

PRESS RELEASE

Congratulations to Romeo Saganash on Receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Law from Université Laval

Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee (November 29, 2021) – On Thursday, November 25, Romeo Saganash attended convocation at the Université Laval to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Law. The Cree Nation watched proudly as he was awarded one of the highest distinctions offered by the University in recognition of his contribution to the advancement of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

As a former member of Parliament, and first Indigenous person of Quebec to be elected to represent the region of Ungava for the New Democratic Party (NDP), Romeo received a well-deserved standing ovation from those in attendance, which included 1000 members of the legal succession. This event was initially scheduled to take place in October 2019, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic was postponed to November 2021.

Romeo's contribution to the Cree Nation and to Indigenous rights across Canada and the world is one of diverse impact. As a defender of human rights, Romeo has spent much of his political career advocating for national reconciliation as well as the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* through his private member's Bill C-262. Although this important legislation was not passed at the time, it laid the foundation for future efforts that would see the framework for the implementation of UNDRIP through Bill C-15 finally be adopted on June 21, 2021.

As a leader in Eeyou Istchee, Romeo has had a diverse and longstanding contribution to the Cree Nation. In 1985, at the age of 23, Romeo founded the Cree Nation Youth Council – an organization that continues to grow in its support of youth throughout Eeyou Istchee. In 1989 after completing his studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) he became the first Cree from Eeyou Istchee to receive a law degree. He was elected as Deputy Grand Chief, a position he held for three years from 1990 to 1993. During this time, Romeo Saganash fought for his people amidst continued hydroelectric development being contested for its impact on traditional Cree territory.

Romeo Saganash also served as the Director of Cree-Quebec Relations for over 10 years continuing to play an important role in environmental advisory and development issues. It was during this time that he contributed as one of the negotiators that led to the signing of the Paix des Braves; a Nation-to-Nation Agreement that is instrumental in ensuring Cree participation in the management and benefit of development in mining, forestry and hydroelectricity.

“On behalf of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government, I would like to congratulate Romeo on receiving this highest distinction as we stand in ovation for his contributions to the advancement of the Cree Nation and the rights of Indigenous peoples. It brings us great pride to see one of our own receive such a prestigious award. We are inspired by his courage and determination in promoting and protecting the rights of our people, and ultimately all Indigenous Peoples across Canada and the world.” – Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty