



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Paul O. Thompson  
Chief Beverly Cook  
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Sub-Chief Eric Thompson  
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs  
Sub-Chief Michael L. Connors

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:  
Enniskó:wa/March 16, 2015

For more information:  
Communications Department  
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe  
Tel: (518) 358-2272

### **Akwasasne Businesses Explore WMBE Certification**

By Mary La France

**Akwasasne, NY** — The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) Office of Economic Development (OED) strives to support the local business community by creating partnerships and providing trainings that grow economic development opportunities for Akwasasne businesses. On Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, the OED partnered with the Adirondack Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) to bring a Women and Minority-Owned Enterprise (WMBE) seminar to Akwasasne.

The New York State's WMBE Certification Program was created as a way for minority or women-owned enterprises to better their bottom line by doing business with New York State and other public entities receiving state grants and loans. The goal of the program is to promote equality of economic opportunities for WMBEs and to eliminate barriers to their participation in state contracts. In an effort to achieve WMBE program goals, New York State is mandates that a certain percentage of all state contracts utilize certified WMBEs.

Executive Director of the AEDC, Jim Murphy, visited Akwasasne and met with a group of local businesses and emerging entrepreneurs to explain the WMBE certification process, eligibility requirements and answer any questions pertaining to their specific areas of business. Most importantly the AEDC offers one-on-one technical assistance in completing the application for any women or minority owned businesses interested in becoming a certified WMBE.

“WMBE certification is a great opportunity for any native business looking to do business with the state of New York or any agency or government that uses state funds,” said Mr. Murphy.

Those in attendance ranged from established and prospective construction, professional development, veterinary and retail enterprises with interests working with New York State on a variety of projects.

“I appreciate the workshop because of the face to face meeting and I look forward to perusing certification when I have things in order to go that route,” said Herbi Francis, a specialized tile artisan for Tre Tile. “I am also grateful to know the right people and resources on where to go.”

Last year, state contracts utilizing WMBEs reached 21.06 % or a record \$1.4 billion spent with certified WMBE firms. But, local public agencies continue to struggle to find WMBEs to fulfill their contract obligations. The Akwesasne business community is in a unique situation where virtually all business are eligible to become WMBEs. But to date, only two Akwesasne business have been certified. The OED recognizes the tremendous opportunity for our local Native-owned businesses and is committed to working the AEDC to help facilitate the application process.

For more information regarding the WMBE certification process you may contact Jim Murphy at AEDC 518-891-5523. For more information on SRMT OED services and trainings please contact Mary La France at OED 518-358-2835 or [mలాfrance@srmt-nsn.gov](mailto:mలాfrance@srmt-nsn.gov).

#####

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