the First Nations University of Canada is a testament to his tireless dedication and the enduring legacy he has built. His life's work continues to inspire and empower First Nations communities, fostering a spirit of self-determination and cultural resilience.

About Prince Albert Grand Council:

The Prince Albert Grand Council is one of the largest tribal councils in Canada with a membership of over 44,000, representing 12 First Nations and the 28 northern communities in the territories of Treaty 5, 6, 8 & 10. To learn more, visit pagc.sk.ca.

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