



# Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Beverly Cook  
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Chief Eric Thompson  
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs  
Sub-Chief Michael L. Conners  
Sub-Chief Cheryl Jacobs

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:  
Onerahtohkó:wa/April 19, 2016

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

## ESTABLISHING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOR DIABETIC WOUND CARE IN CUBA

### *SRMT Invited to Meet with Ministry of Public Health*

**Akwesasne, NY** - The care and prevention of diabetes related complications in Akwesasne are one of our most important health priorities. Throughout Indian Country, Native people experience an 11.4% prevalence of the disease. The community of Akwesasne has a diabetic population of 16.4%. In comparison, the State of New York has 9.7% disease prevalence. One of the most severe complications from the disease is diabetic foot ulcer, which impairs wound healing and sometimes leads to amputation. In early 2016, the National Congress of American Indians shared information on a treatment for diabetic ulcer, developed in Cuba. The treatment, [Heberprot-P](#), is available in 26 countries, but not accessible in the U.S. or Canada. The [Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council](#) wants to find a way to access Heberprot-P, and to consider other forms of medical treatment, including lung cancer vaccines, developed by the Cuban health system.

Chief Beverly Cook, FNP and Chief Eric Thompson were given a unique introduction to the Ambassador to Cuba on December 2, 2015, through [Katsi Cook](#), Certified Aboriginal Midwife and Program Director, Indigenous Leadership of Indigenous Girls and Women, NoVo Foundation and [Jose Barreiro](#) of the Smithsonian Institution. Jose R. Cabanas, the Ambassador to the US from Cuba, was impressed with the presentation regarding our community's approach to diabetic care and prevention. Within a month, Ambassador Cabanas extended a rare official invitation to the leaders on behalf of the Ministry of Public Health of Cuba. "It is an honor to have the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba, a country rich in ethnic diversity and Indigenous thinking," expressed Chief Beverly Cook. "The World Health Organization recognizes Cuba as having one of the most effective public health systems. The intent is that we build a relationship that allows us to access treatment that benefits Native patients to avoid amputation as a result of diabetes. Our initial focus is on Mohawk patients and Six Nations communities with the vision of nurturing a deeper understanding and sharing of cultural practices and protocols."

*Continued*

Through the Cuban Ministry of Public Health, the group will spend five days touring Cuban medical facilities, research centers and meeting the officials responsible for the medical research programs. The group will be traveling April 24 through April 30, 2016. During the tour, the delegation, including the Director of Health Services, Michael Cook, Dr. Joseph Robinson, Physician at the SRM Health Services and Allyson Doctor, MS Health Communication, will visit 14 institutions, including the National Institute of Endocrinology, the Latin American School of Medicine and a meeting with the Directors of a bio-tech/pharmaceutical organization, Biocubafarma.

Heberprot-P is an innovative Cuban product containing human epidermal growth factor. Evidence reveals it accelerates healing of deep and complex ulcers and reduces diabetes-related amputations. Clinical trials of Heberprot-P in patients with diabetic foot ulcers have shown that repeated local treatment could safely enhance healing of chronic wounds. [\[1\]](#)

“Access to Heberprot-P may extend the years and quality of life to people facing diabetic wound complications and amputation,” remarked Chief Eric Thompson. “We recognize the political hurdles of the past. It is our intent to create access to a medication that decreases amputations, suffering and disability. Ultimately, we hope to pave the path to treatment that will benefit our Mohawk people and other Native communities.” The delegation will prepare a report on the visit to be shared nationally.

-- ### --

PHOTO CAPTION: *Meeting at the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, Washington, DC, December 2, 2015. Pictured are (from left) Katsi Cook, NoVo Foundation; Jose Barreiro, Smithsonian Institution; Eric Thompson, SRMT Chief; José R. Cabañas, Cuban Ambassador to U.S.; and Beverly Cook, SRMT Chief.*

[\[1\]](#) Berlanga, J. "Heberprot-P: A Novel Product for Treating Advanced Diabetic Foot Ulcer." (n.d.): n. pag. *NCBI. MEDICC*, 15 Jan. 2013. Web. 19 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23396236>>.

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