



Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Beverly Cook
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.
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NEWS RELEASE

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SETTLEMENT TALKS CONTINUE IN DECADES-LONG CONFLICT OVER LAND

Tribe Seeks Negotiated Settlement vs. Land in Trust

Akwesasne, NY — Negotiations concerning the Akwesasne Mohawk land claim continue between the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, Franklin County and New York State. Resolution of the land claim will bring finality to the boundary of Akwesasne. The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State, St. Lawrence County and NYPA nearly two years ago. Negotiations with the County resumed shortly after the MOU was signed in May of 2014.

“The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council has continuously made every effort to educate the surrounding communities on the benefits of a negotiated settlement and the difference between our alternative and the land in trust process,” stated Chief Ron LaFrance. Under a final settlement agreement, Franklin County would receive payment for back taxes, as well as future payment for any lost taxes, from New York State. “Our people have been separated for far too long from our land, including our members that own property in the mile square and Area B. We’ve heard their voice and their need to be included in this settlement.”

Acquisition of land, under a final settlement agreement, would be designated as Reservation under three circumstances, the first is if it is currently owned by a Tribal member, the second is if it is purchased from a willing seller, and lastly, if acquired by voluntary transfer. “Our primary goal is the return of ancestral lands to its original status,” shared Chief Beverly Cook. “All aspects of these negotiations are carried out with the best interests of our children and families foremost in our minds.”

Mohawks own approximately 1700 acres in the Town of Bombay and approximately 1000 acres in the Town of Fort Covington, which includes properties located in the Village of Fort Covington. According to Chief LaFrance, “many of our members are frustrated by how long these negotiations are taking and many have asked us to pursue land to trust. In fact, in the summer of 2014, Twin Leaf and East End Convenience received hundreds of signatures from customers in support of the inclusion of their properties in the settlement area; the petitions were sent to the Franklin County legislators.

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The Supreme Court has ruled that tribes have a right to take land in trust regardless of ongoing land claim litigation. When land is taken into trust by the Federal government, it is no longer under the authority of the State or County. While Federal law requires consultation with the local governments, it does not require that the County or Town agree for land to be taken into trust, and it does not require that the towns or County be paid for any potential property tax loss in the future.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe established resolvetheboundary.com to share facts behind the land claim process, including [maps of the land claim area](#).

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

