



# Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **TRIBE BRINGS ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT AMBULANCE TO AKWESASNE** *Hogansburg Location Reduces Emergency Response Times*

**AKWESASNE, NY** — On Friday, Tsiothohrkó:wa/January 23, 2016 the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council convened an informational session at Tsi Tetewatkins (Seniors Center) to discuss ambulance services for the Akwesasne community. The topic was also discussed at the Enníska/February 6, 2016 Monthly Tribal Meeting and looked at steps being taken to have a fully staffed Advanced Life Support (ALS)-certified ambulance unit in the territory. Community members were encouraged to attend these meetings to learn the facts about the expired Memorandum of Agreement with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and to provide further input on ambulance services.

“We were pleased to receive feedback and recommendations from community members that participated in discussions about ambulance services, particularly the input we got from our Mohawk EMTs and volunteer fire fighters,” stated Tribal Chief Beverly Cook, who chaired the community meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. “We continue to extend our appreciation to Akwesasne’s first responders for the invaluable role they serve in keeping our community safe. The information they shared at the meeting was important and helped the Tribal Council in making a decision that addresses specific concerns shared by community members at monthly tribal meetings.”

At the Onerahtókha/April 4, 2015 Monthly Tribal Meeting, community members directed the Tribal Council “to look into the possibility of housing an ambulance on the U.S. side for medical emergencies.” The action item was in response to the increased need for ALS ambulance services in our growing community and concerns about response times for emergency calls. Further discussion revealed community concerns about delays associated with roadside ambulance intercepts on route to the hospital. These concerns, along with long response times for ALS medical transports, was reiterated at the Tsiothohrkó:wa/January 23<sup>rd</sup> community meeting.

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Following the additional feedback from community members at the February 6<sup>th</sup> Tribal Meeting, the Tribe will modify its agreement with Seaway Valley Ambulance (SVA) Services to provide a fully staffed ALS-certified ambulance that will operate from within the territory. The arrangement specifies SVA to serve as primary responder for Akwesasne's southern portion and the Akwesasne Mohawk Ambulance (AMA) Service will continue to provide backup support. Tribal members supported the measure as it will significantly decrease ALS response times for the entire Akwesasne community and will enable AMA to better serve as primary responder for Akwesasne's northern portion, with SVA and Massena Volunteer Rescue serving in a backup role.

“We continue to make it clear in our discussions that the arrangement with Seaway Valley is an interim solution to address the needs of our community,” stated Tribal Chief Ron Lafrance. “In the meantime, the arrangement with Seaway Valley addresses community member's requests for decreased response times by situating an Advanced Life Support ambulance in the community. Having ALS equipment and staff responding directly from the territory helps increase the level of care for all of Akwesasne.”

Within 30 days, a dedicated and fully staffed ALS ambulance unit will be based in Akwesasne's southern portion to significantly reduce response times for Advanced Life Support. The SVA ambulance will be centralized to ensure ALS response times are minimal regardless of the emergency call's location. It is anticipated the ambulance unit will operate out of a renovated warehouse located on State Route 37 in Tekahson'karó:rens (Hogansburg), which is located in the middle of the territory.

The Tribal Council has also secured a commitment from SVA to recruit and hire Mohawk EMTs to support the new arrangement. Mohawk EMTs will assist with emergency transports by providing knowledge of Akwesasne's unique geography and to use their training to administer Advanced Life Support medicines and treatments only available in an ALS ambulance unit. Information on employment qualifications and responsibilities will be shared in the near future.

“Akwesasne has a long, proud history of taking care of our own in all types of emergency situations,” said Tribal Chief Eric Thompson. “The Tribal Council has every intention on working with MCA to examine ways to develop a comprehensive ambulance system for the community that will be inclusive of ALS-certified equipment and technicians. As the operators of an ambulance service, we expect MCA will best understand how to navigate the steps required to make the improvements we are seeking.”

For an emergency, community members are encouraged to call “911.” Franklin County “911” will dispatch the Advanced Life Support ambulance unit based in Akwesasne's southern portion, with AMA also being available to respond to calls.

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*The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.*