

Banquet Keynote Speaker

## 2007 Western Canadian Deans of Arts and Science Conference

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Thursday, September 27 to  
Saturday, September 29

### Chief Ovide Mercredi

**Ovide William Mercredi** (born January 30, 1946, in Grand Rapids, Manitoba) is an Aboriginal Canadian politician. He is Cree and a former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

Mercredi attended the University of Manitoba and graduated with a degree in law in 1977. While a student he became president of the first Native Students' Association formed in Canada. He was elected regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations for Manitoba in 1989. Mercredi had specialized in constitutional law, and became a key strategist for the assembly during the time of the Meech Lake Accord constitutional reform discussions. He also had a strong leadership role in resolving the Oka Crisis.

In 1991, Mercredi was elected national chief for the Assembly of First Nations. During this first term, he played a major role in the Charlottetown Accord constitutional discussions. He was re-elected to this position in 1994, and served as national chief until 1997. As chief, Mercredi addressed the United Nations in both Geneva and New York. He also led a Canadian delegation to the troubled area of Chiapas, Mexico.

In addition to serving as a lawyer and politician, Mercredi is a noted author. He co-wrote with Mary Ellen Turpel the 1993 book, *In The Rapids: Navigating the Future of First Nations*.

Mercredi is an advocate of non-violent methods for change, and has been nominated by the Government of India for the Gandhi Peace Prize. He has also received honorary law degrees from St. Mary's University and Bishop's University.

In April 2005, Mercredi announced he would challenge Bev Desjarlais for the nomination of the New Democratic Party in Desjarlais' riding of Churchill for the next federal election, but he later withdrew his candidacy.

In May of 2007 Mercredi along with his fellow Manitoba Chiefs began seeking compensation from Manitoba Telecom Services for every cellphone signal that passes through First Nations land, saying the airspace should be considered a resource like land and water.

Mercredi was quoted as saying "When it comes to using airspace, it's like using our water and simply because there's no precedent doesn't mean that it's not the right thing to do.

He is currently serving his first term as the Chief of Misipawistik Cree Nation in Manitoba.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia