



# Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Beverly Cook  
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Chief Eric Thompson  
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **TRIBAL COUNCIL CONGRATULATES SONNY WHITE ON BEING NAMED 2016 CHAMPION FOR CHANGE**

*Aspen Institute Award Recognizes Young Native Leaders*

**Akwesasne, NY** — Members of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council were on-hand as the Aspen Institute's Center for Native American Youth (CNAV) recognized Brayden Sonny White as a 2016 Champions for Change on Tuesday, Enniska/February 25, 2016. Held during a special presentation at the National Congress of American Indian's Tribal Nations Legislative Summit in Washington, DC; Sonny White was one of five Native youth to receive the prestigious award for serving as extraordinary young leaders in their respective communities.

"We are always proud when a community member, especially our youth, receives national recognition for their outstanding achievements and contributions to Native communities, including to Akwesasne," stated Tribal Chief Beverly Cook, who was in attendance for the award presentation along with Tribal Chief Eric Thompson and Tribal Sub-Chief Michael Conners. She added, "To have one of Akwesasne's young Native leaders recognized is even more uplifting and ensures a very promising future for our community. Sonny has been actively involved in national initiatives aimed at addressing some of the challenges that Native youth are experiencing."

The award comes three months after Sonny shared a stage with U.S. President Barack Obama and other Native youth at The White House's Tribal Nations Conference to discuss the realities being faced by Native youth. The group panel was the result of Obama's Generation Indigenous Initiative, or Gen-I program, which was launched at the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Conference. The resulting discussion focused on a variety of topics relevant to Native youth; from the alarming number of youth suicides in Native communities to the need for increased financial support for low-income students to pursue higher education.

"Sonny White continues to be an impressive and positive role model for all Native youth," said Tribal Chief Eric Thompson. He noted, "As a Gen-I National Native Youth Ambassador, Sonny is becoming a familiar name at national gatherings as he promotes hope to the difficulties confronted by youth. I'm pleased the Center for Native American Youth has recognized him and other Native youth who are helping their Native communities through inspiring ways."

*Continued*

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*Tribal Council Extends Congratulates Sonny White...*  
*Enniska/February 29, 2016*  
*Page 2*

The Aspen Institute's award presentation was conducted by CNAY's chairman and founder, Senator Dorgan. CNAY board member, along with journalist Patty Talahongva. While in D.C., the honorees had meetings with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, White House staff, members of Congress, and other federal agency officials, where they discussed the challenges that their Native youth peers are facing across the country.

You can watch the video using this [link](#) and view photos from the event [here](#).

**Center for Native American Youth** is dedicated to improving the health, safety and overall well-being of Native American youth through communication, policy development and advocacy. Founded by former US Senator Byron Dorgan in February 2011, CNAY is a policy program within the Aspen Institute, headquartered in Washington, DC. For more information, visit [www.cnay.org](http://www.cnay.org)

**The Aspen Institute** is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

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