

Daniel David Moses receives 2015 OAC Aboriginal Arts Award

By Laura Hill

Author Daniel David Moses has dedicated over 30 years of his life to the arts. Since 1979, he has written 13 published or produced plays, several books of poetry and countless essays. He co-edited Oxford University Press's *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, a founding text for the study of Canadian Indigenous literature. In 2003 he joined the Department of Drama at Queen's University as a Queen's National Scholar.

And that's just an abbreviated list of his accomplishments. His CV lists a host of awards, recognitions, residencies, workshops and more that prove that this Six Nations author

is no stranger to hard work.

This past week, the Ontario Arts Council acknowledged Moses when they named him as the recipient of the Aboriginal Arts award. Created in 2012, this award celebrates the work of Aboriginal artists and arts leaders who have made significant contributions to the arts in Ontario.

"Daniel is very deserving of this prize," noted the jury. "He is one of the key figures of Aboriginal theatre, both artistically and academically, and is developing an essential Indigenous archive. He is committed to telling the stories that created this country and is an advocate for Aboriginal culture."

Speaking to Moses from his office at Queens



Poet and author Daniel David Moses.

University, he speaks modestly of the win and of the formative years of his decades-long career.

"The recognition has been wonderful, especially after all these years," he says, before sharing a little more

about his decision to become a writer.

"In high school, after finding that I didn't have the coordination for music", he jokes "I found that there was something really interesting about poetry. I went on

to York University and University of British Columbia, and afterwards took short term jobs to get by. One of those short term jobs was in immigrations at an airport, where I earned enough to take an entire year off for writing."

During that year off, Moses wrote his second book of poetry. He began to find success as a writer, and embarked on a path that would see him through a myriad of experiences and accomplishments.

As a part of his most recent distinction, Moses was invited to select an emerging Aboriginal artist to receive a \$2500 prize. He chose another Six Nations writer, Falen Johnson, whose first play *Salt Baby* received accolades for its humour, honesty and insight.

"Being chosen by Daniel David Moses to receive this award is an extraordinary honour. Almighty Voice and his Wife blew my mind when I first read it in high school. It was seminal in propelling me into a life of theatre both in performance and writing. Daniel's work is beyond anything I have ever encountered, Indigenous or non. His use of poetry while exploding form is something that I greatly admire and aspire to as a writer", Johnson shared.

Moses will receive a \$10 000 prize from the OAC at an awards ceremony this summer. While he continues to write and teach regularly, when asked if he has big plans for his sabbatical next year, he hints, "Well, a book of poetry sounds interesting."