



*Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k*

# PRESS RELEASE

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## MCK mourns the passing of former Grand Chief Andrew T. Delisle

For Immediate Release

**(Kahnawake – 8, Ohiarihkó:wa/July 2019)** The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) is saddened to announce that former Grand Chief Andrew Tanahokate Delisle passed away this past Saturday evening at the age of 85. The MCK offers its deepest condolences to his family, and countless friends from across the country.



He was first elected to Council in 1960. In 1964 his fellow Council members selected him as Spokesperson – a position that evolved into today's position of Grand Chief. He held that position until 1982, though this was interrupted when he spent four years (1972-1976) in the private sector to create Okwari.

In 1964, in the aftermath of the St. Lawrence Seaway, his administration stopped the development of a four-lane highway that would have cut through the Territory from the Old Chateauguay Road to Highway 138. It was a significant political move that changed the way

Kahnawà:ke dealt with Canadian and provincial governments.

“Andrew will be remembered for instituting great changes in the Kahnawà:ke political landscape, overseeing major reforms in policing, social services, administration, housing and much more,” said current Grand Chief Joseph Tokwirot Norton. “He bridged the gap from the ‘old days’ to the modern era and was a mentor and personal friend to me for over 40 years. He was a true leader, a defender and promoter of Indigenous rights and, right to the end, a great ambassador for the people of Kahnawà:ke. He leaves an incredible legacy and will truly be missed.”

“Andrew was inducted as an Officer of the Order of Canada for his work as the Commissioner of the *Indians of Canada* Pavilion at the Expo 67 World's Fair,” stated Ratsénhahienhs Ross Montour. “An integral facet of that groundbreaking pavilion was the telling of Canada's sad record in its relations with our people. When Queen Elizabeth came to visit, she was confronted with the unflinching record of Canada's *Indian Act* and of the Residential School System. Non-Native politicians tried to dissuade him from this course, but he remained true to his Mohawk name Tanakohate (“Paddles Against the Current”). For this reason, the chiefs from the west insisted he be inducted into the Order of Canada.”

Grand Chief Delisle was a founding member of both the *Indians of Quebec Association* (later the *Confederation of the Indians of Quebec*) and *National Indian Council* (later the *National Indian Brotherhood* – which became the *Assembly of First Nations*). He also played an active role in negotiations for the James Bay Agreement.

While semi-retired from politics, he was asked to assist in the resolution of the 1990 Oka Crisis, which brought him back to the political forum. He then worked as Elder/Advisor to the MCK until 2014. During this time, he also acted as Chairperson of the Kanien'kehá:ka Funding Association.

In 2004 he was named as a recipient of a National Aboriginal Lifetime Achievement Award. He also received the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2013.

Viewing will begin from Tuesday at 11am at Poissant & Deer Funeral Home in Kahnawà:ke, with the funeral taking place at St. Francis Xavier Mission at 11am on Thursday.

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