Stephen Kakfwi

A Dene Perspective in Canada: its Laws and its Institutions

Tuesday, January 11, 2011
5:00 PM, Moot Court, Faculty of Law
3660 Peel St., McGill University

The John P. Humphrey Lecture in Human Rights
Stephen Kakfwi, former Northwest Territories Premier and Dene Nation President, has been at the forefront of the development of political, democratic, environmental, economic, cultural and geo-political transformation that Canada’s north, especially its Aboriginal residents, has undergone in the past quarter century. Mr. Kakfwi played an instrumental role in the settlement of regional Aboriginal Land claims, and in the promotion of Aboriginal peoples as key players in the NWT economy. He ensured that a zero tolerance approach was taken on violence, particularly as it relates to women, children and elders.

Born at a traditional Dene bush camp on Yelta Lake near Fort Good Hope, NWT in 1950, Mr. Kakfwi was sent to residential schools for seven years in Inuvik and Fort Smith, both 500 miles from his family home. Stephen Kakfwi established the NWT Dene Cultural Institute and founded Indigenous Survival International (ISI) with the assistance of the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations. Mr. Kakfwi established the Western Arctic Leadership Program, which was designed to encourage young Aboriginal students to prepare for future leadership roles.

Over sixteen years in Cabinet, a record in NWT history, he served as minister of Education, Housing, Justice, Personnel, Safety and Public Services, Aboriginal Rights and Constitutional Development, Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and as the first Premier of the new NWT after division and the creation of Nunavut. During his term, he developed and implemented an NWT Protected Areas Strategy and a Mackenzie Valley Five Year Action Plan and actively participated in the formal establishment of Nunavut on April 1, 1999.
Welcome Note

Dean Daniel Jutras
Faculty of Law, McGill University

Introduction of the Guest Speaker

Professor Colleen Sheppard
Director of Research, Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism
Faculty of Law, McGill University

Guest Speaker

Stephen Kakfwi
Dene President and former Northwest Territories Premier

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Thank you

Joseph Paul Flowers
Faculty of Law, McGill University

A reception will follow
The John P. Humphrey Lectureship in Human Rights

The John P. Humphrey Lectureship in Human Rights is an annual lecture on the theme of the role of International Law and Organization in the worldwide protection of human rights. The lecture was founded in 1988 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in recognition of the leadership of John Humphrey (B.C.L. 1928) in the elaboration, drafting, and promotion of the Declaration. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Professor John Humphrey, and subsequent lecturers included His Excellency Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN Secretary General, University of Toronto Law Professor Ronald St. J. Macdonald, Chief Justice Rolv Ryssdal, President of the ECHR, Stephen Lewis. The Humphrey Lecture was delivered by Thomas Franck in 2004, Sally Engle Merry in 2006, and Ratna Kapur in 2008.

Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism

Following the principles which animated the Deans and Professors Maxwell Cohen, John Humphrey and F.R. Scott, the Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism is a focal point for innovative legal and interdisciplinary research, dialogue and outreach on issues of human rights and legal pluralism. The Centre’s mission is to provide students, professors and the wider community with a locus of intellectual and physical resources for engaging critically with how law impacts upon some of the compelling social problems of our modern era.