

CHIEF ROY MUSSELL, STO:LO NATION (1948 - 2006)

Roy Mussell, former chief of the Skwah Band of the Sto:lo First Nation, is no longer among us, yet his gifts of quiet wisdom and passionate leadership continue to resonate across Canada.

“He was a remarkably selfless man,” says Kelly Lendsay, president of the AHRC. “Roy believed that the foundation for everything was based on human relationships. He had a roaring belief in the power of partnerships.”

“When partners care,” Roy Mussell often said, “a partnership grows.”

Mussell cared about a great many things. He served as vice president of the Fraser Basin Council Society, a unique group that includes four levels of government, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations committed to sustainability of the Fraser River’s huge watershed where much of BC’s population is based. The Society’s governance model became the first of its kind in Canada and has served as an example for other organizations throughout the world.

“Roy made every minute of his life count,” the Honourable Iona Campagnolo, lieutenant-governor of Canada, said at his memorial service. “He was the living embodiment of a 21st century leader, constantly forging new pathways to aboriginal inclusion and rational public policies...As a national and international advocate for a balanced, sustainable and shared world, Roy Mussell brought a deep respect for the natural world together with his own innate integrity, informing everything he did and inspiring everyone he met.”

Stephen Point, a former grand chief of the Sto:lo Nation, who is also a Provincial Court judge and chief commissioner of the B.C. Treaty Commission, knew Roy Mussell all his life. “Roy has been a very progressive individual...He’s one of those guys who gets things done. He doesn’t talk about it, he goes out and does it. He’s also a very diplomatic individual ... he’s the glue that holds things together.”

Mussell’s approach to Aboriginal issues was direct, simple and profound: “Too many face multiple barriers and too many are not reaching their full potential. Why do we wait?” he asked. Passionately concerned about Aboriginal youth, he worked to enhance construction trades skills and apprenticeship opportunities for young Aboriginal workers. He administered federal support programs, crafted goals and the strategies for innovative job training, skills development and education programs.

“Everything we do is about human resources,” Mussel believed. He wore many HR hats. He was also co-chair of the B.C. First Nations’ Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements’ Management Committee and co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations’ Chiefs’ Committee on Human Resources Development Agreements.

Dan George, a former treasurer with the AHRC, was impressed with Mussell’s ability to deal with people holistically in their relationship to their community and family. “We couldn’t only look at employment and training...Roy had us looking at issues of poverty and homelessness. If we just give someone skills in employment, we will have failed if we don’t look at their relationships with that person’s family and community. As an influence on others, Mussell often had a profound impact. He led by example, with honour and an unerring moral compass. He’s going to be remembered as a leader, as a chief, as an innovator, as a strategist...I think he’d want to be remembered in his greatest of roles: husband, father, son,

uncle, brother. His family was very important to him and gave him the strength of purpose during his last days on this earth.”

Advice of a change master:

“Following the right road or taking the right path or blazing the right trail - that's also being able to leave a trail that everyone will understand. Make decisions, exercise authority, rather than be fearful of it.”