

News Release



The Empire Club of Canada will present The Nation Builder of the Year Award to First Nations leader Perry Bellegarde on December 9th, 2021

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO, ON – The Empire Club of Canada is proud to announce Perry Bellegarde will receive its 2021 Nation Builder of the Year Award at a special free virtual event on December 9th, 2021.

Chief Perry Bellegarde is the recent former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations with a record of achievement built over 35 years in First Nations leadership and advocacy for Indigenous rights, human rights, and building bridges within Canada and globally.

This award comes as Bellegarde completed his second term as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in July of this year, a term capped off by his leadership of the federal parliament's passage into law of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, foundational to reconciliation.

"We believe Perry Bellegarde is a Nation Builder in the greatest and truest of senses," said Empire Club Board President Kelly Jackson. "Throughout his career, he has shown his belief in approaches and processes that unite rather than divide. His inclusive approach to building relationships and his championship of First Nations rights has helped make Canada a stronger nation."

"It's a profound honour to be recognized as a nation builder," said Chief Bellegarde. "I was raised to believe in the importance of peaceful co-existence, friendship and mutual respect between First Nations and all Canadians. Today, more than ever, we come together to address the urgent social, economic and environmental challenges of our time. We must keep talking and take action as we rise to the challenges facing all of humanity to build a better Canada together."

The special event will take place at noon on December 9th. It will be hosted by CTV's National Affairs Correspondent Omar Sachedina. There will be several performances as part of the event, including ones by Twin Flames, Red Sky and a rendition of O Canada by Fawn Wood and Dallas Waskahat. Remarks will also be offered by notables such as Trent University professor Dan Longboat, former Prime Minister Paul Martin, film producer Lisa Meeches, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed and Parliamentary Poet Laureate Louise Halfe. Other participants will be announced in the coming weeks.

The Empire Club will announce an exciting contribution to the Perry Bellegarde Leadership Scholarship at the First Nations University of Canada as part of the event on December 9th.

Chief Bellegarde is well deserving of this achievement. Chief Roger Augustine, Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief for New Brunswick, stated, "Perry Bellegarde has been a tireless

advocate for First Nations peoples for many years. He has worked diligently to have our Inherent Rights and Treaties recognized and implemented, and to ensure our people take their rightful place throughout Canada.”

Chief Wilton Littlechild, former Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and former Member of Parliament offered, “He maintains humility, kindness and strength while he leads. And the ripple effects can be felt throughout our First Nations, Canada, and the world. For that, humanity and indeed, the world, are better off. Perry is so very deserving of this 'nation-builder' award.”

Chief Connie Big Eagle, Chair of the Assembly of First Nations Women's Council and Chief of the Ocean Man First Nation in Saskatchewan, added, “As National Chief, Perry Bellegarde made the Assembly of First Nations a more united and effective organization for our Chiefs. His dedication, his tenacity, and his thorough understanding of the priorities – both nationally and right at home on our First Nations – provided him the balance to achieve results.”

The livestream event is free to attend and registration is available at <https://events.empireclubofcanada.com/nationbuilder2021/home>.

About The Empire Club of Canada

Established in 1903, the Empire Club of Canada, a non-profit organization, is celebrating its 118th Season. As Canada’s go-to forum for conversations that matter, the Empire Club produces over 40 thought leadership events annually that connect people to ideas and each other.

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