



CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor Mike Layton

Seconded by: Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are saddened to learn of the passing of Vernon (Vern) Harper, 85 on May 13, 2018.

Born in Toronto on June 17, 1932, Vern Harper is 5th Generation Grandson of Mistawasis or Mistahi-maskwa, and 6th Generation Grandson of Big Bear, a “Peace Chief” who negotiated Treaty 6 with the Government of Canada.

A survivor of residential schools and foster homes, Mr. Harper was a First Nations Cree Elder, medicine man, Aboriginal rights activist and Keeper of the Lodge. His life story includes being a stage actor, a professional fighter, author of “Follow the Red Path”, cancer survivor, and a highly decorated Korean War veteran.

In the 1970's, Mr. Harper was the Vice-President of the Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association, organized the Native People’s Caravan, a cross-Canada trek to raise awareness of broken treaties and grievances against the Canadian government, and, along with his wife, founded the Wandering Spirit Survival School of Toronto.

Known as the “Urban Elder” of Toronto, Mr. Harper dedicated his life to helping people as the Resident Elder for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health where he promoted the role of First Nations spirituality in the treatment of mental health and addiction.

Mr. Harper was the first Native to receive Federal Recognition through Corrections Canada granting him Chaplain’s Status, as a Native Spiritual Elder where he provided spiritual services, sweat lodge ceremonies and traditional counselling to Indigenous prison inmates.

In 2007, Toronto City Council awarded the Access, Equity and Human Rights - Aboriginal Affairs Award to Mr. Harper to recognize his lifelong legacy and accomplishments within the aboriginal community and the wider society, and his efforts to promote the role of First Nations spirituality and traditions in education and mental health institutions.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our deepest respect and gratitude for Vernon Harper's distinguished, productive and generous life, and our sincere sympathy to his family and many friends.

May 23, 2018